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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 167**

SIXTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 12 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Death of a Member

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of James Harold McCusker Esq, the hon. Member for Upper Bann. I desire on behalf of the House to express our sense of the loss that we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

1. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the progress of the Channel tunnel rail link.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): British Rail and its private sector partner, Eurorail, are working to specify a route for the Channel tunnel rail link from Swanley in Kent to King's Cross. The aim is to introduce a parliamentary Bill for the project in November.

Mr. Townsend: Is it the Government's view that the rail link represents a major national project that will benefit all regions of this country, encourage the use of the railways and protect the environment? If so, should not it be controlled and financed by a partnership of the Government, British Rail and the private sector?

Mr. Portillo: It is clear that Channel tunnel rail services represent such a partnership, because £1 billion of British Rail money is being spent on the first phase of improving rail links, even before the matter of a new line arises. It is right that the new line should be a commercial proposition, because it will be in competition with the airlines, ferries and other private modes of transport. I do not foresee any need for a public sector subsidy, but it is an appropriate project for British Rail and the private sector to operate as a joint venture.

Mr. Fearn: Does not the Minister agree that it would be sensible for British Rail to use the year that it now has to rethink its policy and use other methods, under which it could consider the comprehensive services that it offers? Does he agree that services to the north are not comprehensive and need further consideration?

Mr. Portillo: British Rail and its partner are using the year to consider some of the measures that the hon. Gentleman suggested, including the route from Swanley to King's Cross. British Rail brought forward a comprehensive plan on links to the other regions. It offers about 3 million seats from the regions to Paris and Brussels and a comprehensive series of freight services from every part of the country. That is a good plan, but if the hon. Gentleman has proposals on how it should be modified, I am sure that the last full stop has not been put to it.

Sir John Hunt: Is my hon. Friend aware that the prospect of Channel tunnel traffic hurtling along existing British Rail track in Bromley and elsewhere is horrific and totally unacceptable? Will he therefore look more closely and sympathetically than he has hitherto at the alternative proposals presented by Ove Arup and Partners, which provides for a national rail infrastructure with reduced environmental damage and disturbance?

Mr. Portillo: British Rail believes that until the turn of the century the new Channel tunnel services will be accommodated on the existing system without disrupting

commuter services, and it is important that they should be preserved. Together with its private sector partner, British Rail is considering whether extra capacity will be needed at about the turn of the century. Its private sector partner was chosen after competition, which included firms such as Ove Arup. Ove Arup's proposal includes making four tracks through much of Kent, which might be more environmentally damaging than the two tracks proposed by British Rail and its private sector partner.

Mr. Prescott: Do the Minister and the Secretary of State accept that if we are to get the best economic advantage for Britain and the north, with the least environmental damage to London and the south, we should repeal section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987? That would allow him and the Secretary of State to reassess the alternatives, so that Britain's national interests are catered for rather than the private interests of the City.

Mr. Portillo: That is a controversial proposal. Section 42 was approved by Parliament and enjoyed all-party support. That section stated that there should not be any subsidy to the Channel tunnel. The reason why that section was introduced and approved by Parliament was sound. Parliament did not want the Channel tunnel to undermine other forms of transport that had to get by without subsidy. What stands in our way is not just section 42 but its underlying principle, which commended itself to Parliament at the time.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: I remind my hon. Friend that the fears for the Kent environment are very much alive. Will he, in his discussions with British Rail, ensure that British Rail does not backslide on the considerable measures that it has taken to protect the environment and which were built into its previously announced plans?

Mr. Portillo: British Rail and its private sector partner are well aware of the immense importance that the Government attach to environmental protection. The requirement that an environmental impact study should be published at the time will be part of the process of introducing a Bill on this subject. I hope that that is of some consolation to my hon. Friend, who has been a champion for his constituents in this matter.

Greater Manchester

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of funding for Greater Manchester passenger transport authority for 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo: The Government are making available to the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority £58 million in grant and credit approvals. We have given the go-ahead to the Manchester airport terminal 2, to the rail link to the airport and to the Manchester Metrolink light rail project.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Minister for that information. Will he consider the possibility of increasing that funding, by instructing British Rail to make a refund to Greater Manchester passenger transport authority, because of British Rail's failure to provide the service that it was contracted to provide during the past 12 months? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that during that period—the Secretary of State has made this point—trains have been late or cancelled and service in the Greater Manchester area has been totally inefficient? Does the hon. Gentleman further agree that a refund should be made to the authority and fares cut, not increased? British Rail should come up with the goods for paying passengers in Greater Manchester, instead of providing a poor-quality service.

Mr. Portillo: I have to be rather careful on this subject. As the hon. Gentleman may know, if the PTA decides to pursue a case against British Rail for non-performance because it feels that BR has let the passengers down, that case will ultimately go to Ministers who might have to arbitrate. I think, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I cannot comment much on this point. Fares are a matter for the PTA. The £58 million in grant and credit approvals that has been made available to Greater Manchester PTA is a substantial amount, which will enable a significant range of passenger projects to go ahead.

Mr. Favell: Of course, there is lots of jam tomorrow for the British Rail passenger in Greater Manchester, but what about now? As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, many trains have been late or cancelled and there is sheer, unadulterated misery for many commuters from Stockport and elsewhere in Greater Manchester. Has that arisen, as suggested in the press, because of the late delivery of Sprinter trains? If so, who is to blame? How did that happen? What is to be done about it? When can something be done?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has done his constituents a great service in bringing their difficulties to my attention. I have great sympathy with those people in making difficult journeys. My hon. Friend identified one reason —late delivery of trains—but there have been unconnected reasons as well, such as delays in the work at Piccadilly station. It is not for me to attribute blame between the parties, but I am pleased to say that I understand that the class 158 Sprinters should be delivered in the spring and early summer, which should benefit my hon. Friend's constituents.

Electrification (Birmingham)

3. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the electrification of the Birmingham cross-city railway line.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I announced last week the Government's approval to the electrification and re-equipment of the Birmingham cross-city rail line.

Mr. Snape: Opposition Members are grateful to the Secretary of State for that announcement, hurried though it appeared to be. We accept, of course, that there is no connection between his decision and the Mid-Staffordshire by-election that is to be held shortly. Will the Secretary of State now consider the extension of the Walsall-Hednesford railway line to Rugeley, preferably on or before 15 March?

Mr. Parkinson: I believe that the county council is strongly opposed to the proposal, and I understand that the hon. Gentleman's party is in charge of that council. I am sure that when he tabled his question two weeks ago he

did not have the by-election in mind; nor, I think, did he have it mind to help the Conservative candidate and neither did I.

Mr. Roger King: Did my right hon. Friend chance to see the evening paper last week? Blazoned across the front page was the headline, "Cross City Rail Joy". That, of course, was the result of the extensive £37 million modernisation programme announced by my right hon. Friend. Is not this a reflection of the hard work done by many Members of Parliament in Birmingham and the areas surrounding it—particularly that of our late colleague John Heddle, who was in the vanguard of the campaign to bring a modernised rail service to his constituents?

Mr. Parkinson: Birmingham Members, especially Conservatives, have certainly been very assiduous in pressing the case for inner-city improvement in Birmingham, and the rail link—along with the heartlands spine road—is evidence of the Government's commitment to inner-city regeneration.

Mr. Allen: Is the Secretary of State aware that the rail link from Nottingham to London would cost——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does it go across Birmingham?

Mr. Allen: Yes. Is the Secretary of State aware that the link would cost a mere £95 million?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns the Birmingham cross-city railway line.

Mr. Allen: The link referred to in the question is, of course, entirely unrelated to the by-election. Will the right hon. Gentleman call on some of his colleagues in Nottinghamshire to resign their seat so that we, too, can benefit from an electrification similar to that which is now benefiting the people of Lichfield?

Mr. Parkinson: I thought that the question was a pretty feeble joke when the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) put it on the Order Paper. Conservative Members do not regard the Humber bridge as a desirable precedent, and therefore do not intend to follow it.

Civil Aviation

4. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's competition policy with regard to civil aviation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Our policy is to promote competition throughout civil aviation, with, of course, proper safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour. We have played a leading role in the European Community's progress towards a freer market in aviation.

Mr. Steen: I thank the Minister for the robust way in which he personally is pursuing the Government's important competition policy. Is he aware, however, that unfortunately Italy, Spain and Germany are not prepared to recognise the EC directive on competition? As a result British Airways, with its block, and Air France, with its anti-competitive arrangements with Lufthansa, are freezing out the smaller, independent airlines and preventing them from competing with the big boys. If we are not to see a repeat of the Laker episode—and we have already seen signs at Gatwick that that may be happening—what policy have the Government to help the smaller airlines to compete in Europe, especially with countries that will not support the EC directive?

Mr. McLoughlin: Many of the points that my hon. Friend has brought up are very important; his remarks about competition policy must be addressed by the European Commissioner who has responsibility for competition. It is important that we put the user first. We must allow competition so that the passenger obtains the full benefit of what we hope will be a freer aviation market, which we hope will lead to cheaper fares in the long term.

Mr. Colvin: I welcome the package of liberalisation measures agreed in Brussels on 1 December, but what arrangements are being made for the introduction of transitional arrangements between now and 1993—arrangements on which much of the growth in competition will depend?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend has raised an important point, relating to the whole question of progress towards a freer aviation market. As I said, such matters as takeovers and mergers must be dealt with by competition policy, and primarily involve my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. A number of cases are under consideration at present. However, there is nothing to stop the industry preparing for 1992 and its consequences.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister give us an update about what he is doing to improve air transport from Greater Manchester, particularly from Manchester international airport, and tell us how the negotiations on getting routes across the north Atlantic are progressing?

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently met the Secretary of Transportation in the United States and another meeting is planned in the near future. We are very hopeful and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are exceptionally keen to see links from Manchester to the United States. We have done a lot of work to that end and we shall continue to work vigorously on that policy. I hope that we shall see a successful conclusion, as the hon. Gentleman was right to say that this has been continuing for some time.

Humber Bridge

5. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimated deficit being carried by the Humber bridge board; and what plans he has to review the situation of the board.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): The debt on the Humber bridge is about £342 million. We are working with the bridge board on financial projections that it will use to support its detailed case for Government assistance.

Mr. Cran: Does not my hon. Friend agree that the saga of the Humber bridge debt has gone on far too long and that that is illustrated by the fact that a debt next year of about £400 million is projected, with interest charges being clocked up to the tune of £1 a second? Everyone believes

that the matter should be resolved, including the Government. Will my hon. Friend tell us what impediments there are to an agreement?

Mr. Atkins: We are waiting for several things, and we hope to be able to make a decision in the not-too-distant future. However, my hon. Friend has been a champion of the need to resolve concern about the bridge, and he will be aware that we shall do what we can as quickly as we can, but he will have to wait a little longer yet.

Ms. Ruddock: Is not that an admission that tolls are not a success and that where they pay their way they cause great congestion, for example in Dartford, and where they do not pay their way, they force operators to raise tolls to such a level that they are a grave disincentive to local business, for example on Humberside and Merseyside? Is the Minister aware that the only alternative to raising tolls to such a level in Merseyside is an extra £10 per person on the poll tax? Surely it is time that the Government reviewed their policy on tolls and provided help for Humberside and Merseyside.

Mr. Atkins: As I think everyone is aware, the Humber bridge was build by Barbara Castle to ensure a by-election victory for a Labour candidate in Hull. Typically, therefore, it was not costed properly and it will never make money. Therefore, the taxpayer may have to foot some of the Bill. That is not the sort of argument to which I am prepared to be party.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend the Minister must bear the £342 million in mind, but I hope that he will not allow that to become an overriding factor when considering the link road between the south and north of England——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will that link be via the Humber bridge?

Mr. Holt: Yes, via the Humber bridge. The last thing that we want is to subsidise the Humber bridge loss by having the link road run up the east coast of England when it should run parallel to the A1. I understand from the Secretary of State that it will take 14 years for the road to be opened after it has been agreed. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not allow the waste of money with regard to the Humber bridge to stop us in the north-east of England from having our proper motorway.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, as always, champions the cause of greater and better infrastructure for his constituency and for his constituents, in a manner to which we have become accustomed. He will know that the east coast motorway is being considered by a private consortium at the moment and we shall be interested to learn the results of that investigation. My hon. Friend would do well to press his case, as he normally does, and we shall do what we can to meet his concern.

Traffic Area Office, Cardiff

6. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy to retain his Department's present traffic area office in Cardiff to ensure that matters involving Wales are dealt with in the Principality.

Mr. Atkins: The importance of the Principality is such that I can confirm that I am retaining the traffic area office in Cardiff.

Mr. Michael: I welcome that lifting of the threat to the Cardiff office. It is obviously good news to us in south Wales, where the threat of closure was causing considerable worry. Does the Minister agree that traffic examiners form an important part of the service, and complement the work of the transport office in Cardiff? In view of the use that is made of them, will the Minister assure the House that traffic examiners' work will be continued and that it will stay under the direction of the office in Cardiff?

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted that my decision has pleased the hon. Gentleman and all Welshmen. I cannot confirm all the details that he would wish, because we are still looking at the matter. We value the importance of the Cardiff office. When we finalise the plans for the whole Principality, I shall be in a better position to give him more details.

British Rail

7. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects he expects to discuss with him.

Mr. Parkinson: I regularly meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss a variety of railway issues. The last meeting took place on 17 January, and I next plan to meet the chairman tomorrow.

Mr. Knox: When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman tomorrow, will he draw his attention to the inconvenience that is caused to the rail-travelling public by the often marginal twice-yearly changes in InterCity train services? Will he draw his attention to the fact that printed information about alterations to the timetable is often not available beforehand?

Mr. Parkinson: I shall draw those points to the attention of the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Rees: Will the Secretary of State congratulate the chairman on the excellent advertisement about InterCity trains? However, when I travelled from Leeds yesterday on Intercity trains, the advertisement bore no relationship to reality. It would be helpful if we knew that trains are not going to run on time, that we must change at Doncaster and that we shall arrive in London an hour and a half late. The same thing happens going the other way. It would be a good idea if somebody told us that we shall be late for appointments.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall draw those points to the attention of the chairman. Included in the objectives that we have set for the next three years are not only financial but performance objectives, including punctuality and cleanliness. The results will be announced at regular intervals. The right hon. Gentleman will be able to see the improvements for himself.

Mr. Adley: When my right hon. Friend sees the chairman tomorrow, will he explain that, since 1980, the public service obligation grant that the Government make

available to British Rail has never reached £1 billion? Every year since 1980, the West German federal railways public service obligation grant has exceeded £3 billion. Will my right hon. Friend explain to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that one reason why trains are constantly late is insufficient money for staff and for on-going improvements, to keep the service up to scratch?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend knows that I totally disagree with his diagnosis. I have not met any German transport Minister who is proud of the subsidy. They think that it is an outrage that the German taxpayer is forking out £3 billion a year to subsidise the railways.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State discuss with the chairman of British Rail his recent disgraceful comments on a radio programme two weeks ago, to the effect that long-distance commuters must pay an extra 40 per cent. on what are already among the highest railway fares in Europe? Does the Secretary of State think that such stupid and ill-informed comments will endear the Conservative party to commuters in the south of England who, for years, have made the silly mistake of voting Conservative?

Mr. Parkinson: The stupid and ill-informed comments have just come from the hon. Gentleman. As the hon. Gentleman knows, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) had my job a year ago, he announced that long-distance commuters, who represent 18,000 of British Rail's customers—less than one half of 1 per cent.—were receiving a discount of over 60 per cent. on their season tickets. They were paying less per journey than the cheapest discounted off-peak ticket. He felt that that gap should be closed, but he never said that they should pay 100 per cent. This year, on an annual basis, the cost of season tickets has been increased by 13·5 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should get a grip of the facts, stop relying on his prejudices and start talking sense.

Mr. Prescott: See you on Wednesday.

Mr. Burns: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Rail, will he raise with him on behalf of my 12,000 commuting constituents the cleanliness of trains and their timekeeping? What will be the benefits to the Chelmsford to Liverpool street line as a result of the record investment that was announced by his Department into services on Network SouthEast?

Mr. Parkinson: I welcome the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who shouted, "See you on Wednesday", to his first televised Question Time—the rest of us have been here three times.

I have good news for my hon. Friend: the whole of the Liverpool street signalling system is being modernised and work on his line, costing £19 million, is due to begin in the early part of 1991.

Transport 2000

8. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives from the group Transport 2000; and what was discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I had an informal and broad-ranging meeting with the chairman of Transport 2000 on 24 January, and I shall be meeting shortly representatives of a number of transport and environmental groups, including Transport 2000.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that reply and for his willingness to meet the group. At the meeting, will he pay particular attention to the correspondence between the Minister for Roads and Traffic and Transport 2000 because the Minister has clearly not stated the real status and objectives of the road-building traffic forecasts? What does the Secretary of State regard as the objectives of traffic forecasting in relation to new road-building schemes?

Mr. Parkinson: It has never been the Government's policy that all traffic forecast demands must be met. In the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity", we spelt out clearly that it would be neither sensible nor economic to remove all congestion. Like all other programmes, the roads programme is governed by what the country can afford. That has always been the case and represents no change of policy.

Mr. Higgins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that many transport organisations, including Transport 2000, are increasingly concerned about the effect of road-building programmes on the environment and about the need for a better system of compensation for those affected? Following his most forthcoming answer last time he was top for questions and the answer from the Prime Minister the following day, which was surprising in some respects, will he consider publishing a Green Paper on compensation for those affected by road-building programmes?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend did not mean to imply that it was unusual for two Ministers in the same Government to say similar things on consecutive days. I should have thought that that was absolutely normal. We are aware of the problems caused by blight and compensation. I am in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I hope to have some news for my right hon. Friend in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Prescott: Now that the Secretary of State accepts that it is impossible to have a road-building programme to meet his Department's estimate of the projected demand for the use of private vehicles, does that mean that he accepts that we shall have to restrict use of the private car, especially in our cities? Does he still believe that that is an eastern European solution, or has he now had his talk with the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is as opaque about his transport policy as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was about his rates policy at the weekend. The hon. Gentleman is a great one for exploiting disasters. He is never happier than when he is miserable and trying to make the rest of us miserable as well. In the next three years, we have programmes for roads amounting to £5·7 billion and programmes for rail, underground and public transport amounting to £6 billion.

Disabled People

9. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve mobility of the disabled.

Mr. Atkins: We want all concerned to recognise and cater for the needs of this important sector of the community. Our plans are set out comprehensively in the document "Transport and Disability: A Statement of Aims and Priorities".

Mr. Carrington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. He will be aware that access for disabled people to London's buses and the Underground leaves a great deal to be desired. What has been the response to his Department's initiatives on the design of buses to enable access for the disabled? Will he undertake to ensure that in the massive rebuilding and refurbishment that is under way on London Underground, access for the disabled is kept as a top priority?

Mr. Atkins: As ever, I have worked closely with the disabled persons transport advisory committee which was set up by my Department in 1985 to advise us on such matters. It has produced guidance for the elderly and disabled on the use of buses in particular. My hon. Friend will be grateful for the knowledge that I am about to impart to him: most of the advice that has been received is about simple, cheap and effective ways to help people, and they are being widely adopted. His point about London Underground is well understood. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is working hard on the matter and we shall do what we can to meet my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Leighton: Will the Minister consider the wretched state of Stratford station in east London? Is he aware that it is a busy junction of British Rail, Central and Docklands light railway lines? The tripod barrier makes it almost impossible for anyone to pass through, whether disabled or not. Then there is almost a half-mile walk to the platform. The waiting-rooms have not been decorated since the second world war and the lavatories do not work. Such conditions would not be tolerated in a station in the west end of London, so why should the people of east London tolerate them?

Mr. Atkins: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman knows the stations in his constituency better than I do. I understand that Stratford is due for redevelopment shortly.

Mr. Leighton: The plans have been cancelled.

Mr. Atkins: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is wrong. Stratford station is due for redevelopment and access for the disabled will be taken into account when that redevelopment takes place.

Mr. Hannam: Is my hon. Friend aware that most buses and minibuses are still largely inaccessible to severely disabled people? Can he give the House an idea of the progress being made in bringing new designs into use?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend speaks with considerable authority on matters relating to the disabled. He is a member of my advisory committee, and who better. I confirm that I am working extremely hard, with all the Ministers in my Department, to ensure that access for the disabled is a high priority.

Integrated Transport Policy

10. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to present an integrated transport policy to Parliament before 1992.

Mr. Cecil Parkinson: We are pursuing a balanced policy, with record levels of investment over the next three years, to improve all aspects of the transport system.

Sir David Steel: That sounds absolutely marvellous. Is not the difficulty that the outgoing chairman of British Rail has given a clear warning to the Government about the levels of investment in both line and rolling stock required for 1992? Is he aware that road users want more traffic taken off the roads and put on the railways and that airport congestion could be eased if there were an improved railway system and fewer short-haul flights? That is why an integrated transport system is needed.

Mr. Parkinson: The only countries in Europe with a fully integrated transport system that we have located are East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia. Their electors do not seem terribly impressed with their integrated transport systems or with the people who tried to develop them.

M1, West Yorkshire

11. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the M1-M62 link road in west Yorkshire to be started; what it is projected to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Civil engineering consultants have recently been appointed to investigate possible route alignments for this new link road. Subject to the completion of statutory procedures, construction work could start in the late 1990s.

The initial estimated cost is £54 million.

Mr. Riddick: My hon. Friend's statement will be widely welcomed by local Members of Parliament and councillors of all political parties who lobbied his predecessor in favour of the scheme last year. Instead of building a dual carriageway to alleviate traffic congestion in west Yorkshire, may I suggest a motorway? May we have an assurance that environmental considerations will be taken fully into account when planning the scheme and that every opportunity will be provided for local residents who will be affected to have their say?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has pressed his case strongly with my predecessor and since. I am grateful, as I am sure his constituents are, for his skill in doing so. He will know, as everyone on this side of the House does, that we are highly committed to environment matters in relation to building new roads. For example, we plant more trees than any other organisation except the Forestry Commission.

M25

13. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about future improvements to the M25.

Mr. Atkins: We propose to widen the M25 to dual four lanes. We shall also issue soon an action plan for the motorway following up the recent consultants' review which will propose a range of further improvements.

Mr. Marshall: Although I congratulate my hon. Friend on his proposals to improve the M25, which is Britain's longest traffic jam, may I suggest that by the 21st century they will be inadequate? Will he consider building a son of the M25, an outer M25, to relieve the congestion on that motorway?

Mr. Atkins: I am sure that my hon. Friend did not mean to suggest that somehow the M25 was bad news. It is extremely good news. It is, by definition, a victim of its own success. Many people in villages on either side of it who suffered from congestion and environmental disadvantage before it was constructed are considerably better off. My hon. Friend's points about the improvement of the M25 are well taken, but he will understand that if it passed through his constituency, he might take a different view.

THE ARTS

Arts Funding (West Midlands)

76. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to meet the director of West Midlands Arts to discuss what effect the uniform business rate may have on arts funding in the west midlands.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Luce): I have no plans to do so. The Arts Council is looking into the effects of the change on a sample of its clients among arts bodies nationwide and I am asking it to keep me informed.

Mrs. Golding: Is the Minister aware that many people are worried about the impact of the poll tax on the many arts buildings that do not have charitable status? Is he further aware that the main public library in my constituency faces a rate increase of 24 per cent. and that the main headquarters library in Stafford faces an increase of 55 per cent? Does he see that as a poll tax on reading?

Mr. Luce: The question is about the uniform business rate. The hon. Lady will realise that under the new law and rules an arts organisation that is a charitable body will receive up to 80 per cent. mandatory relief and that it is within the discretion of the local authority to give relief on the remaining 20 per cent. If an arts organisation is not a charitable body, it is subject to the normal law, as are all other businesses in the area. Obviously, it is impossible to have a clear picture of how the rate will affect different arts organisations in the area.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the uniform business rate will have a bad effect on many craftsmen in the west midlands and elsewhere, and that many craftsmen's shops and artists' studios are being significantly uprated? Will he promise to discuss this matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge the importance of the growing number of craftsmen in this country. A considerable number are classified as business people and to that extent will be subject to the new rules and regulations. I will discuss this issue with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Evironment, but if they are classified as businesses they should not be treated as exceptions.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister should not be so complacent. He should examine the position in the west midlands and elsewhere. It is not good enough to come to the Dispatch Box and say that he is not sure how the uniform business rate will affect the arts. He should find out. That is his job and he should do it.

Mr. Luce: The Department of the Environment estimates that, after the introduction of the uniform business rates, small businesses and businesses as a whole in the west midlands will pay less rate. Of course, it is impossible to be precise. Some arts organisations that are businesses will find that the amount they have to pay has declined, whereas others will find that their charge has increased. The important point about which we have to be absolutely clear is that organisations that are classified as charitable bodies will be in no worse a position. Indeed, with local authorities having full authority to give complete relief, they should be in a better position.

Public Lending Right

77. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what he intends to provide for public lending right in the next financial year; and to how many authors this applies.

Mr. Luce: Funding for the public lending right in 1990-91 is £3·5 million. The registrar forecasts that approximately 15,500 authors will receive payment in February 1991.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that our authors deserve generous support, and does he have any plans to increase support in the near future?

Mr. Luce: It is very important that we continue to support authors through the public lending right for their contribution, through the library system, to public reading. In 1988-89 I was able to increase the budget by 27 per cent; in 1991-92 I should be able to increase it by 29 per cent; and in the following year, under the three-year funding rule, I shall be injecting an extra £250,000. The fund remains very strong and is making a contribution to authors whose work is of much value to the public.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that this kind of money goes to people whose faces fit? There is something that I should like him to consider seriously. Many of the people who were made redundant from the mining industry in Nottinghamshire have become writers. Those people need some encouragement, so the Minister should get off his backside and put some money in their direction. He should stop looking after Front-Bench Members who are writing books.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman's performance gets more dramatic every time he speaks. Last time I recommended him for a drama award; I think that this time I shall recommend him for a book award.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister promised me a drama award last time, but I have not yet received it.

Mr. Luce: A neutral panel is considering the matter.

It is impossible to be precise about the varying effects. Some will gain, whereas others will lose, but it is absolutely clear that those with charitable status will not lose.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one author who will benefit from this measure is Mr. Salman Rushdie? Is it not time for everyone in this country and elsewhere to accept the ancient saying:

"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that matter. I join my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in condemning most strongly the threat to Mr. Rushdie, which has been renewed recently. I endorse every word that my hon. Friend has said. One of the cardinal principles of our democracy is freedom of expression. It is a principle which we must uphold to the last.

Local Government Act

78. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what guidelines exist for arts funding bodies that seek advice on section 28 of the Local Government Act.

Mr. Luce: In July 1988, the Arts Council, in conjunction with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has had his question. He need not discuss the matter across the Chamber.

Mr. Luce: In July 1988, the Arts Council, in conjunction with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, issued guidance on section 28 to arts organisations and other voluntary bodies. At the same time, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment issued guidance to local authorities.

Mr. Hughes: Is it possible for one company to act within the law by being funded by local authorities to perform a play with a homosexual theme, and at the same time act against the law in the sense that the local education authority decides that the play is unsuitable for showing in its schools? If not, can the Minister have a word with his colleagues in Tory-run Kent county council, who, when offered the chance to host Britten's "Death in Venice", played by the publicly funded Glyndebourne touring company, decided that it was unsuitable for showing in the Kent and Sussex schools festival—possibly because it breached section 28? Other Tory authorities do the same. Surely the principle needs to be established, and everybody should be allowed the most liberal interpretation of it.

Mr. Luce: The only basis upon which section 28 can be flouted is if a local authority sets out an intention to promote homosexuality. I have no evidence that Kent county council in any way demonstrated that intention and there is no evidence to suggest that it was flouting that law.

Arts Funding (East Midlands)

79. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he has to increase funding for the arts in the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: The funding of arts organisations is a matter for the Arts Council. In 1990-91 its grant to East Midlands Arts will increase by 10 per cent. and, taken with its direct spending in the region, amounts to a total of nearly £5 million.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware that last week the board of directors of the Haymarket theatre announced losses of £500,000 in the past year? Is he also aware that the board will be meeting tonight and that it will make 13 employees of the theatre redundant? Will the Minister arrange for his officials to speak to the directors of the theatre to see whether the Government can provide funding to enable those jobs to be saved?

Mr. Luce: I am aware of the important role of the Haymarket theatre in Leicester and the surrounding area, and in 1988 I had the pleasure of visiting the theatre. It has a high reputation, but I realise that it has acquired a deficit of some size. It is up to every management to cut its coat according to the cloth available. I understand that the Arts Council has increased its financing for that theatre next year by 7 per cent. and, of course, funding comes from local authorities and other areas. Once the management has cut its coat accordingly I hope that it will be possible for it to ensure that the theatre moves forward to produce its normal high-quality work.

CIVIL SERVICE

Women Civil Servants

93. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many women are employed in the Civil Service as a whole; and what proportion this is of the total so employed.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): There are 265,000 women in the Civil Service. That constitutes 45 per cent. of all staff.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and I believe in the innate superiority of women? Do not the figures given by my right hon. Friend show that no rebuke should be delivered to the Minister for the Civil Service? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that those figures could equally well have been achieved without the equal opportunities legislation?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is right to pay tribute to the ability of women in the Civil Service as much as anywhere else. Given the total size of the Civil Service, it is right and good that nearly half our civil servants are women. However, at the senior levels—in the top grades—only 6 per cent. are women. But an increasing number of women are coming in under the high fliers scheme—just under 50 per cent. are now recruited from that scheme. I am sure that in the 1990s, with full equality of opportunity—I believe that that is what my hon. Friend is stressing as so important—more women will come to the top.

Nottinghamshire

94. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what recent representations he has received from Nottinghamshire regarding matters within his responsibilities.

Mr. Luce: I am not aware of any such representations.

Mr. Allen: I thank the Minister and his colleagues for their intervention in the relocation of the Inland Revenue to Nottingham. Will the Minister commend the efforts of the county council in securing that relocation, particularly the chairman of its finance committee, Councillor Paddy Tipping? Will the right hon. Gentleman keep an eye on liaison and co-ordination between Government Departments and public bodies during relocations so that the difficulties that arose in this instance between British Rail, the Inland Revenue and landholdings do not recur?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks and glad that a sizeable number of civil servants are moving to the Nottingham area—including not just the Inland Revenue, with more than 2,000, but the Driving Standards Agency headquarters which is to open in, I think, April with about 100 staff. I note what the hon. Gentleman says and I am glad that the pace of relocation from the south-east to other areas is quickening, and that larger numbers of civil servants are moving to other areas.

Senior Professionals (Secondment)

95. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further steps he is taking to encourage the secondment into the Civil Service of industrialists and other senior professionals.

Mr. Luce: More exchanges have taken place in recent years and the Government are determined to continue the upward trend.

Mr. Field: Why, of the 12 competitions held for the agencies set up by the Government, has only one outsider been appointed, Mr. David Beeton, to the Royal Historic Palaces Agency? There are also two directors-designate who will come from outside the Civil Service. Conversely, how many of the First Division Association have been seconded to industry?

Mr. Luce: I cannot give a precise answer on the latter point. In the past 10 years the number of exchanges between the Civil Service and the private sector and commerce has almost doubled. In addition, there have been 500 exchanges between the Government and the non-commercial sector, including local government. We want to encourage that. The Government's policy is to encourage open competitions for the appointment of chief executives of agencies. We want to select people on their merit and get the best possible people to serve in those posts. There have been a number of open competitions but, as my hon. Friend said, only one non-civil servant been selected for the job. That does not mean that others may not be selected in the future.

Trade Unions

96. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

97. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met trade union representatives from the Civil Service; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met members of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants on 29 January to discuss physical security of Government establishments.

Mr. Fisher: When the Minister next meets union representatives, will he give them a guarantee that those agencies which there is no immediate intention to privatise will remain in place for a minimum of five years to provide both stability and prospects for those working in them?

Mr. Luce: Although I do not know whether it is right or wrong to set a time scale—I shall reflect on that point—the Government's policy is clear. Our first priority is to assess whether a service of Government is better suited to privatisation. If the Government decide that that is not so, the next option is to consider whether it should be an agency. It must be assumed that, in most circumstances, it will remain an agency for the foreseeable future. However, that does not preclude privatisation in the longer term.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Minister aware of the huge uncertainty and concern of people who are notified that their jobs are to disappear in Southend and be transferred to Liverpool or who are told that their services are being privatised? Does the Minister agree that it would be helpful and in the interests of good industrial relations if everyone so affected was issued with a sheet of paper explaining what will happen to their pension rights and security of employment and what employment rights they have? Should not the Government set an example to private employers to tell employees about their rights and obligations if their jobs are affected because of Government policy?

Mr. Luce: I am very much aware that a considerable number of officials—particularly in Customs and Excise—work in my hon. Friend's constituency. I will convey to my noble Friend the Paymaster-General, who is in charge of relocation policies some of my hon. Friend's views. I shall reflect carefully on his points. Several movements are taking place in Customs and Excise. Some headquarters are being moved out of London to Southend, and a greater number of staff are moving to areas outside the south-east. As my hon. Friend knows, that is part of the Government's policy to encourage relocation wherever possible.

Dr. Marek: When the Minister reflects on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) will he also reflect on the advisability of giving a guarantee to all civil servants who find themselves in agencies that are liable to be privatised that they will be retained in the Civil Service by being transferred to another part of it?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman always misunderstands what the agency system is about. If the Government decide to establish an agency rather than privatise an organisation, the officials in that agency remain part of the Civil Service. There is no question of a change in their status. The hon. Gentleman's question is misleading; I am glad to have this chance to reaffirm the position.

Mr. Bowis: When my right hon. Friend last heard from the Civil Service unions, were they able to congratulate

him on the first high promotion of a female part-time civil servant, and, secondly, on the introduction of two days' paternity leave for civil servants whose wives have babies?

Mr. Luce: I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that the number of women part-timers in the Civil Service has risen to 12 per cent. of the complement. The fact that we have much more flexible employment policies and encourage part-timers is attracting more able women to serve. Over the past few years I have been surrounded by very able female advisers, many of whom have been part-timers.

99. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what recent meetings he has had with Civil Service trade unions; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. Skinner: As the Minister has been discussing the privatisation of parts of the Civil Service, would it not be a good idea if the Government, for the first time, allowed the Civil Service unions to hold a ballot on whether their members want to take part in a privatisation scheme?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman must agree that the most important factor is how whatever service we are considering can be most effectively managed for the country. If the Government take the view that it can be more effectively managed through privatisation, that is one road. If the hon. Gentleman wants a better use of our resources—it is taxpayers' money—he will accept that the other route to more effective management is to create agencies. Both routes are based on the criteria of good value for money and the best use of resources.

South Africa

3.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy towards South Africa following the release of Nelson Mandella.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): We warmly welcome the release of Nelson Mandela. He symbolises the aspirations of millions of South Africans for a non-racial democratic South Africa.

Since Mr. de Klerk became president, he has transformed the policy of the South African Government. He has initiated a series of steps including the commitment to abolish much of the remains of so-called petty apartheid, the unbanning of political organisations and now the release of Nelson Mandela. All these steps have been demanded time and again by the British Government, by the international community and by the House. Taken together, they create a completely new climate in South Africa—a climate in which dialogue can begin about the massive task of dismantling apartheid peacefully. This new climate presents a decisive challenge to those, black and white, who wish to maintain the old orthodoxies of confrontation.

We urge the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress, the Inkatha movement, the various white parties and all other political organisations in South Africa to rise to this challenge, end violence, and enter negotiations.

It is vital to send a signal to the white community that President de Klerk's steps will find a response from the international community. That is why the British Government believe that it makes sense to stop discouraging investment and tourism in South Africa.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, having consistently called for the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela for many years, we in the Labour party express our profound satisfaction that he is no longer in prison? We emphasise that he should never have been in prison in the first place. We welcome his release and other recent steps taken by President de Klerk. We trust that successful negotiations will soon begin to bring about a South Africa with a vote for every man and woman on a common roll.

Is the right hon Gentleman aware that although Mr. Mandela is no longer in prison, he is not a free man? He cannot live where he chooses. He has no vote. For him and for the rest of the non-white majority in South Africa, that country continues to be a prison and it will be until apartheid and the police state are completely dismantled.

Does the Secretary of State recollect the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur last October.? The Prime Minister signed up—to use her phraseology—a statement which affirmed that the:

"justification for sanctions against South Africa"

was

"to abolish apartheid by bringing Pretoria to the negotiating table and keeping it there until that change was irreversibly secured".

As that objective to which the Prime Minister put her signature has clearly not been achieved, how can she call for relaxation in sanctions—particularly the ban on direct investment, to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred?

Is not the right hon. Gentleman aware that the ban has been responsible for one third of the 100 billion rand of losses to the South African economy caused by sanctions over the past four years? It is by far the most effective sanction. Is not that precisely why the Prime Minister wants to end that sanction?

Mr. Mandela has called for sanctions to be maintained. Should we trust the British Prime Minister, whose every action has been to prop up apartheid, or should we pay heed to Mr. Mandela, who has given more than 27 years of his life fighting the injustice of apartheid?

The world has made its choice, and that is why the Prime Minister is isolated in the United Nations, isolated in the Commonwealth and isolated in the European Community. It is no thanks to her, but with all thanks and praise to Mr. Mandela and the millions of other Africans fighting for justice, that apartheid is doomed and will be destroyed.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is characteristic of the right hon. Member not to say a word of recognition about the courage shown in the steps that Mr. de Klerk has taken.

The sanctions that were introduced in 1986—and some of them will continue—by the European Community were aimed explicitly at bringing about a national dialogue. Mr. Mandela has said that he believes that national dialogue is liable to begin within days. If we do not recognise the courage behind the steps that have been taken—and that I hope will be taken, in response, by the other side—we would not be doing the right thing. The House is owed an explanation by the right hon. Member, on behalf of his party, whether its policy is to step up mandatory sanctions. If that remains its policy, Opposition Members are, as usual, completely out of touch.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a lot of support from Conservative Members for what he has said, and especially for his welcome for the release of Mr. Mandela?

If we hope for the survival of Mr. Gorbachev should not we equally hope for the survival of Mr. de Klerk, as long as white majority rule continues?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition appear to be too obtuse to understand that there is a serious danger of a Right-wing backlash from some elements of the white population—possibly among the Afrikaners or even among the security forces, which could be accentuated if there is no recognition given by the outside world to the dramatic and imaginative steps that President de Klerk has announced?

Mr. Waldegrave: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend, and I find it depressing that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has used his eloquence to try to get a dialogue going in the Arab-Israel conflict, and has expressed enthusiasm for and welcomed the Soviet Union into the community of nations, but he is so blinkered that he cannot see the window of opportunity here, and the possibility for real progress in South Africa. To let that slip by sticking in the old tired positions would be a terrible waste of opportunity.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Minister accept that yesterday some of us were

[Sir David Steel]

simply appalled when we found that the first words that the Prime Minister could bring herself to utter on the momentous release of Nelson Mandela were about increasing British investment in South Africa? Will he try to get her to understand that the best way to secure British investment in South Africa is to pay more attention in future to the views of the ANC and other movements that are pressing for the future of democracy in that country? While President de Klerk is, of course, to be congratulated on the brave steps that he has taken, does the Minister accept that South Africa cannot be treated as a normal state until the legal entrenchment of apartheid is lifted?

Mr. Waldegrave: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong on one point. The Prime Minister's first words were an expression of delight; which, I am sure, is shared by all hon. Members; at Mr. Mandela's release. The right hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that South Africa is at the beginning of a long process. We say that surely we must recognise—as we are trying to do in relation to the Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organisation—that those who wish to sit down and negotiate need our support. If we do not provide any response at all the right hon. Gentleman will surely blame us when the white backlash sweeps de Klerk away.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): While recognising that risk and the reality of what my right hon. Friend says, may I ask him whether he should not differentiate between the relaxation of some sanctions now unilaterally by Britain and the encouragement worldwide of doing away with sanctions overall? The Government have made subtle and positive contributions to bringing about what has happened in South Africa. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will continue their subtle handling of this matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. Those who are opposed to dialogue in South Africa know very well the position of the British Government. That is why white extremists have been shooting at the British embassy in Pretoria. As my hon. Friend says, our approach remains careful and, I hope, subtle. We want to see de Klerk's position strengthened because, as Mr. Mandela has said in the most eloquent language, de Klerk stands honourably for dialogue.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On this momentous occasion of historic importance, which has brought great joy to millions of people throughout the world, will the Minister reflect on what has been happening over the weekend in relation to Government policy? Does he recognise the great hand of reconciliation that has been offered by Nelson Mandela? Does he recognise that the pillars of apartheid remain in place and that Nelson Mandela has said that until those pillars are substantially removed and there are substantial negotiations, sanctions must stay? Instead of always talking about offering carrots to President de Klerk, what about offering a little comfort and support to the people of South Africa instead of the contemptible, craven attitude that we get from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Waldegrave: All the people of South Africa, black and white, need our support and hands from both sides have been reaching out for reconciliation. The steps that we have taken are to support that process and I am sure that we are right so to do.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Mr. Mandela's support for the continued armed struggle is a chilling reminder that, regrettably, violence is still a part of African National Congress policy? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lifting of sanctions will ensure the prosperity of the black South African and that it is only under such conditions that the world can reasonably hope for peaceful reform and meaningful change?

Mr. Waldegrave: At his press conference this morning, Mr. Mandela spoke about the need for peace and said that he foresaw dialogue soon. We should surely concentrate on what he is saying and on such elements of the present situation. We should be seeking to support that hope of reconciliation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) was one of the most notorious apologists for the South African regime.

Will the Minister explain why the Prime Minister has simply refused to recognise that the pressure of the international community and the liberation movement in South Africa brought about the release of Nelson Mandela and the removal of the ban on the ANC? Will he make the strongest possible representations to the South African Government on how their security forces are completely out of control? Many of its members, perhaps the large majority, are clearly sympathetic to the forces of the ultra-Right and the Nazi terror groups that want to assassinate Mr. Mandela and refuse to recognise the advances that must be made in that country.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is well known as a spokesman for consensus and moderation. He is right that the Government have found it necessary—with, I am sure, the support of the House—to make protests again and again about the behaviour of the South African security forces. The hon. Gentleman was not fair in his remarks about yesterday's events. Mr. Dullah Omar, one of the pricnipal organisers for the Mass Democratic Movement at the large march and demonstration yesterday, did not blame the police for the violence that occurred. He said that he was not satisfied with the security arrangements made by the organisers.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the South African Government could not have run the risk of releasing Mr. Mandela—his release is welcome—if President Gorbachev had not withdrawn his support for militant revolutionary forces in central and southern Africa? Will he congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the contribution that she and former President Reagan made by standing up to the imperialist advance in Africa which has been halted? Thanks to its being halted, the chances of fruitful dialogue have increased.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend is right. The completely transformed relationship between East and West and this country, the United States and the Soviet

Union has contributed—many other things have also contributed—to the change in atmosphere. We are well aware that the advice of the Soviet Union to the ANC, the South-West Africa People's Organisation and other organisations in southern Africa has been to seek dialogue and peace.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Will the Minister reconsider his remarks about the white backlash sweeping away President de Klerk? Should not he be more positive in his approach to the liberal whites and the black majority in South Africa? Were not his earlier remarks very unfortunate?

Mr. Waldegrave: If I spoke with urgency, I meant it. The person who is under most immediate pressure from his constituency is President de Klerk, which is why it is right that we should signal to him that there are benefits for his constituency in going down the road to peace and dialogue.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend encourage, in every international forum that he attends, a full and generous response from the international community to the fundamental changes that have taken place in South Africa, and which need to take place in the future? Does he agree that the hopes and aspirations of the black community in South Africa will be best served by peaceful and steady reform and not by a headlong rush into what may be a very dangerous period?

Mr. Waldegrave: The challenge facing all sides is to transfer the most powerful economy in Africa to its rightful owners—all the people of South Africa—under a proper constitution and without revolutionary chaos in the process. I agree with what my hon. Friend said about that. The steps that have been taken by Mr. de Klerk, which have transformed the situation away from the simple certainties of the past few years and to which we are already seeing a response from Mr. Mandela, deserve our wholehearted support.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the Minister aware that it will have been noted that he went out of his way to praise the courage of President de Klerk but said nothing about the courage of the tens of thousands of people who struggled for a generation to bring about yesterday's historical event? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Prime Minister is widely regarded in this country and abroad as a fifth columnist for apartheid? In her headlong rush to drop sanctions before there has been a word from de Klerk about bringing down the fundamentals of apartheid and about one person, one vote, is not she—like collaborators and fifth columnists throughout time—exposed as redundant, marginal and out of step?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not agree with the extravagance of the hon. Lady's language. The importance of the events in South Africa should not be underestimated. It is easy to imagine this opportunity being lost because we do not rise to the scale of the events but stick to the old rhetoric—that is the danger which faces us. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is as determined as any of us in the House to see the destruction of apartheid. We need, therefore, to get negotiations under way quickly, and that is what Mr. de Klerk is doing. Hon. Members have paid tribute many times to those who have suffered and who continue to suffer under apartheid. It is worth thinking of those people in South Africa who are not alive today and who could have contributed to this process of peace. If Mr. Steve Biko were alive today, he would contribute to the process of reconciliation and negotiation.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I welcome the call by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary for a measured response to this historic event. That response should be co-ordinated to the maximum extent with our European Community partners, the Commonwealth and, in particular, the United States, which has taken a strong line on sanctions. Does my right hon. Friend agree that sanctions were imposed not for the release of one distinguished and courageous leader from prison but to help bring down a system that was seen as unjust by the international community?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right—the objective of the House and of the world is the destruction of apartheid. It is vital to get negotiations going. In 1986, the Council of Ministers reaffirmed

"the urgent need for a genuine national dialogue"

in South Africa and proposed various sanctions to bring that about. We believe, as Mr. Mandela clearly believes, that that national dialogue is about to begin.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a day for private Members' motions and that an important statement is to follow this private notice question. I shall call two more Members from each side, and then I am afraid that we must move on.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Minister of State referred a number of times to giving "signals" to the present regime in South Africa. Is not the concern throughout the House, including that of the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), about the fact that the Government are contributing to confusing signals? As the right hon. Gentleman is a strong advocate of a common foreign policy in the European Community, will he assure us that the British Government will not take a position with the Council of Ministers whereby it seeks to withdraw any sanctions at this stage? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is no parallel between the democratic movement in central and eastern Europe and the changes in South Africa? The South African regime is based on institutional racism. That is qualitatively different from any other lack of democracy worldwide.

Mr. Waldegrave: The lack of democracy in Stalinist Russia was built on institutionalised persecution of the population by a so-called vanguard. The institutional racism of South Africa is an equal or greater evil. Both are evils, and we should welcome the destruction of both.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the European Community. We will discuss these matters with our partners, but we do not believe that it would be right at this moment to send no signal to the South African Government.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I give the warmest possible endorsement to my right hon. Friend's analysis and the sentiments that he expressed. Does he agree that the three greatest dangers now are the extremism of the extreme Right, the extremism of the extreme Left and the

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

extremism of the extremely stupid? In the light of the analysis of sub-Saharan Africa in the recent report of the World Bank, would not it be extremely stupid to go along the lines suggested by Mr. Mandela and strengthen sanctions when, as my right hon. Friend said, the South African economy is the powerhouse of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa? That is what we must now recognise and support.

Mr. Waldegrave: I find my hon. Friend's analysis rather attractive. The present circumstances have their parallels: the extremists on both sides sometimes end up in the same position. I have never been able to understand why it should be thought that damaging the economy of South Africa further would bring about any progress at such a juncture.

My hon. Friend asked about Mr. Mandela and sanctions. Mr. Mandela has made it perfectly clear that he is a loyal member of the ANC, and the view that he has expressed is ANC policy. No one imagined that he would change ANC policy overnight, and there was no surprise whatever when he took the stance that he took.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the Prime Minister's view—reflected in his answer—is open to a wholly different interpretation: that apartheid is a system of economic exploitation, made possible by the denial of political rights, and that the profits from it accrue to foreign investors, many of whom live in this country? The Government's opposition to sanctions has been motivated more by a wish to preserve the economic interests of their business friends than by any interest in the Africans themselves.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not for the first time, the right hon. Gentleman has the wrong conspiracy theory. If he wants to examine the way in which economic pressures are affecting the position, he should recognise that it is perfectly clear that those who want dialogue and fundamental change in South Africa are now to be found among South Africa's business community. They know that without the use of all the country's resources—including both blacks and whites—the economy will begin to be damaged, and they are a force for progress.

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): Let me follow up what my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir Ian Lloyd) said about the World Bank report. There is only one democratic country in the whole of Africa, and that is Botswana. We can see Namibia becoming independent next month, and we have high hopes of freedom in South Africa. Will the British Government then press for the abolition of the one-party state in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania?

Mr. Waldegrave: The World Bank report makes depressing reading. The great prize in southern Africa is a peaceful transition of Africa's most powerful economy to its proper ownership—ownership by all South Africa's people. We believe that Mr. Mandela wants that, and that Mr. de Klerk is entering on the great task. We welcome what Mr. de Klerk has done, and for that reason we support him.

Electricity Privatisation

3.57 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about electricity privatisation, the publication of the draft regulatory licences for the industry and the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Good progress continues to be made in preparing the electricity supply industry for vesting on 31 March. The House will be aware that the second commencement order under the Electricity Act 1989 was made at the end of January. Today I am taking another important step towards completing the restructuring of the industry.

I have today made available to the House copies of revised drafts of the licences to be issued to the successors of the Central Electricity Generating Board and area electricity boards, which were initially published on 10 January 1989. The revised drafts take account of the commitments made during the passage of the Electricity Act, and of consultations since the original drafts were published. Other licensees will receive licences based on those drafts, but tailored to their particular requirements. Regulations are being laid today setting out how to apply for a licence and the details of the application procedure. The exemption order identifying those who will not require a licence is also being tabled today.

The principal changes in the draft licences published today are in the conditions dealing with price control, security of supply and the transition to a competitive market. The revised conditions are explained in detail in the explanatory notes that accompany the licences.

The average price for all customers supplied by the public electricity supply companies will be controlled by an RPI − X + Y formula, where Y represents the actual costs to the companies of purchasing the electricity supplied. Customers taking more than 1 MW will benefit from the competition in supply that will be introduced by privatisation. I expect many of them to enjoy price reductions. It may take some time for customers to gain experience of the market and negotiate terms. I have therefore sought an undertaking from the industry that it will use its best endeavours to offer a one-year real price freeze to customers taking more than 1 MW.

Customers taking less than 1MW will benefit from an addition to the price control. Although the industry has yet to propose a final figure, I see no reason why the average price to these customers should rise by much more than the current rate of inflation this year. The price control should prevent any further real increases before the end of March 1993. Indeed, the public electricity supply companies could well be able to offer some real price reductions to these customers in this period.

I believe that the combination of these controls will be more effective than the yardstick price control proposed in the original draft licences. Altogether I do not expect the average price for all customers to rise in real terms this year.

All these expectations on prices allow for the effect of the fossil fuel levy, which I intend to set for 1990-91 at a rate of 10·6 per cent. on the value of final sales. I expect the rate of levy to decline significantly over the next eight years. I shall shortly be laying regulations under which the levy will be established and collected.

I also intend to lay at the same time an order setting the initial non-fossil fuel obligation for the public electricity supply companies. The intention of the obligation is not only to ensure that existing and committed nuclear plant in England and Wales is contracted for; it is also to encourage the development of commercial renewable energy sources. Around 300 projects have been put forward to the area boards in response to that policy. The Government have been extremely encouraged by this response and wish to ensure a full contribution from renewables to the NFFO. Given the size of the response, it has not been possible to assess all those projects fully by the time the initial order needs to be made.

Accordingly, the initial order will cover only nuclear capacity. I intend to allow a further two months for the area boards to complete their negotiations with renewable operators and I shall then lay a second order relating specifically to renewables. That will ensure that renewables projects can be assessed fairly and a proper contribution obtained.

The initial order will, therefore, amount to some 8,000 MW or so in total for the period 1990-91 to 1997-98. As I told the House on 9 November, the Government will review the prospects for nuclear power in 1994. Decisions about the level of the obligation beyond 1998 will be taken then.

Returning to the licences, the conditions on security of supply have been amended to ensure that all suppliers meet the current standards of security, except where their customers choose otherwise. Suppliers may meet that condition by becoming members of the new electricity trading pool that is being established since the price of electricity in the pool will include a capacity charge that reflects the value of secure supplies to customers. Suppliers will have economic incentives to ensure that sufficient generating plant is available. I believe that that approach will provide secure supplies more effectively than central planning by a monopoly supplier.

As for competition in supply, the licences now incorporate provisions to implement the decisions announced on 29 September 1989. Those provide for an orderly and stable transition to a fully competitive market by allowing other suppliers to compete with the area supply companies for customers taking more than 1 MW at the outset, for customers taking more than 100 kW after four years, and for all customers after eight years.

The licences, therefore, contain corresponding transitional constraints on the premises that such competitors can supply. If they apply for licences to supply customers falling within those restrictions, I will look to the Director General of Electricity Supply to advise me on whether such licences should be issued.

Although I shall be disposed to act in accordance with the restrictions announced on 29 September, I accept that I will need to exercise discretion to deal with particular circumstances that already exist or may arise. Such cases will be considered on their merits. The licences also contain transitional limits on the extent to which National Power and PowerGen can engage in direct sales to enable competition in supply and new supply arrangements to develop.

The arrangements that I have set out today mark the successful achievement of another stage in this privatisation. When the new companies are vested on 31 March, this country will have the most competitive electricity supply industry in the world. I know that those in the industry are keen to be privatised to respond to the new challenges and to rid themselves of the dead hand of the public sector. I am sure also that the public will welcome the benefits of competition and will seize the opportunities to invest in the new companies.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. I realise that my first point is not a matter for him, but will he confirm for the benefit of my Scottish colleagues that a statement on what is to happen to the electricity industry in Scotland will be made in the House?

The Secretary of State told us about his amazing RPI − X + Y formula, but there must be a more important definition of Y. Everyone in the country will want to know why it is necessary for there to be any electricity price increases. Will he confirm that price increases are quite unnecessary and are needed only to fatten up the industry for privatisation? Is it not the case that, over the past three years, coal prices have gone down by 6 per cent., electricity prices have gone up by 12 per cent., the generating board's profits have gone up by 90 per cent., and the new coal contract envisages further reductions in the price of coal? So why is it necessary to have any price increases for consumers?

The Secretary of State is an accountant and he is usually fairly precise, but his statement was rather vague about price increases to be faced by major industrial consumers in particular, such as the special steels industry, the chemicals industry and paper and board mills. Will he guarantee that he will not handicap those companies by enormous price increases in the run-up to 1992? What will be the increases for domestic consumers in future years?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that a nuclear levy of 10·6 per cent. means that nuclear power costs must now be at least 40 per cent. more than the cost of electricity produced at conventional stations? If that is the case, why does he insist that the most expensive stations on the system provide the base load while the cheapest power stations on the system are not run all the time? Surely that is the reverse of common sense.

I hope that the Secretary of State will forgive my colleagues and me if we do not comment on the licences, because we have had the details only since 3 o'clock and we have not had an opportunity to consider them in detail. However, do the licences place an obligation to supply upon the two main generating companies? If not, how can there be any guarantee of security of supply? Will the licences promote energy conservation by the distribution companies? Will they require the generating companies to install equipment to clean up flue gases, or is there truth in the rumour that the right hon. Gentleman is allowing the generating companies to wriggle out of their obligation to clean up flue gases? In other words, is it true that he is willing to accept them continuing in their present dirty ways, as they have for the past two decades, to make the industry more attractive to private purchasers?

We welcome the news that there are many applications for renewables, but will the Secretary of State reconsider the position and allow combined heat and power to be included in that category, and thus give it the boost that it needs?

Finally, will the Secretary of State confirm that everything in his statement amounts to his putting privatisation first, and that the interests of industrial consumers, the balance of payments, the environment and

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

domestic consumers are all being put second to the requirement that has been placed on him by the Prime Minister, which is get the industry sold off as quickly as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me 10 questions. He is right that his first question—about Scotland—is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and I shall certainly put it to him.

The hon. Member then talked about price increases and about fattening up the industry for privatisation, as he put it. He must make up his mind fairly soon about whether we are fattening up the industry for privatisation or selling it for a song. The fact is that we are doing neither. We intend to privatise the industry at a proper and fair price. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said about price increases, he would have heard me say that I did not expect that on average there would be any price increases in real terms and that prices would stay the same in real terms. I shall not quote the Labour party's record on electricity prices as there are plenty of other questions to answer.

The hon. Gentleman asked me not to be vague about large users of electricity. I certainly shall not be vague and I have said that I expect the industry to offer terms to the large users and to any user over 1MW of consumption and to keep the price increases to the RPI for the current year. Thereafter, they will be in a position to negotiate freely for prices within the market and I know that a number of them are already setting about that task.

The hon. Gentleman's fourth question related to domestic prices. I have said that customers below 1 MW will have the benefits of the overall price control and of regulation. I see no reason why their prices should increase by much more than the rate of inflation this year, although the area boards have not yet made their proposals. The price control formula will ensure that price rises are limited so that there will be no real increase in prices for the next two years. As I have said, they are maximum figures, and the area boards could well do better for many of their customers.

With regard to the fossil fuel levy that I announced, the hon. Gentleman is misleading the House if he states that it is an additional impost on electricity consumers. Consumers pay for the cost of nuclear power in their bills at the moment. The levy simply brings the matter out in the open, as set out in the Electricity Act 1989, and there will be no increase in the price of nuclear power as a result of the change. The levy will still be there, but, at 10·6 per cent., it is less than a lot of people thought, and it will decrease over the next eight years.

On the question of the obligation to supply, or the security of supply, I believe that the present arrangements under the Electricity Act are better than the previous bureaucratic arrangements of the Central Electricity Generating Board. Under the Electricity Act, the area boards are required to offer terms to any customers in their area and that offer will be backed up by the licensing conditions and by stiff financial penalties. Therefore, they will have a clear legal obligation to contract for sufficient supplies to meet the requirements in their areas.

The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the important matter of energy conservation. He should remember that over the past 10 years there has been a substantial improvement in energy efficiency in Britain. While there has been a 20 per cent. increase in gross domestic product, we have used the same levels of energy. We expect that to continue. It is very much in the consumer's interest to pursue improvements in energy efficiency. Several proposals in my statement will improve energy efficiency further. First—

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): How much longer?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend asked me 10 questions and I have not finished answering them. If he does not like it, he should speak to his hon. Friend about it.

The overwhelmingly important factor in efficiency of energy consumption is to create competition in generation. The area boards will have a responsibility to encourage energy efficiency and will draw up codes of practice.

The Government stand by their commitment to ensure that the European convention on flue gases, to which we are signatories, is met. Proposals will be made to do that in the most effective and efficient way possible. Negotiations on the most effective way will include desulphurisation retrofitting of electricity stations. In some stations, it will not be necesary because of the planned changeover to gas. Negotiations with the industry are being held now. I confirm that the Government are fully committed to the European directive. The industry will be fully committed to any environmental matters that arise out of the Environmental Protection Bill currently going through the House.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked me about renewables and combined heat and power procedures. We did not include CHP power stations in the renewables. We believe that CHP proposals can provide some of the most efficient forms of electricity generation. There will be a great incentive for builders of electricity generating stations to use those principles wherever appropriate. In the initial period, most CHP proposals will come within the proposals for own-generation, which will be free of the fossil fuel levy. Builders of power stations will benefit from that.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong about privatisation. The purpose of privatisation is to provide customers with a better deal by encouraging competition in electricity generation. It can be seen from the date of my statement that that has already begun. At the end of the transitional period all consumers will benefit.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I always endeavour to look after the interests of Back Benchers and give them at least as long as Front-Bench Members. However, I ask hon. Members to put their questions succinctly so that we can get on with the business set down. This is a private Members' day.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Does my right hon. Friend recall that it was not long ago that the Labour party forecast price increases after privatisation in excess of 20 per cent.? Now Labour Members grumble that prices will increase at the level of inflation, something which the Labour Government did not achieve. Will he accept the thanks of consumers for the steps that he has taken to stabilise electricity prices after privatisation? Will he

confirm that as competition brings itself to bear in the electricity supply industry there will be a downward presure on prices in the longer term?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the last five years of the Labour Government, the price of electricity increased by 6 per cent. in real terms for industrial customers and 5 per cent. for domestic consumers. A stabilisation in real terms is a substantial improvement on the record of the Labour party. As competition is seen to work, there will be a downward pressure on all prices.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the Secretary of State deny that for the past 12 months and for some time ahead every quarterly domestic electricity bill will be at least £10 higher as a result of the preparation for privatisation? Will he further deny that the sale price for the industry compared with its asset value will be so low as to make all other privatisations look responsible?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I do not accept that. On average, prices will not increase over the whole range. The electricity industry will be privatised at what will be seen to be a fair and proper price.

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Although I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, which shows that privatisation is well on target to meet the proposed timetable, which is excellent news for domestic electricity customers, does he agree that heavy industrial users have short memories? In the past five years of this Government industrial electricity prices have decreased by 10 per cent., whereas in the last five years of the Labour Government they increased by 6 per cent.

Mr. Wakeham: I have provided a cap for large industrial users in the first year. Afterwards they will be able to negotiate prices in a competitive market. Many expect to benefit from price reductions.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement today is so important and significant for consumers and the electricity industry that it should be the subject not merely of a statement but of scrutiny and debate in the House? In his carefully worded statement he said that he would not expect prices to rise above the rate of inflation. Many consumers will see that as faith, hope and charity because he is not in a position to guarantee that that will happen. Many knowledgeable people in the industry believe that prices will increase substantially. Does the Secretary of State agree that many consumers see as most important, not the question of competition, but the security of supply? We do not want the lights to go out.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman can speculate about prices. I have given the House the information as best I can and the figures I gave are accurate. It is interesting to remember how wide of the mark previous speculation has been, and I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is wide of the mark, too.

I recognise the importance of the security of supply. As I pointed out, the arrangements that we are making now are better than existing arrangements whereby the security of supply or the obligation to supply is a planning decision for the CEGB. Under the new arrangements the area boards must offer terms to the customers in their area. Those terms and the generation for which they have contracted is backed up by licences. It will be a licence condition that the suppliers contract for adequate supplies and there will be severe financial penalties if they get it wrong. That will provide the security of supply that we all want and expect to see at a better, more economic cost than previously.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): While I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for his clear statement, may I refer to the non-fossil fuel obligation? It is important to bear in mind the size of the nuclear industry and not to wait until the review in 1994 when it may be too late. Nuclear power stations must be built and we must have an ongoing research and development programme. Unless that is done, the country could be in great difficulty with its electricity supply.

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate my hon. Friend's long-term concern and interest in the nuclear industry. We have organised the industry with Nuclear Electric and a good level of management to ensure that our substantial nuclear capacity is used to best advantage in the interim period. Meantime, it is right to give a degree of certainty to what will happen in the short term. That is why I said that we shall review the prospects for nuclear power in 1994, but remain committed to a long-term role for competitive nuclear power. Between now and 1994 we shall be giving a considerable amount of thought, and, if necessary, devoting a considerable amount of research, to establishing the best way forward after that.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): As I am sure the Minister accepts, we welcome the identification of the role of renewables, which he has emphasised. Can he tell us more about how renewables projects will be assessed fairly and properly, as he said they would be? He referred to the dead hand of the public sector, but he has had to use that so-called dead hand to maintain the life of the nuclear industry. How does he propose to deal with the older Magnox stations in respect of which decisions may have to be made before 1994? Can he say precisely how he intends to undertake the review in 1994?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know that I can say anything further in reply to the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. However, the first two points that he makes are important. As I have said, about 300 renewables projects have been put forward for consideration. These extend right across the range of all the sorts of renewables that the hon. Gentleman and others will be aware of. They amount, in total, to a capacity of between 1GW and 2GW —a substantial improvement on what we have at the moment. It would be idle to pretend that they are all likely to be developed sufficiently to be included in the obligation. We want to see whether these projects, with the financial assistance of the obligation over the period, appear to have a viable future. If so, we shall give them every encouragement.

With regard to the Magnox stations, the position is quite simple. Subject to the overriding safety considerations of the nuclear inspectorate, the life of some Magnox stations may be extended somewhat. That is what we shall seek to do. It may be that in some cases additional expenditure will be necessary. The first consideration is safety, but if the life of a station can be extended we believe that that would be a good idea.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Now that my right hon. Friend, for very sensible reasons, has arranged a transition period, during which it will be necessary to restrict free competition, can he give us an assurance that he is satisfied that, with regard to investment intentions, new independent producers will have the same incentive during that period? If not, he will not get the benefit of diversity of supply and genuine competition at the end of the transition period.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are very anxious indeed that a sufficiently large number of independent projects should come forward. We know of about 20 that are being considered at the moment. We believe that the publication of the licences, which will give potential investors in independent generation more detail about how to proceed, will bring forward further projects. It is important that potential investors should know that they will be very welcome to become suppliers. So long as they meet the technical requirements, there is no reason why they should not be part of a highly competitive and expanding generating business.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Why does not the Secretary of State recognise that, in the private sector, energy conservation and the development of renewable sources of energy will always come second to the profit motive? Would not it be in our best interests, in terms of energy and environmentally, for this important industry to remain in the public sector?

Mr. Wakeham: I should expect the hon. Gentleman to say something like that, but it does not fit very well with the facts. We have a non-fossil fuel obligation. In particular, we are obliged to encourage renewable sources to play their part during the initial period—while they are being established. I think that that is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. We have set up the machinery, and it appears to be working even better than we thought it would. At some stage the hon. Gentleman will regret what he has just said.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): As the propaganda war about the privatisation of electricity gathers momentum, does my right hon. Friend agree not only that industrial users have benefited greatly from our management of electricity supply, but that domestic consumers, householders, can be grateful? Is it not the case that, over the past five years, they have benefited from an 8 per cent. decrease, in real terms, in their electricity bills, whereas during the last five years of the Labour Government they suffered an increase, in real terms, of 9 per cent.? Whom should the householder trust with the management of electricity—the present Government, or the Opposition, who, when in office, raised prices?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. The privatised electricity supply industry will greatly benefit the consumer.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Secretary of State clarify whether the price increase, which he described as not being a real one, includes the nuclear or fossil-fuel levy, call it what one will? Can he assure the House that the nuclear levy will not increase when the first costs of decommissioning start to come through?

Mr. Wakeham: The indications of the prices that I gave include the fossil fuel levy, which must be paid. The levy will put Nuclear Electric in a cash positive position for the first eight years of its operation and, during that time, fossil fuel will be on a declining path. The company will be able to meet all its obligations during that time, including decommissioning costs.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend recall that during the passage of the Electricity Bill the non-fossil fuel obligation was universally branded by the Opposition as a device for the perpetuation of nuclear power? Does he agree that the range of options for renewables that have now been introduced not represent only a direct contradiction of that belief, but an indication of the extent to which the process of increasing the supply of renewables has been helped by the privatisation process?

Mr. Wakeham: The process of privatisation appears to be working extremely well with regard to renewables and will be beneficial to the environment. In about two months' time I intend to lay the order about renewables, but I should make it clear that it will relate to the initial tranche of renewables. We have reserved an additional 600 MW for further renewable projects after that time. If that allocation does not appear to be enough in the light of experience, we shall give serious consideration to increasing it still further.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Surely the truth of the matter is that when the Government decided to set forth on their privatisation of electricity after the general election the first thing they needed to do was to allow the industry to increase prices massively to fatten up the enterprise. The next thing the Government did was to allow the industry another 8 per cent. in accordance with the RPI and then to announce that they would allow the nuclear section of the industry to be subsidised to the tune of about £10 billion with the decommissioning of the Magnox nuclear reactors. Now the right hon. Gentleman has told us that the next price increase will be based on two variables—minus X plus Y. He has told us what Y is, but he has not told us what X is. My guess is that X represents the electoral factor in the run-up to the next general election.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, as usual, goes wide of the point. I know that the hon. Gentleman watches such things carefully and I advise him to watch some of the statements made by his hon. Friends the Members for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) as to exactly what they would do to the coal industry should they ever have the opportunity. The hon. Gentleman should consider those statements carefully as that would be a more productive use of his time. Y equals input costs, X represents cost savings through efficiency. It is a minus figure.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It is welcome to hear that price increases to the domestic consumer will be contained, at least in the next two years, within the rate of inflation. From the taxpayers' point of view, can my right hon. Friend tell us whether substantial sums will be required to write off assets before privatisation occurs, as they were for the water industry? If not, what will be the position?

Mr. Wakeham: There may be some slight increase in domestic prices this year, but for the next two years after that they will be contained in real terms. For the figures for the privatisation of the company, my hon. Friend will have to wait until we produce the prospectus. We are in the process of producing balance sheets for the companies before privatisation. We shall ensure that the assets are sold at a proper and realistic figure.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I have an obligation to protect private Members' business. I shall call three more Members from each side and then, I regret, we shall have to move on.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I echo the earlier plea for a separate Scottish statement. This is an extremely important matter, and I see that there is a Scottish Office Minister on the Treasury Bench. Will the Secretary of State obtain confirmation from the Scottish Office that such a statement is intended and thus avoid the suggestion that one hand does not know, or is not in tandem with, what the other is doing? Is not the truth of this afternoon's statement that all the tough political decisions are being postponed beyond the latest date of the next election? Why, in the transitional period, has the Secretary of State not found room for incentives for energy efficiency? Will he explain what he meant by this statement, which occurred among a lot of ministerial gobbledegook:

"The licences, therefore, contain corresponding transitional constraints on the premises which such competitors can supply."

May we have that in English?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland the request for a statement on Scotland. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not a matter for me.

With regard to the juicy extract that the hon. Gentleman gave from my statement, I meant that, because there is an eight-year transitional period for the introduction of competition, for the first part of that period, customers with more than 1 MW of consumption will be free of all restraint. At the end of four years, the limit will be reduced to 10 kW. Thereafter, there will be no constraint. During that period, there must be a regulation to stop anybody supplying electricity to those areas that are the exclusive purview of the area boards. The regulations cover that.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): A free market.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman says, "A free market". He should consider how this will benefit the coal industry during that period.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): In response to the remarks of those Opposition Members who wear their environmental credentials on their sleeve, will my right hon. Friend confirm that 34 per cent. of the principal greenhouse gas —carbon dioxide—comes from coal-fired power stations? Will he confirm that there is nothing in his statement to prevent the nuclear workers in my constituency from making their contribution to addressing this environmental problem?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. A substantial amount of the greenhouse gases that are produced from power generation in this country come from fossil-burning power stations. Nuclear power stations have a substantial advantage over that. Nuclear power has one big disadvantage: it is required to pay the cost of disposal of its waste. The disposal of the wastes of the fossil fuel generators is part of the problem that we have to tackle in the near future.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I ask the Secretary of State a slightly hypothetical question: is it not fair to say that, if nuclear power were cheaper, the coal mining industry, and the mining industry generally, would be asking for a nuclear levy to help them in their difficulties?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not normally answer hypothetical questions, but I take the hon. Gentleman's point. We are dealing with the real world in which nuclear power is more expensive than fossil-generated power. It is possible to get the price down to a competitive rate, and I shall do everything that I can to deal with the problems.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): In seeking to achieve the lowest possible prices, especially for industrial consumers facing foreign competition, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is no cross-subsidy between industrial and domestic consumers so that all consumers, large and small, can benefit from the welcome advantages of competition?

Mr. Wakeham: That is an important part of what we are seeking to achieve in the initial years, and further ahead. Cross-subsidisation would negate the purposes of the Act.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the formula RPI-X+Y, what are the determinants of X? Those who use mathematical formulae had better be very precise.

Mr. Wakeham: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a look at the licences; they are precisely all the costs incurred by the area boards other than the costs of electricity, which they have to buy from the generators.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the non-fossil fuel obligation and the eventual right of large industrial producers of electricity —such as the Fawley oil refinery—to sell their excess capacity will make an outstanding contribution to the reduction of global warming and CO_2?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the Minister give an accurate statement of what is to happen to the 12,000MW flue-gas desulphurisation programme? The Government were committed to that programme and to completing it by 1993, but it seems that in their enthusiasm to privatise the electricity industry that commitment has vanished. Does not that show that when there is a choice between helping the rich, which is what privatisation is, and cleaning up the environment, the environment always comes a very poor second under this Government?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is cleverer than he sometimes pretends. He knows perfectly well that there is an EEC directive which requires us to reduce sulphur levels, and that the Government are committed to doing that. They are not, however, committed to doing it in a non-efficient way. We are looking at the best way of

[Mr. Wakeham]

achieving it. Achieve it we will and we shall be seen to achieve it, but we shall not do it in a way that is not the most sensible—even the hon. Gentleman would not advocate that.

Mr. Barron: Is not the non-efficient way, as suggested in the right hon. Gentleman's statement, an expansion of the generation of electricity by nuclear means? As for the misnamed fossil fuel levy announced today, should not the right hon. Gentleman admit that nuclear generation is more than 40 per cent. dearer than fossil fuel generation?

Speaking of the quaintly named interim period, has not the right hon. Gentleman told everybody today that there will be little or no competition in electricity generation for the foreseeable future? Why has he not protected consumers, both industrial and domestic? He must be well aware that British Coal has reduced its prices to the electricity generators in the past three years by £850 million. That could have led to a cut of 4 per cent. in prices over the past three years, but instead they have increased by 15 per cent. in order to fatten the industry for privatisation.

How can the Minister tell industrial and domestic consumers that they must accept an increase of at least the rate of inflation—8 per cent.—when he knows full well that the major expense that the generators will face in the next three years lies with British Coal, which has provided them with a contract that will save them £450 million in that period? Why has he not protected consumers, instead of letting his friends in the City and everyone else get ready to run away with the profits at the consumers' expense?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nuclear position, on which we have stated our policy. We shall review the prospects for nuclear power in 1994. In the meantime, we shall complete Sizewell B and make the most effective and efficient use of existing nuclear capacity. That seems a sensible policy.

As for the protection of the consumer, and of prices, a great chunk of my statement provided an indication of price levels which I believe are a good protection for consumers for the next few years—very much more so than was possible under the last Labour Government.

I know that the hon. Gentleman takes the coal industry very seriously. So do I. That is why we brought the Coal Industry Bill before Parliament—it represents a substantial improvement in British Coal's finances—and why it is necessary to continue. I would be the first to pay tribute to the efforts of the coal industry to improve productivity in recent years, but the hon. Gentleman's proposition that the coal industry's improvements in efficiency could all be passed on to the consumer was not sensible, given that they were largely paid for by the taxpayer in recent years. The great problem facing the coal industry is that it should not rest on its laurels but should continue the improvement, so that at the end of the three-year contract I believe it possible that coal will still be the prime choice of fuel for the British generation industry. The hon. Gentleman should be worried lest competition from oil, gas and imported coal takes a great share of the market and produces more unemployment in the coal industry. None of us wants that.

T. W. Kempton Limited

4.45 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure on Friday of the long-established Leicester knitwear company T. W. Kempton Ltd, which has its headquarters and major plant at Burleys way in my constituency".

The matter is specific because it concerns Kempton, a fine, well-managed and long-established company and one of the largest privately owned knitwear companies in the United Kingdom.

It used to employ 1,200 people, 840 of whom worked in Leicester. The company was put into the hands of receivers on 6 November, and immediately jobs were lost. On Friday last there was an announcement of closure with the immediate loss of a further 300 jobs. That is important in itself, but especially because it reflects a national advancing catastrophe.

Leicester's main industry is knitwear, which last year still employed about 33,000 people in the county, some 22,000 of whom worked in the city of Leicester. Between June 1988 and November 1989 there were 7,500 job losses in the industry, of which 4,000 were in Leicestershire. The knitwear and hosiery industries are heading for catastrophe. The Government are standing with their hands folded, and there should be an urgent debate on the matter.

Among other companies affected by redundancies are renowned names such as Corah, Ingram, Chilprufe, Strettons, Towles, Lesley Dee and Leofabs. Last week it was announced that the Paisley Hyer group, which employs 1,000 people in Leicestershire, had gone into receivership in conditions similar to those in which Kempton did. In Nottingham, the Response group, employing 3,500 people, has gone into the hands of receivers.

The Government have taken no action while this great industry, symbolised by Kempton, struggles to survive. With employers and unions united in their pleas for help, the Government have done no more than produce a research programme which is due to take effect and to become useful in about five years. How many people will still be employed in the industry by then? How many firms like Kempton will collapse before the Government act?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the loss of 300 jobs resulting from the closure of T. W. Kempton Limited of Leicester".

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to announce my decision without giving my reasons to the House. I have listened with care and concern to what the hon. and learned Gentleman said. As he knows, my only decision is to decide whether the application should have precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that, in this case, I do not feel that the

matter that the hon. and learned Member has raised meets the requirements of the Standing Order, and I cannot accept his application to the House.

Inshore Fishing Fleet

4.49 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the threat to the nation's inshore fishing fleet arising from the recent bad weather conditions."

The appalling weather of recent weeks is causing grave damage to the livelihood of the nation's fishermen, in particular to the inshore fleet. The matter needs urgent debate in Parliament. The fishing press, fully supported by information from ports throughout the United Kingdom, is reporting extensive damage to boat-owning interests and the laying-off of a large number of people working in the industry. They call for immediate emergency aid to see them through a difficult period. They are calling for, and need, the kind of aid which has readily been made available to the farming community in the past.

The matter is important, as the position in the north-west of England is causing grave concern. In my constituency the problem is acute. The Maryport fleet of 25 boats, employing between 60 and 80 people, has been tied up for more than eight weeks.

A letter from local fisherman Harold Musgrave, explaining the plight of fishermen, says:

"The situation is now so desperate that we must appeal through you for emergency aid from the Government. If it is not forthcoming, the very important role that we play in providing jobs and support to the economy of our town and West Cumbria as a whole could go to the wall."

He goes on:

"Over the past 10 years, UK fishermen have been ignored. The Government's failure to introduce a comprehensive decommissioning scheme has made matters worse and the Government is now under attack within the EEC where money is available . . . whether at sea or not, fishermen must pay overheads, whatever they be, high interest bank loans, insurance or the hire of equipment."

He says that bills have to be paid:

"We are asking for your full support and that of all fair-minded MPs to gain for us emergency aid now. The position is desperate."

He emphasises the word "now", and I know that the time of the House is precious, but could you spare us time for a debate please, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the threat to the nation's inshore fishing fleet arising from the recent bad weather conditions."

I have listened with concern and I do not underestimate the seriousness of the situation that the hon. Member has outlined, but, as he knows, I have to base my decision on whether the application should have precedence over today's business or business tomorrow. I regret that I have to give him the same answer as I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). I cannot submit his application to the House, but hope that the hon. Member will find other methods of bringing the matter before the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Public Records Act 1958 (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Alfred Morris, supported by Mr. Jack Ashley, Sir Richard Body, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Denis Healey, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Rev. Martin Smyth, Sir David Steel and Mr. Dafydd Wigley, presented a Bill to amend the Public Records Act 1958 to permit the making of a permanent loan or a gift of a public record: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 70.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 9127/89, 10318/87 and 4406/88 on generalised system of preferences (Poland, Hungary and Korea) be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Legal Services

4.53 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I beg to move,

That this House is shocked at the continued public feuding between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service which has developed into a crisis of confidence in two essential parts of the criminal justice system; and notes that the public legal services are in a serious state of collapse, in particular in respect of the legal aid system, the duty solicitors' scheme, the funding crisis of law centres and the failure of the Government to make progress on the issue of family courts.

This is the first time in many years that the House has discussed the crucial issue of legal services. I am grateful to the Attorney-General for his presence in the House today, and I look forward to hearing his important contribution.

This debate is not just about lawyers talking about lawyers. At some time in his life, every citizen comes into contact with the legal services. I declare an interest as a former solicitor, who was employed at the north Leicester advice centre. I no longer practise.

In the time available I want to cover several crucial areas where I assert that the legal system is in crisis, and where I believe that early and urgent Government action is required. I shall begin with the Crown prosecution service.

As the House knows, the Select Committee on Home Affairs is conducting an inquiry into the operation of the Crown prosecution service. Members of the Committee, apart from myself, are at present on a site visit to Manchester. Tomorrow I shall join them in north Wales. Had they been here, I am certain that they would have wished to contribute to the debate.

On 23 January 1989, I asked the Attorney-General whether he agreed that the operation of the Crown prosecution service was approaching a crisis. He did not agree, and he stated in his reply to my request for an inquiry that he felt that it was an unnecessary disruption for an inquiry to take place.

Judging by the evidence given to the Select Committee by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Allan Green, and by representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Federation, there is little doubt in my mind that a serious crisis is besetting the Crown prosecution service. The public feuding between two essential elements of the criminal justice system has been astonishing. I felt that it was important to bring the matter before the House at an early stage, to seek the Attorney-General's views. The only people who could have an interest in the continuation of this quarrel are the criminals themselves, who have watched the proceedings, and watched the police and the DPP acting as sworn enemies rather than partners, as we have watched them.

I pay tribute to the staff of the Crown prosecution service for the work that they do under enormous pressure. I am a friend of the service, and I strongly believe in the need for an independent prosecution service. I pay tribute especially to the CPS in Leicestershire, which I have found to be efficient, fair and independent. All people agree that, from birth, the CPS has suffered from gross under-resourcing and understaffing. There are numerous complaints about the way in which it was established.

I ask the Attorney-General—I gave him notice of this and of several other questions—whether, with hindsight, he accepts the criticism that the service was established too hastily by the Government and without sufficient planning. Does he agree with the statement by Mr. Green to the Select Committee, that "I think the service was brought in too hurriedly."?

The inability of the Crown prosecution service to keep and recruit lawyers is legendary. Since its creation it has been understaffed by 23 per cent., or by 430 posts. In a recent parliamentary reply, the Attorney-General told me that, in the three years since its creation, 334 lawyers have left—304 resigned, seven retired, four were dismissed, 16 were transferred and three died. A total of £619,580 has been spent, until 14 November last year, on an advertising campaign to recruit more staff.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Can the hon. Gentleman give the exact figure of how many people work for the Crown prosecution service, so that we may know by what percentage it is understaffed?

Mr. Vaz: The service is about 23 per cent. understaffed at the moment, and the total number of posts is about 1,200, but I am sure that when the Attorney-General replies he will give us the correct, up-to-date figures. Those are the rough figures, as I see them.

Does the Attorney-General accept the proposals of the Public Accounts Committee, which would give the Director of Public Prosecutions more freedom to pay competitive rates for CPS lawyers?

Over the past three years more than £40 million has been spent out of the CPS budget on private agency lawyers. Does the Attorney-General know that an agency lawyer working full time for the CPS earns more than a CPS lawyer doing the same work? This afternoon when I spoke to the First Division Association I learnt that about £250 is the cost of an agency lawyer for a day's work in the CPS. That would give that person an income of £150,000 per year. I understand that that is more than the amount paid to any chief Crown prosecutor, except the Director of Public Prosecutions.

How can we justify the expenditure of such an enormous amount from the public sector on private solicitors? Does the Attorney-General accept that the Government are not getting value for money, given the criticisms that have been made about the calibre of the agency lawyers? What steps does the right hon. and learned Gentleman propose to improve that?

Those are important issues, but by far the most important current issue concerning the CPS arises from the evidence to the Select Committee. I found Mr. Allan Green, the Director of Public Prosecutions, a professional, honest and candid witness. In answer to a question from me he made an astonishing statement. He said:

"The introduction of the service was a bitter pill for some police officers to swallow. Some are not co-operating fully and might indeed be obstructing it in certain respects. These are areas in which we do need, if we are to do our job properly, very much greater effort, co-operation and willingness on the part of the police."

I pressed him about who the officers were and their ranks, and asked how senior the officers obstructing the work of the CPS were. Mr. Green replied:

"It is a very difficult question to answer. I would say that at all ranks in the police force, from top to bottom, there will be certain people who are very much less willing to co-operate than others."

His words "from top to bottom" included reference to chief constables and junior officers.

Does the Attorney-General stand by the statement of the Director of Public Prosecutions? Does he agree that

there are officers at all ranks who are refusing to co-operate, hindering, or wilfully obstructing the workings of the CPS? How many officers are involved in that action? When did the Law Officers first become aware of that? I know from a conversation that I had with the Solicitor-General on Report of the Children Bill that he was aware of it in October last year. What steps has the Attorney-General taken to refer the matter to his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary? What disciplinary action, if any, has been taken against officers who have been found to be involved in that obstruction?

I now refer to the evidence of the police. The Police Federation maintains that there is a crisis of confidence in the CPS. Its evidence stabs the CPS not only in the back but in the front. The federation has become extraordinarily bitter. It asserts that the reputation of the criminal justice system has suffered as a result of the activities of the CPS. The federation is against almost everything that the CPS has done in the past few years. It challenges the calibre of agency staff, is critical of the plea bargaining system that the CPS has adopted, and attacks CPS lawyers for failing to make applications for compensation after cases. The federation also attacks the CPS for failing to keep witnesses informed and says that the actions of the CPS have damaged the morale of police officers. It challenges the way in which the CPS has taken prosecutions and decisions about the discontinuance of prosecutions.

Does the Attorney-General accept any of the police criticisms that are set out in written evidence? Does he agree with the police that the CPS is in crisis? Has he received any representations from the Home Secretary about the matter? Does he accept the view put forward by the Association of Chief Police Officers that the police should be allowed their own solicitors in order to second-guess the decisions of the CPS? Crucially, does he accept the police statement in paragraph 1 of their evidence, that the CPS has damaged the reputation of the criminal justice system? Does he agree with the Director of Public Prosecutions or with the Police Federation?

In respect of the evidence given last week by Mr. David Owen, the chief constable of north Wales, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman support the view that the evidence given on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers represents Mr. Owen's own views and that he is pursuing a vendetta against the CPS, or does he accept that Mr. Owen's evidence represents the collective views of the association?

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On occasions I have had the advantage of being instructed by the north Wales CPS, under the leadership of its chief Crown prosecutor, Mr. Clarke, and I found that its Crown court preparation is of the highest possible standard.

Mr. Vaz: I certainly accept that. As I said, I shall join the other members of the Select Committee in north Wales tomorrow. I raised the issue of Mr. Owen because it has been raised with me in the past and was raised in the Committee. It is extremely important for the House to know whether the Attorney-General accepts Mr. Owen's views.

I urge the Attorney-General to act to stop this disgraceful public row, which must be having a profound effect on the public perception of two of three partners in the criminal justice system. I ask him to tell the House the steps that he will take, either on his own or with the Home Secretary, to end the feud.

The public evidence submitted by 23 organisations is a damning indictment of the Crown prosecution service. Everyone who gave evidence, including representatives of the Home Office, was critical to some degree. One of those giving evidence said that the CPS was in a shambles. Perhaps the problem lies in the lack of co-operation between the police and the Crown prosecution service. Those are serious matters that have attracted a great deal of public comment, and I hope that the Attorney-General will give us the assurances that I seek.

There is a view that, because of the enormous damage to its reputation, the Crown prosecution service should be scrapped, refurbished and re-established with a new name, and that it should be given the support that it has never received. I should like to know whether the Attorney-General shares that view.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman because I am anxious to learn whether he is criticising the police or the CPS. His solution to the problem is to change the name and re-establish the service. Does he accept the concept of an independent prosecuting authority—which is what the CPS is? If he accepts that, why will changing the name make the army fight any better?

Mr. Vaz: As is so often the case, the hon. Gentleman missed the beginning of my speech. I am sure that he was delayed elsewhere on parliamentary business. He will therefore not have heard me say that I am a great supporter of an independent prosecution service. I offered the example of the American system and said that we need to get away from the damaging criticism of the CPS. A change of name and a new approach may do much to reassure the public and the elements of the criminal justice system that we wish to begin again.

There is a crisis in the provision of legal aid. I welcome the announcement that the Lord Chancellor made in November of a review of the legal aid system. However, I question why it will take so long for that review to reach a conclusion.

In the past 10 years, 15 million people have lost the right to qualify for legal aid. Many proposals in many reports published over the past decade would, if implemented, directly benefit citizens. They include the same flexible upper limit for civil legal aid as for criminal legal aid so that people of all means will qualify, subject to an appropriate contribution; abolishing the means test in personal injuries cases; and bringing the capital rules for green form advice into line with those for civil legal aid. A single person who has savings of more than £890 is excluded from the scheme, however low his income. Legal aid should be extended to tribunals, particularly the social security commissioners. The commissioners are referred to in the Select Committee's report as a decision-making body, from which, as the Attorney-General knows, the next step is the Court of Appeal.

The Department of Social Security is almost always legally represented in such cases. Only 3,000 cases were decided in 1987—the last year for which figures are available. In written parliamentary answers, the Attorney-General conceded that only about 200 cases led to hearings, which on average take two hours. At current

[Mr. Vaz]

rates, the cost of advocacy would be no more than £20,000. Parliament is legislating for rights that cannot be enforced because citizens cannot pay.

The decline in legal aid and assistance is real and substantial; 8 per cent. fewer people used the green form scheme in 1988-89 than in 1987-88. That is the largest, and only the second ever, drop in the use of the scheme, from 1,077,054 people to 994,066.

There was a 3 per cent. drop in civil legal aid certificates over the same period, whereas previously there had been a steady rise. Fewer and fewer citizens qualify. This year, 56 per cent. of the population are eligible, whereas the figure for 1979 was 79 per cent. Justice is being cash limited; I call it justice capping. Never before has there been such a need for people to be given proper legal advice and assistance. Does the Attorney-General accept that fewer people qualify, and does he think that that is a healthy development?

The duty solicitor scheme is in danger of collapse. Research from Birmingham university, which was published at the end of last year, shows that the safeguards that were built into the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 have not worked. Only 25 per cent. of suspects in police stations seek advice, and fewer receive it. Research shows—and I am sure that the Attorney-General is familiar with it—that 22 ploys are used by the police to discourage requests for advice.

Citizens can obtain advice only if solicitors are willing and able to administer the scheme. Fewer and fewer solicitors are taking part in the service, which places greater strain on those who participate in it. The scheme does not provide adequate compensation for being on duty overnight or at weekends. I should be the last person to argue for a pay rise for solicitors—I have yet to meet a starving solicitor—but the quality of advice that is given must in some way reflect the number of solicitors who are taking part. What is the Attorney-General's solution to the problems of the duty solicitor scheme?

I am deeply concerned about how the contracting-out of legal services will be operated. Franchising may be good enough for McDonald's, but it is not appropriate for justice to be treated as a junk food chain. Will the Attorney-General tell the House what progress and decisions have been made on franchising?

Several hon. Members are present who support the concept of family courts. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) was a member of the Commitee that considered the Children Bill. He and I tabled a new clause that would have realised a long-standing ambition—the creation of a family court. On Report, the Solicitor-General took the House by surprise by announcing the establishment or existence of what he called "a rolling programme" of the review of family law and administration. On Second Reading of that Bill in another place, the Lord Chancellor tried to placate the supporters of the family courts campaign by saying that the Children Bill allowed for the establishment of a family court in all but name.

If that is so, I cannot understand why the Courts and Legal Services Bill, which is currently being considered in another place, does not go the distance by allowing for the creation of a family court. What worries me is that there does not seem to be a time limit on the rolling programme that was referred to by the Solicitor-General. In addition, its terms of reference have never been properly defined. Government agencies and Departments meet regularly, but Parliament is not kept informed of developments. We want a proper family court—not a series of piecemeal changes, but one comprehensive change that will allow the procedure to be adopted. We were told many times in Committee on the Children Bill that the substantive law has been codified, but it is now time for the court structure to follow. Without a court structure, substantive law will never be properly achieved.

Mr. Devlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again, but, as he knows, I have a great interest in this matter. Many parliamentary questions were tabled a week ago last Thursday, in answer to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General revealed that a programme of reforms was being worked on by an inter-departmental committee. Unfortunately, it does not appear to have met since last November, and many people will be concerned that the rolling programme does not appear to be rolling very fast. What has the hon. Gentleman to say about that?

Mr. Vaz: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I agree with everything that he said. He was in the Chamber on the dramatic day when the right hon. Member fo Blaby (Mr. Lawson) resigned, thus turning the Children Bill, which was being debated, into a controversial Bill when previously it had always progressed by consensus. We raised that matter with the Solicitor-General. The right hon. and learned Gentleman uses marvellous adjectives to describe the family court system, and he said that he was sorry that he could not provide the "all-singing and all-dancing" family court that we required. He went on to coin another phrase, the "rolling programme". As the hon. Member for Stockton, South correctly said, despite a number of parliamentary questions having been tabled in a completely unorchestrated way, the response by the Attorney-General was disappointing.

Mr. Devlin: I am sorry to keep interrupting the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is probably thinking that the hon. Gentleman has never specified what he means by a family court. When I moved the new clause in Committee, I was fairly specific about what I particularly wanted. I knew that there was not a consensus and that different people supported different ideas. Will the hon. Gentleman give us a better idea of how he sees the family court? My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General would be interested to hear it and would then be in a better position to respond.

Mr. Vaz: I shall not be tempted down that path and shall not turn the debate into a major debate on family courts. The Attorney-General is well aware of what we mean when we describe the need for a family court. I am sure that he has read at length the extracts from *Hansard*, including the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman replies, he will probably say what all Law Officers have said from the Dispatch Box when this matter has been raised with them—"No". We shall be interested to hear whether that "No" has been tempered in any way, in the ferocity of its delivery.

As I said, the county court system is in need of major surgery. Like so many other parts of the judicial system, it is under-resourced and understaffed. There have been numerous complaints in cases where the inaction of the courts has resulted in a denial of justice. The proposals in the Courts and Legal Services Bill and the Children Act will result in more work being given to the county courts. When those proposals are enacted—the Children Act is not yet in force—it will bring the county court system to a grinding halt, unless there is a huge increase in resources and efficiency.

Those who use the county court system pay for the service. It operated at a notional profit of £6 million in 1988-89, yet the service in many parts of the country is appalling. The issuing of summonses has been delayed and there is a backlog in dealing with correspondence. According to the Law Society, Hastings county court is said to have a one-month backlog in dealing with its post. As at 1 November 1989, Birmingham county court had 8,000 unopened items of mail—the scenario that makes even Lunar house in Croydon look efficient.

I support the establishment of an ombudsman to investigate the complaints of maladministration or an extension of the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. I strongly believe that the public should be compensated when they suffer financial loss because of the state of the county courts. What words of comfort has the Attorney-General to offer them?

In passing, I should like to mention the state of the magistrates courts and the delays and injustices suffered there. Will the Attorney-General bring to the attention of the Home Secretary my worry and that of many others about the delays? In particular, I strongly support the idea of a fixed appointment system in the magistrates and juvenile courts as the best way of organising court business. That will help the system save a great deal of money. It will stop the legal aid fund paying out a great deal of money to solicitors for waiting around in the courts for cases to be called. It will provide a better deal for court users. The key must surely be proper liaison. I hope to see a structure of court user committees established in all local courts that will allow all those who participate in the legal service to be properly represented and to put their views.

I speak as one who has worked in a law centre. There is no better way of providing public legal services in terms of legal advice and assistance to ordinary people than that system. Law centres, citizens advice bureaux, consumer advice centres, rights centres and the like have been established in many cities, but they are always beset by funding crises. Does the Attorney-General agree that they are an essential part of public legal services? If so, when will the Government come up with more funding for them? The case for a centrally funded network of law centres is unanswerable. Why should people be denied access to legal information and advice just because they live in a certain part of the country and their local authority, which is more than likely to be Labour controlled, does not fund a centre?

I commend my local authority, Leicester city council, for the way in which it spends its money so wisely in providing three excellent law centres—the Leicester rights law centre, the self-help neighbourhood project and the Belgrave and Highfields law centre—as well as assisting in the funding of consumer advice centres and citizens advice bureaux. Justice would be denied to thousands of my constituents if anything happened to those important local organisations. Let us have a public commitment from the Attorney-General and let his assurance be simple—that more cash will be forthcoming for those important elements in our legal services.

There are so many other matters that I should like to bring to the attention of the House that, if I were to carry on speaking, I would take up the entire time allocated for private Members' motions. I am sure that other hon. Members wish to contribute, including my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser)—who has a tremendous record on campaigning on these issues—and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). Unfortunately, time does not permit me to continue much longer. Justice can be made available to all our citizens equally only if the system works. In many respects—the Crown prosecution service, the legal aid system, the duty solicitor scheme, law centres, county courts and magistrates courts—it is not working efficiently or effectively. Parliament must ensure that, in the interests of justice, those problems are resolved with a minimum of delay. If they are not resolved, millions of our citizens will suffer from injustice.

5.28 pm

M. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I have listened with interest to the rarefied contribution, if I may call it that, by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on various matters about which he plainly has thought deeply and has considerable experience. No doubt my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will answer many of the hon. Gentleman's questions.

I ceased practising at the Bar in 1976, before the Crown prosecution service came into being, but that leads me to declare an interest. Although I gain no money from practice at the Bar or from any other form of legal practice, I have had experience of such practice. I have held certain views on the country's legal services for many years, and the hon. Gentleman's motion gives me an ideal opportunity to express them. In doing so, I shall give rather wider consideration than he did to the legal aid services, the duty solicitors scheme, the county courts and the advice centres.

Before I embark on more general themes, however, let me take up what the the hon. Gentleman said about the county courts. For far too many years the legal framework has been diversifying into an excessive number of tribunals and other courts that are not part of the central system—the structure containing the High Court, the county courts, the Supreme Court. So much money and so many staff have had to be found that, sooner rather than later, we shall need another adjudicature Act. That will mean taking a close look at the whole structure of our court system to establish whether matters are now being dealt with in the right courts.

Diversification has gone mad since the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1958. It was a mistake to diversify too much, rather than concentrating on improving the system as it existed for many years. That system could have incorporated many of the cases now being heard before tribunals that are not part of the main structure—a remedy to which we must address ourselves in future years.

Parliament contains many legal experts, although, surprisingly, not many are present today.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Special pleading.

Mr. Martin: It is not unusual for those who speak in debates of this kind to perform such a function.

The number of lawyers in both Houses of Parliament has always been considered a mixed blessing at best, and a curse at worst. I once read in a history of Parliament that in 1404 a parliament indoctum had been held in Coventry, from which all lawyers were excluded. That is obviously still a popular notion in some quarters, but the habit did not catch on any more than the cry of, "Let us hang all the lawyers" that was heard during the Peasants' Revolt 23 years earlier. Nevertheless, variations on that cry have been heard on many occasions, particularly from unsuccessful litigants or political revolutionaries, exasperated or frustrated by the pace of constitutional change and filled with a fervent desire to advance their own notions of liberty in the teeth of established law, custom or practice and the innate conservatism—with a small "c"—of any civilisation founded on the rule of law.

Mention of innate conservatism leads me to one of my themes, namely, what the present excellent Lord Chancellor is up against in promoting—by means of the Courts and Legal Services Bill—the reforms that are so crucial to the improvement of our legal services for the benefit of the consumer, or customer, who is foolish enough ever to attempt to resolve anything through a lawyer. From the White Paper onwards, my right hon. and noble Friend has been up against special interests that have been marshalled on a huge scale, particularly the existing power structure of the legal profession and the Bench. The judges' case—the Bar's case—against some of his more imaginative reforms must be examined on the basis of narrow and special self-interest, rather than that of the public interest that they profess to have so close to their hearts.

The public interest is often paraded as women and children are herded into the van of an army that fears attack and hopes by such means to inhibit and deflect the fire of its opponents. Fortunately, my right hon. and noble Friend has been assisted in his task from the outset by the hysterical virulence of the Bench and Bar opposition not only to proposals that might have been considered to need modification, but to any proposals that appear to pose the slightest threat to the status quo and that past investigations under a different leadership in the House of Lords had not recommended.

Top judges, lesser judges, top barristers and lesser barristers alike, have fallen over themselves in the extravagance of their condemnation. It has been said—or, on many occasions, blustered in outrage—that my right hon. and noble Friend is attacking the independence of the Bar; that through such action he is attacking the independence of the judiciary; and that that in turn mounts an assault on the universal liberties that have been guarded so jealously for centuries by an independent judiciary. Those claims are bunkum, and should be examined far more closely before distinguished people parade them.

The Lord Chancellor is proposing to widen the rights of audience, which has been done many times before, not least in Devon and Cornwall. I have practised on the western circuit, and I know from personal experience what happened in those counties; I have not practised in Wales, but the rights of audience have been widened there, as well as in county and magistrates courts. That has not led to any loss of independence for the Bar, or to so much as a hint of its destruction, even where there is joint audience with solicitors.

The extensions that have already been granted have shown that it must not be assumed that those who possess a right will use it. Like every other hon. Member, I have the right to apply to the Crown to be appointed steward of the Chiltern Hundreds or the Manor of Northstead—and I understand that I would be appointed if I applied. However, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who looks extremely concerned at the possiblity of my making such an application, that I leave it to others to apply from time to time.

The same applies to many solicitors, who have rights of audience in the places that I have mentioned but choose not to take them up, preferring to get a barrister in. Every citizen has the right to appear to plead his own cause in every court of law, but few choose to do so. That is another indication that the conferral of a right does not guarantee that that right will be exercised.

With my experience of the Bar and my knowledge of its history, I have no doubt that it will prove strong enough—as it has for centuries—to survive change, not only the changes in rights of audience for general civil or criminal matters but those involving specialist knowledge of commercial, taxation or chancery matters. There will always be a need for good, independent contractors. The fact that some building firms have become very large and have in-house electricians and plumbers does not mean that independent contractors cannot continue to succeed. I see no difference, in principle, between their position and that of the independent barrister advising clients on intricate matters. Surely they have nothing to fear; nor do many express fears. They will survive the moderate reforms that are being proposed.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I do not quarrel with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, will he explain how someone living in Devon who has a complicated chancery matter requiring attention and advocacy in the High Court will secure the services of an independent advocate skilled in that area of the law unless someone can advise him who those skilled advocates are? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a danger of people who are not competent to do particular types of work taking on such work?

Mr. Martin: That is a valid point, but the present position is no different. If a member of the public wants advice on a complicated matter, he can visit his local solicitor who may decide that he can deal with it himself and not recommend that counsel should be employed to give better advice. That sort of thing could still happen under the new arrangements. Adequate information must be provided and there should be wide advertising of barristers who have particular skills so that people in Devon can read *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sun* or whatever and see advertisements for the services of competent counsel, based in London if necessary or anywhere else, to whom they can have direct access. That would improve the present position in which solicitors have the discretion as to whether to bring in counsel.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A few moments ago my hon. Friend said that a solicitor might deem that he had the knowledge. He may deem that, but,

as my grandmother used to say, his saying so does not make it so. He may be so conceited to believe that he is competent when he is not.

Mr. Martin: That is right and my hon. Friend has made that point graphically. Some people may believe that they know something, but they do not and often another person should be brought in to advise on the matter. Many complaints have arisen about that. Some solicitors always go to counsel whether or not they believe themselves competent to deal with the case and problems may arise when the client thinks that he has to pay two people when he could have paid only one. I do not believe that those matters will change significantly under the new system. They will certainly not change for the worse for the customer, but some proposals may improve the position.

I have no doubt that the Bar will adjust to the new arrangements. When the fees increase and standards of living are not threatened but improved, no one will admit to my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General or my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General —who will all probably have retired by then—that they were right and that the reforms did not mean the destruction of the Bar. People will not admit that the Bar is actually thriving when they did not think that it would. The Bar will thrive and those who said that that would happen will get no credit for saying so.

An equally substantial charge about the reforms made against my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor was repeated last week at Exeter university by Lord Ackner. The charge is that my right hon. and noble Friend is making it easier to extend executive control and to deprofessionalise the legal profession. The Lord Chancellor is said to be arrogating to himself, through an advisory committee, unacceptable powers not only of widening the categories of those who will be entitled to plead, but of setting out clear codes or standards of education, training and professional conduct.

Constitutionalists, whether they be self-appointed, elected or otherwise, throw up their hands in horror that so powerful a Minister should presume to exercise such awesome power in such a way, assisted and indeed "dominated"—to use Lord Ackner's words last week at Exeter—by people who

"do not have expertise in the very profession which it is their function to oversee."

In other words, "Intelligent laymen—keep out. You have nothing to offer so far as those very important matters are concerned with regard to standards of education, training and professional conduct of lawyers."

If only those who had expertise were able to make judgments in those matters, very few Ministers would ever be appointed. In some cases, Ministers are appointed to oversee engineering, but they are not engineers. Lay people on both sides of the House must take highly intricate decisions when they are not necessarily qualified to do so. However, in our humility we do not say that we cannot take those decisions; we take them. That is the same with regard to the lay benches. Lay magistrates have no legal training, but they give of their time and use their experience as people of the world. They offer their experience in that highly intricate——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: They are advised by a competent clerk.

Mr. Martin: Indeed, that is only part of the function of lay magistrates. As lay people, they have an important function in helping in the process of the law. They must take decisions about what happens in the courts while the clerk simply advises. The lay magistrate plays a very important role and I do not see why lay people should not be competent and so be part of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee, which is to be chaired by a judge. Their common sense could be of great benefit to the profession.

For generations, the office of Lord Chancellor has involved the most extraordinary totalitarian powers. Constitutionalists have commented on those powers on many occasions. The theory of the job is quite horrifying when we consider what powers are concentrated in the Lord Chancellorship.

The Lord Chancellor is the most senior Cabinet Minister. He has precedence even over the Prime Minister. With such Executive power in charge of the system of access to justice in this country, the Lord Chancellor appoints—and people advise him about the appointment of—virtually irremovable judges. The Lord Chancellor decides who will practise as silks, Queen's counsel or senior barristers and he also appoints recorders. He receives advice, although not necessarily only expert advice.

The reason why the Lord Chancellor's powers do not in practice become intolerable or lead to the goosestep in this country is that they have been exercised in the true British fashion of good sense and restraint in the context of the firmly rooted traditions of a free country governed through an open parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin: I note the support that I hear from my hon. Friend. Parliamentary democracy is the main bastion of people's freedoms. In particular, the House of Commons has proved historically the best guardian of liberty. It is a fanciful notion that judges carry out that role in any but the most marginal of ways or that they have ever done so or are ever likely to do so.

The much-vaunted role of judges in administrative law, in protecting the liberties of the subject, is grossly exaggerated. Parliament holds Ministers to account and it makes and changes the laws. The fear of having to face Parliament, and in particular this House, and so preserve a majority in this place, is the real check on ministerial powers and actions; it is not the apparent check claimed by judges. The judges have a role to play, but that should not be exaggerated.

The basis for the complaints made by judges lies in the power structure and influence that they possess at the moment. That applies in the courts, with rights of audience, and to the conduct of barristers and the Bar generally. It also relates to the Bar's promotion prospects. Those factors have an influence on the way in which people are promoted and the advice given to the Lord Chancellor about advocates. Wider influence in the way in which that advocacy is conducted will do nothing but good for the standards of independent advocacy in court.

There are bound to be amendments to the Courts and Legal Services Bill, and they will meet many of the criticisms that have been made. The biggest outrage is being done to my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor by people not considering the proposals in a

[Mr. Martin]

calm and reasonable manner. The atmosphere has changed because of the damage caused by those who went off at the deep end at the outset. Misrepresenting the proposals as an attack on the constitution and representing judges and barristers as the guardians of liberty, any erosion of whose traditional rights, powers and privilege will lead to the loss of our treasured freedoms, is just not on. In future years, when legal services are operated in the light of the new Act, people will wonder what all the fuss was about.

5.49 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on his success in the ballot. Legal services, including legal aid and advice, are to citizens' rights what the National Health Service is to their health, yet, in terms of parliamentary time, legal services are the Cinderella of parliamentary debate. The Government have not helped. Despite the importance of the subject, the Government gave Opposition Members no time to discuss the wide-ranging civil justice review. The Government have provided no time to discuss the Lord Chancellor's Green Paper, White Paper, or the reform of the profession. The Government have consulted virtually everybody except hon. Members. To emulate the example of High Court judges, we might have had a little more time if we had taken some industrial action. The House owes my hon. Friend a debt of gratitude for his luck and for his judgment.

The House creates many rights and duties and provides guarantees of liberty and fair play. At one end of the scale it provides for the right of silence—although that is under threat at the moment—and it provides consumer guarantees at the other end of the scale. It provides thousands of rights. However, rights and duties are meaningless unless they are understood and operate in practice with equal force, irrespective of the income, wealth, power or influence of those in whom they are confirmed. The scale of legal services and how they affect people's daily lives is much broader than that which is measured by the time that we have to discuss such matters in the House.

For instance, in the last complete year for which figures are available, more than 600,000 people received legal aid orders for the defence of criminal proceedings—incidentally, a rise of about 250,000 in 10 years, which goes to show how ineffective the Government have been in checking crime. Every year, about 2 million people are prosecuted for offences ranging from the most serious to the most trivial, but all those people have an interest in the efficiency and integrity with which our courts are conducted. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people will be the victims of crime. Their interest are often unvoiced or unheard, but they have an interest in the efficiency of our legal service and, in particular, the prosecution service.

It is said that it is better that 10 guilty men should go free than that one innocent man should be convicted, but it is much better that all guilty men are convicted and all innocent men should go free and that the guilty do not go free simply because of the incompetence or inefficiency of the system. Last year, about 250,000 people received legal aid for civil proceedings. Of course, many more will seek assistance and advice. Millions of people will seek advice in one form or another—for example, advice on housing, social security, immigration and police matters—and millions of people are served by the green form.

Only last week, the *Financial Times* mentioned the need for advice. We were told that

> "At least 200,000 households—1 per cent. of the national total—are in serious financial trouble because of the increase in the use of credit, according to a working party set up . . . at the request of Sir Gordon Borrie".

The report went on to recommend an extension of advice services.

Hon. Members are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East for raising several issues and giving hon. Members a chance to raise matters concerning legal services.

I did not wish to say anything about the duty solicitor scheme, but I hope that the Attorney-General will discuss with the Home Secretary some improvement in the way in which defendants are advised about the duty solicitor scheme at police stations. There have been reports of the 22 ploys that the police use to rob people of their rights to legal representation. There is great professionalism among custody officers. There has been a massive change since the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. All practising lawyers and academics come across cases in which people have asked for legal representation at a police station but have not received it or have not had their rights properly explained. One suggestion is that the person in custody should be required to make a positive statement that he does not require help from his own solicitor or from the duty solicitor, rather than ticking a box, which is what occurs at the moment.

I do not intend to politicise every issue. There are some issues upon which the Opposition will probably support the Lord Chancellor more strongly than we support the Attorney-General. We shall not turn it into a partisan debate. However, I shall say something about the competence, efficiency, effectiveness and coverage of some of our legal services, such as the prosecution service and legal aid, and then refer to some ways in which the Labour party sees the development of legal services, advice and representation at their broadest. I shall refer first to competence, coverage, efficiency and effectiveness and some of the matters for which the Attorney-General is responsible.

We welcome the Lord Chancellor's extension of legal aid for the elderly and for children, the extension of legal aid to some personal injury cases, and the disaggregation of some assets and income. We welcome the Government's long overdue admission—they have told us previously that the figures could not be collected—that only 56 per cent. of the population were eligible for legal aid before the recent changes were made. Although we welcome those changes, they do not go nearly far enough. The loss of legal aid eligibility is a massive blemish on any Government's duty to make civil and legal rights a reality.

In 10 years, the number of people eligible for legal aid has fallen by about 14 million individuals and 5·5 million households. It is almost as though we had said to 14 million people, "You no longer have access to a National Health Service hospital." That is a correct analogy. In the past two years alone, 1 million households and 2·5 million people have ceased to be eligible for legal aid. The reason is that the increases in the limits for legal aid—the allowances that enable people to qualify for legal aid and assistance—have increased far more slowly than either the

increase in the retail prices index or the increase in earnings. Taking 1979 as the base year, and giving each of the figures an index of 100 for 1979, we find that the increases in the allowances for a single person to qualify for legal aid have gone up by only 48 per cent., and the increases in allowances for a couple with two children to qualify for legal aid have gone up by 53 per cent. In contrast, since 1979 the retail prices index has gone up by 93 per cent., and average earnings have gone up by 134 per cent.

That is the plain reason why, during the past decade, the effect of successive reviews of legal aid eligibility limits has been to take more and more people out of eligibility. That is effectively to destroy the civil rights of millions of people who might want to claim damages for personal injury, apply for custody of children, or conduct property disputes. We simply cannot divorce civil rights for legal aid from effective enforcement and the provision of legal aid for those who are in need of advice and assistance.

Research by the London School of Economics and the department of statistical mathematical sciences has shown that the figures that were disputed by Cyril Glasser, which we quoted extensively during the passage of the Legal Aid Bill, were correct. We asked the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor to cease to deny the effects of the legal aid income limit and capital limit policies and, in addition to the cases that were recently dealt with by the Lord Chancellor, to restore eligibility to 1979 limits.

It is interesting that, although the number of civil legal aid certificates has remained relatively static over the past 10 years, the number of criminal legal aid orders has just about doubled, increasing from about 300,000 in 1979 to 600,000 in 1989. Of course, people who are accused of criminal offences must have representation and a fair trial. Indeed, they cannot have a fair trial without representation. However, those who have not even been accused of a criminal offence have equal rights to representation. What is even worse about the way in which we have whittled away eligibility for legal aid is that civil legal aid costs very little and, because there is a sieve, many of the cases are successful. Many cases involve the recovery of damages and of costs. Therefore, the burden of providing civil legal aid and of extending the limits is minor, compared with the expense of criminal legal aid work. In the light of the most recent research, I ask the Attorney-General seriously to consider restoring eligibility to the 1979 level of about 80 per cent. of the population.

Apart from eligibility, there are further problems with legal aid relating to the quality and choice of representation and to the efficiency and the quality of the legal system. I know that it is intended that the Legal Aid Board and the recent changes should improve efficiency, but it is an outrage that in 1988—the last year for which complete figures are available—in south London, part of which area I represent, the average waiting time for a legal aid application to be approved was eight months. Even now, it is not unusual for the granting of a legal aid certificate to take six months. That is not good enough.

The time taken to administer the legal aid system once a case is successful is also indefensible. I am sure that, like me, other hon. Members have often come across cases in which somebody has been successful in a claim—it might have been settled or it might have been the result of going to court—and damages have been awarded, but because of the operation of the statutory charge and sometimes because of the inefficiency of legal aid committees it is months, and sometimes almost a year, between the time that the damages were received and the time that they reach the assisted person. That cannot be right.

There is another thing wrong with the system—or where there is a great danger of something being quite wrong with the system. I refer to the choice and the quality of representation. There is a great danger that legally aided people will soon be offered a lower quality of representation simply because the rates of pay for legal aid lawyers are getting further and further behind the comparative rates of payment for those in privately funded work. Research has already shown that lawyers are tending to leave legal aid work in their 30s. As soon as lawyers become experienced, they are moving from legal aid work to more remunerative work. Other research has shown that about 40 per cent. of solicitors had given up, or were seriously considering giving up, their criminal legal aid work.

The gulf between the payment of legal aid work for lawyers and the payment of non-legal aid work is growing wider. Last year the pay settlement for those doing legal aid work was about 6 per cent. This year, rumour has it that the Goverment—no doubt for reasons connected with the ambulance workers and other considerations—have suggested a 6·5 per cent. increase in remumeration for legal aid work, which is much the same as the amount offered to other public employees. As a consequence fewer and fewer well-qualified solicitors or counsel will want to—or be able to afford to—do legal aid work. It is not a question of people being greedy because there comes a point in the running of a legal aid practice at which it is no longer possible to continue with legal aid work because it will be loss-making.

As I have said, it is not a question of the greed of those who are operating on behalf of legally assisted persons; it is the sheer necessity of life. If the payment for the work that is done is not sufficient to reward the service or to pay the rent, rates and all the other costs that are involved in running a legal aid practice, there is a great danger that the rates of reward will turn legal aid work into a second-class business and then it is only a matter of time before the quality of representation also becomes second class.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East referred to law centres. We ask the Government for a clear statement that funds will be made available to save the law centres that are currently supported or that were supported by the Lord Chancellor's Department and where the responsibility has been transferred to the Legal Aid Board. Law centres do an immense amount of good work and we in the Labour party should like to see them supported nationally, by a partnership with local authorities. The very least that the Goverment should do is to meet the case of the law centres and to continue the funding of those that are now supported from central funds. If they do not, at least two or three centres are bound to close because the necessary funds cannot be found elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East rightly devoted much of his speech to dealing with the Crown prosecution service. The Opposition are not satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of the Crown prosecution service. I do not say that with any joy or pleasure because we have always supported the concept of the CPS and of an independence of judgment about whether a prosecution should be brought. We do not share the sour grapes that have been expressed in some quarters about the CPS. I

[Mr. John Fraser]

know that there is a degree of jealousy and sourness about the very fact that the CPS was set up. Although we have always welcomed and supported the service, that will not prevent us from lodging criticisms if we believe them to be justified. We do not want the CPS to have a monopoly of prosecutions. It is extremely important that lawyers, and especially those who are likely to become judges, have experience of both prosecution and defence. Once they have learned to walk, there is a real case for them having the chance to do a bit of running—as members of the CPS in the Crown courts. However, perhaps we can discuss that at greater length when the Courts and Legal Services Bill comes before this House. Having said that about our support of the CPS, we are entitled to an explanation of why millions of pounds have been thrown away on cases that have not even been put before a jury for decision. I can think of about four or five cases that have failed before the courts. If we were to take the cost of those four or five abortive cases and transferred that money to the Legal Aid Board, it would be enough to keep the law centres going for another year or so.

The public want convictions of the guilty and the effective prosecution of criminals because that is one of the best forms of deterrence. I am sure that other hon. Members share my experience of being contacted by victims or the families of victims because they are aghast and infuriated by the way in which some cases are conducted. I shall give four examples from my personal experience and wish to put on the record the fact that the Attorney-General has treated one of these cases most sympathetically. People have come to me about examples in which there appears to be a strong case of causing death by dangerous driving and without any consultation the charge has been reduced to one of careless driving, to the immense fury of those who have lost a loved one. That is just one example, and, although that is the case that I have raised with the Attorney-General, other such cases have been raised with me.

A second example is that people have often come to me because they are infuriated that bail has been granted to a defendant who has been guilty of the most violent assault and who has threatened future assaults against the victim, and when there has been no degree of discussion between the prosecution and the victim about the bail conditions that should be suggested to the court.

I have looked at the evidence in a murder case, which was provided to me by the family involved, in which I believe that the family had every reason to question the way in which the evidence was collected, preserved and presented. I have spoken to junior members of the Crown prosecution service, who have complained about the burden of their work and about having, at a junior level, to conduct murder cases.

Turning now to the Kevin Taylor case, I do not question the innocence of those who were acquitted because a Crown case was drawn. I do not question for one moment the innocence of Mr. Kevin Taylor, who was acquitted by the court. It does not seem proper that a case should proceed to trial and be dropped when, according to newspaper reports, about £1 million had been spent on its preparation. If a case is to be dropped, surely it should be dropped well before it comes to trial.

In another recent case, that of the Crown *v.* Coren and Greenwood, allegations were made that information had been obtained from the Office of Fair Trading, including information about takeovers. That case involved not simply the guilt or innocence of those standing in the dock but the integrity of public administration and of a public institution. We are told in the newspapers that in that case about £750,000 had been spent and the case was dropped almost at the beginning of the trial.

It is sad to see headlines such as the one in *The Sunday Times* which said:

"Prosecution service failing miserably."

The Attorney-General must learn the lessons of recent well-publicised cases and others and of the expensive farce of trials which are abandoned at a relatively late stage because the prosecution was inadequate.

I am told by the National Audit Office that about two thirds of all cases which fail are dropped on the first court hearing. I hope that the Attorney-General will recognise that we support the CPS. We want to see it well rewarded. We want a proper career structure for those who join it and proper rates of remuneration. We support the service, but the Attorney-General must respond to criticisms of the standard and performance of the CPS and the amount of resources put behind it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East spent some time on discussing the efficiency of county courts. I remind the Attorney-General of the grave misgivings of those who practise in the county courts about the efficiency of the system. We should expect first-class efficiency from our judical system as a matter of course, especially if jurisdiction is to be transferred to county courts from the High Court, as recommended in the Courts and Legal Services Bill. If that is to be the case, we must be assured that the game will be conducted on a pitch which is fit to play on.

I talked recently in private to a county court judge who told me that in his court it took about two months to reply to a letter. That is simply not good enough. In other courts, it takes weeks or months to issue a summons or county court petition. In some courts there is well-documented evidence from practitioners that, when the postal budget runs out, the court does not send out replies to letters or summonses until the next month's budget is available.

If business is to be transferred to the county courts, we must have continuous trial centres. It is not good enough for a trial on a major issue in a county court to begin one day, be put off for three weeks and then be put off for another six weeks.

Whether there is a transfer of business or not, it is important that the county courts work efficiently and use their surplus fee income for the improvement of the service rather than showing a profit which is put into the Treasury. Litigants pay for a service in their fees, so if there is a surplus of fees let it go to improve the service, not to provide money for public expenditure.

I turn lastly to developments which the Labour party intends to bring about in the legal services and the legal system. I have already mentioned some changes in my remarks. The Opposition's principle is that real equality under the law is possible only if people have the ability to enforce their rights. I always refer to the quotation of Anatole France adopted by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers:

"The law in its majestic equality forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread."

That sums up the notion that freedom of equality under the law does not always meet reality. In the words of the Labour party policy review:

"Real equality under the law only exists in a society which provides equal access to the law and equal treatment before the courts. Neither is provided under our present legal system."

There can be no equality of representation when there are gross social and economic discrepancies.

Advice and representation must never be limited by inability to pay. That is why we say that coverage of legal aid advice must be restored and extended to representation before coroners' courts, tribunals such as the immigration and social security appeal tribunals and the Appeal Court. I use the word "representation" in a wide sense for a particular reason. In some cases the services of a consumer adviser, or a specialist such as a refugee worker, immigration counsellor or non-lawyer who specialise in social security, will be just as appropriate and sometimes more appropriate than the services of a solicitor or barrister. It is important that the lay person should be able to obtain trained, professional, objective and adequate representation which is relevant to the case.

Equality under the law is not simply about individual rights. Whether in a court or tribunal, it is about organising, informing and representing consumers, either individually or collectively. Representing and advocating consumers' rights should not be limited to members of the legal profession. I do not exclude the legal profession for one moment. Often it can represent people in cases of consumer rights, patient rights, equal opportunities, tenants' rights and rights of the small business man in partnership with other representatives.

I pay tribute to my local law centre, which has done a great deal for a group of people who own small businesses in the Brixton area. People found themselves assailed by large financial institutions who, for example, want to take away their security of tenure as a tenant and substitute a licence. To reflect the breadth of provision in the legal aid system the Labour party would extend the scope of the Legal Aid Board to that of a legal services commission. Furthermore, we would provide equality of access to the professions. I know that there have been improvements, but in my experience it is particularly difficult for someone to be called to the Bar and to succeed if he or she is from a working class background. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] There is a problem in being called to the Bar. People from a working class background who go into the solicitors' profession are guaranteed an income almost as soon as they qualify, but that is not so with the Bar. That is not a reflection on the Bar or an attack on it, but we must recognise that there is a problem. If one is from a family with a low income, it is difficult to support oneself during the initial period. We should encourage such people to go into the professions.

The composition of the professions should represent and reflect the composition of the population that they advise and represent in court. The same is true of the composition of the judiciary and magistracy. I use the word "Bench" to cover both. Like the professions, the Bench must be more representative of the community that it serves and show greater social awareness. There have been well-publicised cases of judges who do not seem to understand the social conditions of those who appear before them. A joke is sometimes made about a judge who is reputed to have put an alcoholic on probation. He asked him to promise that he would never drink again, not even a small sip of sherry before dinner. The judiciary and the Bench do not reflect the population that they represent. That causes difficulties.

Our system of selecting, training and promoting magistrates and judges remains mysterious, secretive and unaccountable and reeks of patronage. It should be neither the duty nor the privilege of a political Cabinet Minister to appoint members of the Bench. A Labour Government would create an independent judicial appointments commission, free from political control and better equipped to appoint those who sit in judgment on fellow citizens. We shall have a department for the administration of legal affairs, directly accountable through a Minister to the House of Commons and responsible for legal aid, courts, tribunals and their procedures, the judicial commission and the whole range of advice and representation. Such a department would be charged with putting the needs of users and consumers first. We want an efficient, user-friendly, legal system, not one which is full of mystery and lacks accountability.

I know that this is only a personal view, but I find the courts intimidating. The judge is dressed in the clothes of another century—*[Laughter.]* I am simply remarking on the intimidatory appearance of those who wear wigs, Mr. Speaker. It was no reflection on the Chair. Our courts are intimidating. Even the construction of the dais is intended to rick the necks of those who sit in the well of the court having to look at the judge. We must construct a less intimidating, more friendly, legal system.

The Labour party does not want a legal system which is narrowly bounded by the organisation of the Bar, solicitors and the formal court framework. We interpret the need to provide legal services widely as a need for a network of advice, representation and assistance to uphold citizens' rights. The Government and local authorities jointly have a duty to provide such services through advice centres, law centres and a variety of institutions which supplement and provide access, as well as through the traditional legal professions.

There is no point is giving people rights or imposing duties on others unless the way in which we provide legal aid and advice and organise the professions turns rights and duties into realities. That is the policy that the Labour party will pursue when it is elected to office.

6.21 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on his good fortune in the ballot and on his discrimination in making use of that opportunity to bring so many important topics before the House.

As I read the motion, I found myself wishing that the hon. Gentleman would cheer up a little. As I read through the catalogue of disasters that he perceived I was reminded of a song of my youth in which the author recalls the lurid and various physical misfortunes that befall what nowadays is called his extended family. The hon. Gentleman looks at the family of legal services and sees nothing but feuding, crises of confidence and a serious state of collapse, a sort of super-collapse. It is not like that out of doors and I hope to take some time to justify that assertion.

[The Attorney-General]

The hon. Gentleman asked many questions. He had the courtesy to send me a fax this afternoon which set out some of them. It was not particularly legible, more because of the handwriting than because of the technology. The hon. Gentleman asked many questions during his interesting speech and I shall endeavour to deal with many of them. I cannot deal with all of them. If I did, I could not make some of the points that I have prepared. Consequently, what I have to say will be more disjointed than I should like, although perhaps not more disjointed than usual.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I agreed that there was a serious crisis affecting the Crown prosecution service. The answer is no. I acknowledge readily the handicaps which have always afflicted it and which continue to do so, but they are diminishing. In the words of the Director of Public Prosecutions in his recent evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the service is "making progress" towards its objectives. There is no crisis. Nor do I consider there to be feuding with the police or anything like it and I shall take more time on that shortly.

It follows that my answer to the hon. Gentleman's question whether I agree that the Crown prosecution service should be scrapped and started again is a resounding no. I do not agree that it has damaged the criminal justice system. Quite the reverse. There are many complimentary observations to be found in some of the representations made to the Select Committee and many more that come to me from magistrates, judges and others to the effect that great advantage has stemmed from the institution of the service.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) strongly support the principle of separating the prosecution decisions from those of the investigation of criminal offences and initial charging. That is common ground between us. So far as I know, nobody who made representations of a formal nature to the Select Committee has questioned the desirability and propriety of that principle.

We must ensure that a new service, whose inception constituted a major revolution in the conduct of our affairs, settles down and is given the resources to enable it to do its job. I agree with those who say that the service started too soon, in the sense that the time scale imposed on the Government by the abolition of the metropolitan county councils did not permit sufficient time for a smooth transition. One should acknowledge that it did not permit sufficient time for the examination of every possibility that might have to be faced. Accordingly, it has been common ground among those who have studied these matters, not least those who represent the Government, that the service suffered in its inception because of the time scale imposed on it.

It is also fair to mention that the new Crown prosecution service had the misfortune to come into being at a time of rapidly increasing growth in the demand for the services of lawyers. It was a time when the rewards of the private sector rose dramatically, as though it were caught in some thermal current. That made it imperative that the conditions of service, particularly of salary, offered by the Crown prosecution service should be so attractive as to be able to compete at least reasonably effectively with the private sector.

Everybody agrees that it will never be possible for those in the public service to be rewarded on the scale commensurate with the highest rewards available in the private sector. There are compensating advantages in working for the Crown. Nevertheless, there comes a time when the disparity between the two levels of salary becomes so great that we fail to retain people of experience and to recruit people of sufficient quality. That assessment is not a science; it is an art, in which one gets better with greater experience.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leicester, East for what he said about the evidence of the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Select Committee. One would not have expected anybody of the quality of Mr. Allan Green to display anything except complete professional honesty and candour, to use the hon. Gentleman's expression. It was notable from Mr. Green's evidence that he made no bones about the existence of those handicaps that I have endeavoured to describe.

The hon. Gentleman did not do justice to the optimistic cast of the DPP's evidence, particularly his insistence that real progress is being made.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

The Attorney-General: I have many questions to answer, and the hon. Gentleman spoke for quite a long time. However, I shall give way.

Mr. Vaz: I am most grateful to the Attorney-General. On the question of DPP evidence, I accept that the Attorney-General thinks that there is no crisis of confidence. By saying that, in his view, the Crown prosecution service has not damaged the reputation of the criminal justice system he rejects the premise put forward in the police evidence. Does the Attorney-General stand by the DPP's statement that at all ranks in the police service there are officers who fail to co-operate fully with the Crown prosecution service?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman must not be mischievous. He knows perfectly well that I have a statutory relationship with the Director of Public Prosecutions—a relationship of superintendence. The director gave full evidence about the need for co-operation between the police service and the Crown prosecution service. As the professional head of the Crown prosecution service, he gave it as his view that in some areas there was less co-operation than was desirable. It is not right, especially in advance of my own evidence to the Select Committee, to ask me the kind of questions that the hon. Gentleman has been asking. I shall say only that the director, as professional head of the Crown prosecution service, is an independent public official in whose qualities —including the integrity, percipience and thoroughness of grasp that I think the hon. Gentleman would acknowledge the director has demonstrated—I have the highest confidence. Beyond that, I will not permit the hon. Gentleman to drive a wedge between myself and the police service, between myself and the Director of Public Prosecutions, or between myself and anybody else. I have come to the House to answer questions and to set forth

what the Government are doing as regards the Crown prosecution service and the other legal services to which the motion refers.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his tribute to the Crown prosecution service and its staff—in particular, the staff in his own area of Leicestershire. There is much about which to be optimistic. Great progress has been made. I shall itemise some of the principal matters briefly, as other hon. Members wish to speak. Everyone knows that the service has had difficulty in recruiting enough lawyers. The director has therefore, with my full support, pursued a number of initiatives aimed at making the service more attractive to lawyers. In the last year there have been substantial improvements in pay at all grades, but in particular at Crown prosecutor and senior Crown prosecutor grades. Here the increases in the minimum and maximum salary have been 27·5 and 41 per cent. respectively—in London, 43 and 61 per cent. respectively. Those percentages relate to the initial salaries in 1986, but there were major increases during the last 12 months.

Salaries have been increased substantially all the way up the relevant scales. Senior Crown prosecutors can now earn salaries that, in some parts of the country, have led to the recruitment of equity partners from firms of solicitors in private practice. I am glad to say that there has been a vigorous and very effective recruitment advertising campaign. I dare say that hon. Members will be aware of it. The CPS is now sponsoring members of its own staff as law school students so that they may qualify as solicitors or barristers, and for all newly qualified lawyers the service now has in place a scheme by which either articles or Bar pupillage may be taken within the CPS. I take up what the hon. Member for Norwood said about earnings at the early stages of a caréer at the Bar, as opposed to the early stages of a career as a solicitor. Under the scheme, trainee lawyers, from the moment they undertake articles or Bar pupillage, will be paid a competitive salary—in round figures, between £9,000 and £13,000.

The CPS has already begun to benefit from this scheme, which is very much an investment for the future. The scheme should shortly begin to provide a reliable supply of thoroughly trained and well-motivated Crown prosecutors. So, there is no crisis here—and, if I may say so, I am in quite a good position to make that assertion. I see the Director of Public Prosecutions regularly and frequently to discuss the affairs of the CPS. I also see his senior staff at headquarters, and I travel the country. I have visited the service's offices up and down the country. I have been to most of its 31 areas—in some cases more than once—and my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has probably been to each of the rest. On such occasions I listen to the Crown prosecutors and to their support staff, to magistrates and judges, to the police, and to everybody else assembled, including, sometimes, local journalists.

The motion speaks of continued feuding between the CPS and the police—feuding that has given rise to a "crisis of confidence" between them. That is unreal. In addition, it does great injustice to two services that the motion describes as—here I agree with it; it is only seven words out of 80, but that is something—

"essential parts of the criminal justice system".

All human institutions are mortal and, therefore, liable to human frailties, as even the House occasionally recognises. From time to time, at local level, even in public institutions, there may be a disagreement or a muddle or a failure to do what should be done. Regrettably, this may lead to recriminations and, sometimes, to a public squabble if it gets into the courts. I do not contend that in the three years that have elapsed since the inception of the CPS this kind of thing has never happened in the relationship between the service and the police. I dare say that on occasions it has, but I hope and believe that these occasions have been rare. When they have occurred, no doubt the CPS has sometimes been at fault, and sometimes the police.

Equally, I think it quite likely that in some quarters within the police service there remains some lack of enthusiasm for the concept of a separate prosecution service. I think that that has become pretty rare, but I dare say that it still exists. When one considers the nature of the legislation that this Conservative Government introduced to give effect to the real principle of the report of the Philips Royal Commission—the separation of prosecution decisions from police functions—it is hardly surprising that, sometimes at any rate, there has been some resentment.

Mr. Vaz: The Attorney-General is being uncharacteristically unkind to me. The word "crisis" came not from me but from the chairman of the Police Federation in his evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs last week. It is the police, not I, who, in the very first paragraph of their evidence to the Select Committee, said that the operation of the Crown prosecution service has damaged the reputation of the criminal justice system. Is the Attorney-General saying that he rejects the police argument that the system is in crisis?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is again indulging his penchant for mischief. I do not answer for the evidence of the chief constable who signed the report that was submitted to the Select Committee on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers. It will be for the Select Committee to evaluate that evidence when it has heard all the evidence given to it and has considered its report. I am entitled to say that I have never received from any chief constable individually—nor, I believe, has the Director of Public Prosecutions—any evidence couched in those terms. That description contrasts vividly with the opinions expressed publicly by the immediate past chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers. I shall say nothing further on that score.

There have been occasions, as the Director of Public Prosecutions has admitted, when points of irritation have arisen. They turn on such matters as the failure to warn witnesses—that was the function of the police—or perhaps upon the failure to submit witness statements in typescript rather than in manuscript. If they are in manuscript they take three times as long to read and that has an effect on efficiency. I do not doubt that, from time to time, other matters have been the cause of friction between the newly created service and the police service, for which I have a high regard. Those matters are taken up at local liaison committee level and at senior, national liaison committee level.

Recently the Director of Public Prosecutions established an interdepartmental working group to take hold of such remaining points of irritation and friction as there are to see whether they can be argued out and

[The Attorney-General]

resolved between the police, the CPS and all the other agencies involved. I am confident that the result will be fruitful.

The hon. Member for Norwood drew attention to a number of cases where people have been cross at the outcome of a trial, the withdrawal of a prosecution, the reduction of a charge and so on. Good news gets crowded out, but bad news makes headlines. There is a common perception that the CPS undercharges, contrary to correct police recommendations to charge for a more serious offence. I cannot claim that that has never happened as I cannot know, but I suggest that there are occasions when the reverse occurs. However, we read nothing of them, or, if we do, they are not remembered. I shall give relevant examples of such cases, which I drew from my visit to Greater Manchester last week.

Three of those examples concern police recommendations for careless driving charges to be brought. I hope that the hon. Member for Leicester, East will listen, as this is important. I note that he appears to be otherwise engaged, no doubt signing an early-day motion on another matter. I should be grateful if I could just have his attention on this matter.

While the hon. Gentleman was otherwise engaged I referred to police recommendations, made in three separate cases, that a charge for careless driving should be brought. In each of those cases the CPS prosecuted for causing death by reckless driving. Convictions resulted in each of those cases and prison sentences were imposed in two of them. The fourth instance to which I want to refer occurred within the past two years and represents an even more stark instance of the CPS going for a more serious charge. In that case the police recommended that no action should be taken, but the CPS brought a charge for murder and a conviction for murder resulted.

I do not claim for one moment that those instances are representative, because, in the vast majority of cases, there is no difference between the opinion of the police and the CPS over which charge should be brought. In the light of the criticism that one reads of the CPS undercharging, I mention them because I believe that they deserve to be known and because I believe that the CPS deserves to have them known. We do not read about such cases.

The other day the Director of Public Prosecutions said that 5 million cases had been prosecuted by the CPS in the past three years and yet in the nature of things we read only about that minuscule fraction in which something is thought to have gone wrong. When it has gone wrong we are seldom able to learn whose fault it really was.

The hon. Member for Norwood referred to the prosecution of Kevin Taylor and said that if we decide to drop a case we should do so before £1 million has been spent. The hon. Gentleman was not referring to the merits of that case and neither am I, but I am entitled to refer to the public fact that the Director of Public Prosecutions has requested the chief constable of Greater Manchester to consider whether a police inquiry should be set up into certain aspects of the police evidence given in that case.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to an Office of Fair Trading case, but in fact it was brought by the Department of Trade and Industry. That case related to insider dealing and the prosecution was withdrawn. The hon. Gentleman quoted that case as an instance of failure on the part of the CPS, but it was a DTI prosecution and, as it happens, that prosecution was withdrawn by reason of judicial ruling on public interest immunity that rendered further proceedings impossible.

Mr. Fraser: I must point out that I used the collective phrase "prosecution service". Is the Attorney-General saying that in the Coren and Greenwood case the same Secretary of State who initiated the prosecution then decided to give Crown immunity to some of the evidence?

The Attorney-General: No. In cases of that kind the Secretary of State is the prosecuting authority. The question of public interest immunity arose—there is a duty to claim such immunity, which cannot be waived. A judicial ruling on the scope of public interest immunity led to the result I have described.

A valid example of the performance of the CPS is the percentage of cases brought by the CPS that are dismissed in the magistrates court. In relation to the total number of defendants whose cases are finalised, the figure is 1·7 per cent. The number of acquittals in the Crown court in relation to the total number of defendants whose cases are finalised is 11·52 per cent. Taken together, the number of CPS cases acquitted or dismissed at the magistrates and Crown courts is equivalent to 2·44 per cent.

I ask the House to accept from me that talk of a feud between the CPS and the police and of a crisis in the affairs of the CPS is sensationalist and alarmist nonsense. I pay warm and grateful tribute to the way in which so many of the police, at all levels, have adapted to what was a revolutionary change. Equally I pay warm and grateful tribute to the dedicated and scrupulously independent staff of the CPS under the exemplary leadership of Mr. Allan Green QC.

The motion tabled by the hon. Member for Leicester, East goes on to deal with legal aid, the duty solicitor scheme, law centres and family courts. I am afraid I must deal with them briefly.

As to legal aid, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has set in hand a review that promises the biggest revision of legal aid since it was set up 45 years ago. That is in line with the reforming pattern of my noble and learned Friend's tenure of the Woolsack, which is without rival. The hon. Gentleman asked why that review is taking so long, but it is an extremely sensitive review that extends over civil, criminal and matrimonial legal aid. As and when matters are identified that need immediate treatment, steps will be taken to secure that that treatment is effected. That is a proper and sensible way to go about it.

The hon. Gentleman goes on about the numbers of people who are now eligible. It does not matter how many people are eligible when we do not know what proportion of the population is likely to engage in what type of litigation. What matters is that, based on sensible research, we know people's needs in relation to a particular type of litigation. That is being undertaken by the Legal Aid Board and our review.

The duty solicitor scheme came into being as part of the reforms—again introduced by a Conservative Government—connected with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In 1987, the Lord Chancellor commissioned research into advice and assistance at police stations, and the operation of the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme because he wanted to review the existing

procedures. He wanted advice about whether changes were necessary or desirable. The report was published in November. It highlights the number of sectors requiring further consideration, in particular the role of the police and the quality of advice given by solicitors. The Legal Aid Board, which administers the scheme, recently issued its own consultation paper. The board will report to the Lord Chancellor this spring, taking account of the matters raised in the Lord Chancellor's research.

These developments are all of a pattern with the programme of improvement in the quality of legal services generally. It is a pattern of vigorous inquiry, analysis and action. It extends to franchising, which is being vigorously examined to discover whether it may lead to greater efficiency.

Immense changes have taken place in the county courts. They are dealing with more cases and, in many instances, more efficiently than before. There are shortages of staff, but the Lord Chancellor has secured another £70 million in resources for the forthcoming financial year, another 350 staff will be recruited, and another 100 in connection with the ongoing implementation of the civil justice review.

Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will cheer up. I have good reason to——

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

The Attorney-General: I shall not give way because time is getting on.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will cheer up because, although I have good reason to know of the difficulties in the county courts, there are major pluses to be recorded in their performance, and the prospects for next year are encouraging.

Law centres generally perform a valuable service. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Legal Aid Board has taken over responsibility for the seven legal aid centres that were previously funded by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Their future will be reviewed.

Family courts have a great deal of support. However, there has always been a good deal less particularity about what they actually do. Before setting up what is called a family court, it is essential to have reformed the law relating to family matters so that the law is uniform and coherent—it certainly is not at present. The Government get a considerable amount of criticism for not having introduced the family court, but we are well on the way to developing a family court.

The Children Act 1989 will be implemented progressively over the next two years. That brought together the law relating to children in an admirable way. It has attracted general admiration, but we are a long way yet from that uniform system of law relating to the family that is the essential pre-condition of a family court.

We are asked when our rolling programme will be completed. It is difficult to set a date for that when it partly depends on reports from the Law Commission that have yet to be delivered. The Law Commission is considering the law of divorce, and will report on it. We do not know when we shall get that report, but it will be extremely influential.

What I have to say about family law has been said in previous debates in the House on the Children Act. There is everything to be said for bringing the law together, making it uniform, coherent and thoroughly up to date. However, that must be done before we set up anything approaching a family court. I hope that that day will come and I think that those who share my view have good reason to be expectant. I urge the hon. Gentleman to take heart, and reflect that hopes are being fulfilled and progress is being made.

In whatever part of the legal services touched on by this thoroughly depressing and depressed motion there is a record of research, review and reform unrivalled by any Government over 50 years. The subject was left untouched by successive Labour Governments in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Not everything can be made to fall neatly into place at once. To recognise that and proceed step by step is part of the art and responsibility of government. Conversely, to demand the impossible by yesterday is part of the art and irresponsibility of opposition, so charmingly and classically evinced in the speech of the hon. Member for Leicester, East.

6.56 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I shall start what is bound to be a short contribution by declaring my interest as a practising barrister, a recorder and secretary of the all-party barristers group.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I am extremely grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. Does he share with me a sadness that only members of the legal profession have been called in this excellent debate? I was hoping to appear on behalf of the consumer.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman took twice as long as I had agreed he could take, and I have no comment to make on his contribution.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on initiating the debate and I shall make just two points. First, I agree with almost everything said by the Attorney-General about the Crown prosecution service. Public confidence in that service has been undermined. I can say that, but the Attorney-General cannot, even if he believes it. Public confidence has been quite deliberately undermined in some minority and restricted quarters of the police service. I hope that the police service will co-operate far more with the Crown prosecution service in future. The important thing about the CPS is that it is independent—and that means independent of the police as well as everyone else.

The way in which I regard the Crown prosecution service and make my assessment of it is by comparing it with what went on before. It seems that, despite considerable teething troubles, the Crown prosecution service has combined the best of the old county prosecuting solicitor services—some of which were extremely good—with an avoidance of the worst services in a system in which private solicitors, some of whom were very good and some very bad at prosecuting, conducted prosecutions.

Salaries at the bottom of the professional grades of the CPS are still too low, particularly in London. In a medium-sized west end firm, a newly qualified and admitted solicitor commands a salary of £23,000 or £24,000 a year. I hope that in order to achieve the necessary quality for dealing with what is often difficult work in London, the Attorney-General will try to ensure that salaries that are at least broadly competitive with not the highest new solicitor's salaries, but the medium range in central London, are available to young solicitors.

[Mr. Carlisle]

The hon. Member for Leicester, East mentioned plea bargaining in a way that suggested it was wrong. I have never been able to understand why there is so much criticism of plea bargaining, which goes on now and has always gone on. If it did not take place the criminal courts of this country would grind to a halt. I ask the Government to recognise that plea bargaining takes place and to encourage a much more open system for it.

We must all confess to having been involved in plea bargains in the past, so why cannot we do it in open court? It shortens cases and benefits the criminal justice system. There would be much less complaint about plea bargaining if it were done openly and above board. Not juries—if there is a jury trial—but the public at large could then see that plea bargaining plays a useful, efficient, necessary and real part in what happens in courts.

I should like to say much more in the debate, but time does not permit that. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) took up an unwarranted amount of time——

It being Seven o'clock, proceedings on the motion lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business).

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that motion No. 3 on the Order Paper stands in my name and concerns an important subject: the pre-conditions necessary for a prime ministerial visit to South Africa. I know that, several times during the private notice question and the statement, you mentioned your concern about the time taken out of private Members' business. Would it be appropriate to discuss with the Procedure Committee whether, instead of giving us half a day, finishing automatically at 7 pm, it might be right to give private Members' motions a certain time limit? That would assist you in your job of protecting the interests of private Members and Back Benchers.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that some of the speeches were very long, I would have to agree. But I think that he is pushing his luck somewhat if he believes that his motion No. 3 would have been reached in a half-day debate. A number of hon. Members wanted to participate in the debate that has just concluded, and there would have been another debate on the Health Service after it, if time had permitted.

Orders of the Day

Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

REPLICATION OF PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY FUNCTIONS

"The Secretary of State shall ensure that the functions hitherto exercised by the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers are not, directly or indirectly, replicated within any department of Government."—*[Mr. O'Brien.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.2 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause refers to the replication of Property Service Agency functions—the mini-PSAs. We went into this in some depth in Committee, and the Minister replied to some of our questions. On 16 January he referred to the Ministry of Defence carrying out work that is now done by the PSA, and accepted that the Ministry is now recruiting people to take over the work of the PSA. Between 700 and 800 people will be employed to do the work in the Department. The Minister said that MOD was the largest Department, so it would employ the largest number of people to do PSA work.

In Committee I also asked the Minister about other Departments, in particular about the Home Office and its prisons. I also mentioned the Department of Social Security's new offices to be built in various parts of the country, and the Department of Health's hospitals and clinics. I also referred to other Departments that would assume the responsibilities of the PSA. My question was:

"Is the Minister now saying that all those Departments will have their accountants, consultants, engineers and supervisory staff?"

The Minister replied:

"That is right."

In other words, the Minister said that all other Departments will have their own staff to do the PSA's work. We have agreed on defence, but do I take it that the Cabinet Office, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Employment, the Department of Energy, the Department of the Environment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of Health, the Home Office, the Northern Ireland Office, the Scottish Office, the Department of Social Security, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Transport, the Treasury and the Welsh Office will all start recruiting personnel to do the work upon which the Property Services Agency is now engaged? Will all those Departments take on accountants, consultants, engineers and supervisory staff, and will they be on the payroll of those Departments? If so, the estimated figure given us in Committee—1,000 people—must be far short of the true number who will be employed in the various Departments. May we have all the details and information?

If what the Minister told us in Committee was factual, it is obvious that value for money is important. So the

Minister must explain where the Government stand in relation to value for money in the privatisation of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers.

The Minister has not dealt with the Wardale inquiry, in Committee or in the House. He has commissioned no real inquiry to prove that the privatisation of the PSA is on the right lines and will benefit the Government. There has been no exercise to show that the Government's approach to the privatisation of the PSA is right. The Wardale inquiry, which was never acted or reported on in detail, identified the principal problems in the PSA. It said that the fundamental problem related to management's reluctance to acknowledge that problems existed, and to its lack of vigour in handling them once they had been identified.

People involved in the inquiry believe that this situation shows a degree of complacency by the management. That complacency is reflected in its attitude towards dishonesty and fraud, and we raised those issues in Committee. We wanted an assurance that that situation would not be mirrored in all the Departments that I referred to in my earlier remarks.

The Wardale inquiry said—the Minister has made this point on more than one occasion—that the purpose of untying the various Departments from the PSA was to allow them to have more financial control over their own affairs. One has to ask whether the various Departments understand the concept of financial control sufficiently when it comes to the actions and functions of the Property Services Agency. Unless there has been extensive training and consideration of the problems of financial control, there will be mismanagement when the PSA is privatised, as the Wardale inquiry pointed out.

If management control techniques are not adequate within the various Departments when the PSA is untied from them, it will be difficult to detect irregularities, unless there is to be some sort of in-depth study of problems that may develop in the various Departments which I listed. In Committee we wanted more information, and we mentioned the serious issue that I have referred to tonight. In Committee the Minister said, after he had been questioned:

"I am not sure that we can take the discussion much further, Sir Giles"—

he was the Chairman.

"We have had a good debate on clause 1 and I hope that the Committee will agree to allow the clause to stand part of the Bill."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 16 January 1990; c. 121-22.]

We had not had sufficient discussion. We needed to examine and to inquire about a great deal more. The Minister did not come up with the answers to questions that were put to him. Therefore, I shall put further questions to him tonight.

Is it proposed that all Departments, including the Cabinet Office, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office, will have their own corps of people to do the work that the PSA and the Crown Suppliers carried out?

The Minister said that a lot of the work would be let out to contract but, as we mentioned to the Minister in Committee, who will supervise the contracts and tenders? Who will check the work that is carried out? We have had no answers to those questions, and I hope the Minister will answer them tonight.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Having listened to the hon. Gentleman's argument, I am uncertain whether he feels that it would be better if fewer or more people were employed on those tasks. I am equally confused by the use of the word "replicated" in the new clause. Does that mean reproduce or diminish? It is not a word that I know, and I think that the Opposition should state whether they are in favour of more or fewer civil servants to do this work.

7.15 pm

Mr. O'Brien: I have to excuse the hon. and learned Member for not being aware of what has happened previously. We are saying that there is little cause for him and for his colleagues to support the Bill, because the present organisation—the PSA—meets all the demands of the various Departments, which will now have to recruit staff. When we say that we do not want those Departments to replicate the PSA, we mean that we do not want mini-PSAs in every Department because we consider that that would be uneconomic. It is not value for money, and would not result in good management practice.

I ask the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) the same question that I asked the Minister. The PSA has developed various manuals on the work that it does for various Departments. Security is at the top of its list. The PSA has a manual on security in various Departments, which has been built up during years of experience—for the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, the Foreign Office, the Cabinet Office and the Departments of Social Security and Health. Under the new system, where will the manual go? The Minister did not answer that question in Committee. I asked him again tonight where will the centrally-owned documents which are now in the hands of the PSA be held in future? At one time, the Minister suggested that they could be held by the property holdings department, which would still be part of his Department. If that is so, why are we here? That means that we will have the same situation as we have at present. The manual will go round from Department to Department and there will be no security. That is the situation into which the Minister is leading the House. If our clause is not accepted, there will be a mishmash of security provisions throughout the various Departments.

There is also the question of supervision to ensure that the projects demanded by the various Departments are in accordance with their specifications. Each Department will have to ensure that and will have to recruit the best personnel to carry out the work. There will be a small group of people in a Department to undertake work, whereas, at the moment, the PSA supervises projects in all Departments and can recruit the best staff. The PSA has the knowledge to carry out the work, and the Minister would be wise to leave things as they are. If that is not acceptable, I ask for the assurance that we are seeking in new clause 1—that there will be no duplication of work. Or will Conservative Members join me and my colleagues to ensure that new clause 1 stands part of the Bill? That would be in the best interests of the House and would show that we are concerned about value for money. The report of the Wardale inquiry made it abundantly clear that there must be efficient management and financial control. If there is not, there cannot be protection against dishonesty and fraud. We are trying to protect the House and to make sure that we get value for money.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my hon. Friend the Minister tell the House exactly what will happen after privatisation if replication is allowed? I want

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

to be sure that my constituents have the right after privatisation to be allowed to compete properly and fairly without having set against them an in-house programme and all the problems of single action tenders that can arise through Departments giving the jobs to their own boys. I should like to be certain that there will be open and fair competition after privatisation and that nothing will be held back. I hope that the Minister can convince the House about that.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I certainly hope that I can convince my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and the House on that important point. It would be pointless for each Department to set up its own in-house works organisation, and that is not the Government's purpose in proceeding towards the untying of Departments. The policy of untying Departments for the PSA predates the Bill and any proposals for privatisation. That is why the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is mistaken in his approach. The new clause would prevent the functions currently undertaken by the PSA and the Crown Suppliers being undertaken by other Departments. Indeed, matters would go further because the new clause would prevent the devolution of procurement responsibilities to Departments, and that is well outside the scope of the Bill.

Untying Departments from the PSA will put financial responsibility where it should be—with the user Departments. It will enable Departments to obtain value for money through their own purchasing decisions instead of having to rely on a central Department to make the decisions for them. That is one of the fundamental principles of the financial management initiative that predates the Bill.

Mr. O'Brien: I should like to clarify what the Minister means. Does he think that when the Home Office wants to develop or build a new prison the design work should be left to the PSA and not to the client Department, which is the Home Office? Is the Minister saying that the Home Office will not have an input into the design or building of a new prison but that it will be left to the PSA? Will the same principles apply to the building of a National Health Service hospital? Does the Minister agree that it is for the client Department to instruct the PSA, which then presents designs for which the client can choose? Is not that the way that it works?

Mr. Chope: That is indeed the way in which the system largely works at the moment. Prior to untying, Departments had no choice but to go to the PSA. They now have the opportunity to go to other organisations. That is why the document issued by the Ministry of Defence, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, praises the essence of the financial management initiative about untying. It says that untying from the PSA will bring greater choice. That is what it is all about.

The financial management initiative aims to obtain value for money through a clearer definition of responsibilities and the benefits of competition. To carry out those responsibilities effectively, each Department will need some expertise to know when or even how to commission consultant advice. Departments will need to be intelligent customers for professional services. That is the essence of what is proposed.

It might be helpful to the House if I refer briefly to an extract from the annual report of the central unit on purchasing. It states:

"Arrangements were made to transfer financial responsibility from PSA to departments (effective from April 1989) for part 1 capital works and to simultaneously untie departments from the requirement to employ PSA. Maintenance and minor works would follow a similar path in April 1990. CUP has been directly involved in three areas:

—development of ownership responsibilities in owning departments;

—development of a more commercial approach to project management in PSA, together with appropriate organisational and procedural changes both in PSA and the owner departments;

—providing specific support and professional input to individual projects.

Major departments have adopted the concept of a single point responsibility for each capital project and many have initiated organisational changes . . . In some departments with large works programme, technical support organisations are being developed to assist the project sponsor. These units will provide the technical expertise necessary to inform the sponsor's decisions. This is a vital role which will significantly improve the project appraisal and management during all stages of the project."

Fewer people are involved in that than are presently involved in the PSA. It is interesting to note that the central unit on purchasing concludes that, although it is too early to have a full assessment of the effects of untying, "it is already clear that project sponsors are benefiting from a more responsive and flexible PSA which, coupled with greater commercialism, should result in a significant overall improvement in project performance."

That is the Government's aim. I hope that the House will reject the new clause.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: A terrible experience for Scotland was the PSA construction of new court buildings. The PSA was advised by the Scottish courts administration. The buildings are all impracticable, extravagant and extraordinarily badly designed. If they had been subject to commercial competition, it is impossible to believe that buildings that touch upon the lives of so many people could either have been so expensively built or so badly designed.

Mr. Chope: I am disappointed to hear what my hon. and learned Friend says. I visited some of the court projects in Scotland and I know that the client, the Scottish Office department responsible for courts in Scotland, is much impressed by the work that the Property Services Agency has carried out. I looked at the new sheriff court in Glasgow. Although the design of the building may not be to everybody's taste and perhaps not to the taste of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), he cannot disagree that the building is mammoth and that it is effective for the function that it has to perform.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am amazed that the Minister chose Glasgow sheriff court as the building on which to model the excellence of the PSA. A more impracticable building could not be discovered. It was vastly over budget, 90 per cent. of the space is unused, and to reach the only consultation room the solicitor is required to pass between the cages in which prisoners awaiting trial are kept. It takes half an hour to get from the court to visit a

client. There are 15 armchairs in the dock but only two places for counsel who represent the people in the dock. If that is good design, God help us.

Mr. Chope: I am sorry that that court's design does not appeal to my hon. and learned Friend, who has experience of using it.

The best court building that the PSA has commissioned in recent years is the court building in Truro, which has won probably half a dozen design awards. It is regarded as one of the best buildings built last year. I was lucky enough to be present when its foundation stone was laid and at its opening. Everybody is much impressed by it. Many other court buildings for which the PSA has been responsible have received similar accolades from the architectural profession.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Given what I said in Committee, the Minister may be surprised that on Report I rise to agree with him strongly. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I do not take lightly what was said by someone who is not only a Back-Bench Member of Parliament but chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, an appointment that is made by the Government. This is not a jocular matter, because by implication some serious charges have been made against some important people, whose reputation may be affected. At his convenience, will the Minister, or the Secretary of State, write to me commenting on the intervention made by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn)? This is a grave issue.

7.30 pm

Mr. Chope: I do not think that I could go as far as that——

Mr. Dalyell: Why?

Mr. Chope: Because architecture is a subjective assessment of buildings. Architects disagree about the merits of a particular building. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross holds a different view about the sheriff court in Glasgow from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I congratulate the Minister on defending the architecture and the amount and quality of work done on those court buildings. If the PSA is so good, and I agree that it is, why are the Government privatising it?

Mr. Chope: The answer is quite straightforward: because the PSA is so good, it is important that its expertise is available in a wider market.

Mr. Soley: Is not the danger that the PSA will be lost? We know that it did extremely well before the Government began to run it down and turn it into a second-class service. Therefore, its value is not as high as it would have been a few years ago. Its past considerable achievements could be maintained if the Government were prepared to back it.

Mr. Chope: The facts show that the quality of work that the PSA is commissioning and doing is improving year after year. The work that has been done at Kew gardens is an example of the high esteem in which the PSA is held. The restoration of Fort George is a magnificent example of the PSA at its best. I am sure that it will have an enormous amount to offer the private sector, and I hope that it will do so not only domestically but internationally.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Before we are carried away on a tide of euphoria, I hope that hon. Members will recall the report that the Select Committee on the Environment made after it had interviewed and examined the PSA. In support of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), may I say that the Glasgow sheriff court was completed by the PSA, but the new senior judge wanted to enter court not from the left but from the right, so it had to start all over again. Hon. Members should consider the PSA's record on finishing jobs on time, but they should not consider its record on finishing work within the cost yardstick, otherwise they will have a heart attack.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Sometimes delays are incurred because, for example, a member of the judiciary disagrees about the design of a building. Sometimes those delays are blamed unfairly on the PSA, when truly the responsibility lies with the client. That is why the essence of the financial management initiative is to ensure that responsibility for such delay lies where it truly should—with the client.

We have explored the new clause conscientiously and thoroughly, and I hope that the House will reject it.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The point of the new clause is to avoid empire building within Departments. I am sure that Departments will find reasons for employing experts in security, building design or other matters.

The new clause aims to avoid duplication of functions that are covered by the PSA at present. I agree with the Minister about effective and efficient administration, but the danger is that duplication will affect the purpose of the Bill. The new clause has much to commend it in that respect.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I feel that I should intervene, given the remarks made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), to which I do not object. I am chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, and I hope that I was chosen for that position because I am sensitive to the appearance of buildings and their practicality and cost.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that Glasgow sheriff court is an example of the excellence of the Property Services Agency. In my opinion, it is a singular example of the fallacy of the monopoly of the PSA and of the excellence of the purpose of the Bill.

Glasgow sheriff court rivals in its appearance Goebbels' propaganda ministry in East Berlin, which still stands. It is brutal and hideous. Originally, it was planned to be one third higher than it is, but because the extravagance of its absurdity prevented it from being practical it was required to be one third lower. It is a building of great impracticality, and 90 per cent. of its usable space is unused. It is ill-designed, greatly extravagant and preposterous. Without challenge—the PSA cannot be subject to challenge—the agency decided that the bench in the court should be 40 to 50 ft long. The sheriff therefore cannot speak to the shorthand writer, who is too far away. The witness box is such that the jury cannot observe the witness, and the presiding judge is lower, and therefore

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

appears lower in status, than those appearing in court. There are 15 swivelling armchairs in the docks of the jury courts. I presume that the courts are expected to house 15 accused people, but the table at which their representatives sit has room for only two people on each side. Presumably, on the prosecution side will be the procurator fiscal and his assistant, and on the defence side one advocate and one solicitor.

The building is remarkably impractical. It has certain modern, tasteless features. The great arms of Glasgow has been smashed into bits so that it is incomprehensible and cast in granite over the door. I imagine that the hall is twice the length of the Chamber—for what purpose, I cannot imagine. The building is impractical. To go to the cells, one must go on a long trail, and there is no system of communication between the courts and the cells. At the cells, there is a huge area where the police can undertake their activities and it is unlike any other court that I have seen. However, there is almost no provision in the cell area for solicitors or lawyers to interview their clients. I question whether the Property Services Agency can design courts.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman saying that the court's design and layout were totally the PSA's responsibility and the client department was not involved? Does he believe that the client department does not become involved in that work?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: No, but unfortunately that makes it worse. The Scottish courts administration is the adult child of the PSA. There are extraordinarily badly designed courts in Airdrie, Greenock and Glasgow. Look at what the PSA and the Scottish courts administration propose for the High Court in Glasgow, one of the great buildings of the city. They propose a ruinous and impractical scheme, which was opposed by everyone else, as was the Glasgow sheriff court which practises therein. Therefore, nothing could be better than challenging the PSA's dominance.

I have had the benefit, or otherwise, of being a Minister. On the first day I moved into my small office, I was visited by six people from the PSA—Mr. Curtain, Mr. Carpet, Mr. Desk, Mr. Chair, Mr. Picture and Mr. Someone Else —who told me that they would transform my office at a cost of £6,600. When the PSA offered to move the Crown Office into the royal high school building in Edinburgh, it did the same, except this time at a cost of £160,000. Monopolies of this kind that fall to Ministers and Government agencies should be challenged by those who have more common sense and more idea of economy and practicalities. If the Minister wants to come with us to Glasgow sheriff court, either as a client or as a colleague, I shall show him the absurdity of the work carried out by the PSA.

Mr. Dalyell: I have not yet been to Glasgow sheriff court, but I am not sure that I want to go as either the client or the colleague of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). I have, however, been to Fort George, where the work was done brilliantly. Last week, I was at Kew gardens for the speech by the Prince of Wales on rain forests—a matter close to the heart of the Secretary of State. The experts, whom we both know, were full of praise for the PSA's careful work to take account of special needs. The PSA did a brilliant job there.

Mr. O'Brien: I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) if he believes that, if a private consultant or architect designed a court house, there would not be changes to the design. Changes are made whether a building is designed by the PSA or by a private company or architect. If a judge says that he wants to enter the court room from the right, that will affect the PSA and the private consultant. If that is the Bill's basis, there are no grounds for pursuing it, because nothing will change.

7.45 pm

Mr. Holt: Paragraph 72 of the Environment Select Committee's report states:

> "The original concept of an all-embracing agency has failed the test of experience. The PSA was established to provide a total service to Departments, but its functions have gradually been chipped away by its client Departments. It has been found to be too impotent and too cumbersome, with lines of communications that are far too long."

That damning paragraph explains why we need to privatise the PSA.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister referred to project performance as one reason for giving the various functions to the client Departments. How does one measure project performance unless there is someone in each Department measuring it? The Select Committee's report did not refer to project performance. Research is needed to determine what the Minister means by measuring project performance. He paid credit to the Truro court house. If such expertise is available, why do the Government want to lose it? The Minister said that he would like the PSA to move into a wider market. Why are we not discussing a provision to allow that to happen, instead of destroying it?

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman referred to the Government. I should like to make it absolutely clear that the Select Committee's report was a unanimous report by all parties.

Mr. O'Brien: There is no reference in the report to the Minister's point about project performance. I should be interested to learn how the Minister will ensure that project performance is measured in every Department that will benefit from the Bill, as they will all have their own mini-PSAs.

We should discuss how to give those people with expertise in the PSA and the Crown Suppliers more opportunities to work in the private sector. Because they are dictated to by the Department of the Environment, they are prevented from undertaking other work, just as happens with local authority public works departments. If the aim is to provide a wider market for the expertise of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers, that could be provided without this legislation.

The Minister has not given us a good reason why we should not pursue the new clause. I know that we have only limited time in which to debate the new clause and amendments, and the Third Reading, and I do not intend to divide the House now; we intend, however, to divide it on Third Reading.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 1

TRANSFER OF PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY AND CROWN SUPPLIERS

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 21, at end insert

', with the exception of the Security Group of the Property Services Agency and any property, rights or liabilities related to security work.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this we may take amendment No. 4, in clause 6, page 3, leave out line 46.

Mr. McFall: In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked the Minister what advice he had on security, and whether it was properly discussed with those responsible. When he asked whether the matter had been referred to either the secretariat or the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Minister failed to answer. If he had said that it was subject to proper discussion, we would not now be discussing the amendment. I suspect that there is now a bigger tale to be told.

We also asked in Committee whether the Minister had raised the matter with the Ministry of Defence. He replied that the Secretary of State for Defence, being a member of the Cabinet, agreed with the decisions that had been made, but again he did not say what the security personnel thought about the matter. As a member of the Select Committee on Defence, I had an opportunity to raise the point with MOD officials, who replied—in a manner that was both sophisticated and as bland as the Minister's—that they had their concerns, but that those concerns would be discussed later. In our view, they have not been resolved because the Minister has not turned his attention to them.

I can give an example. The Select Committee discussed the physical security of military installations. Having engaged in public discussions with the MOD over the past few weeks, we have discovered that when security is handed over to private firms they pay poverty wages. We have also discovered massive loopholes. Last week, for instance, I asked the Assistant Under-Secretary whether it was possible for someone to deceive the authorities by assuming a different name, and to get into a military installation. The reply was that it was eminently possible. When I asked the MOD police, I received the same answer. That loophole must be closed.

I fear that the Minister has paid even less attention to the Bill's security implications than the MOD has paid to the physical security of military installations, and that the consequences of his lack of rigour may be severe. He has responded inadequately not only to Opposition Members, but to his hon. Friends. In Committee, the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) said that he hoped that the Minister would take on board the concern felt by many hon. Members; again, the Minister would give no details.

The Minister himself said in Committee that the majority of the PSA's work was sensitive in security terms, some of it extremely sensitive: for example, more than two thirds of its new construction and maintenance programme is for the MOD. He cited the Clyde submarine base in my constituency, where 110 major projects are currently under way. I take his point that much of the work is untied at present, and that most of those 110 contracts will be carried out by private firms. I am concerned about the maintenance jobs. In the case of the submarine base, 200 jobs are involved. There are 90 industrial and 36 technical staff. It is important for staff to have a deep knowledge of the workings of such plants, which are enormously complex technically, and such knowledge can be gained only through historical familiarity with them.

I told the Minister that people who knew had told me that it would take a new operator at least 12 to 15 months to gain hands-on experience of the plant—to build up expertise on a learning curve. How can that happen if the contracts are subject to competitive tender, as the Minister says that they will be? The logic of privatisation is that the PSA must compete for work; if it is not to compete, what is the use of privatisation? If work is always given to the PSA for security reasons, I suggest that Faslane and other such installations should not be included in the privatisation proposals.

In Committee, the Minister was asked whether he had undertaken a risk assessment, taking account of possible management failure. The answer was no. In view of that, I consider it not only reckless but dangerous to proceed with the privatisation programme. The leaked report by the PSA's regional directors predicts a 32 per cent. cut in business contracts and a possible loss of 200 jobs. Still worse, the loss of either Rosyth or Faslane would have a major impact on the PSA's viability. I ask the Minister to consider not only the financial but the security implications.

It would be fine if the Minister's case was consistent, but the Committee knew from the outset that it was not. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) asked a question which bears repetition: if the Secretary of State's car and the design and security of Minister's homes are to be under the control of the PSA or a suitable Government Department, how can it be acceptable to transfer other personnel who face the threat of the paramilitary? I would like the Minister to answer that question now so that I can take the answer back to the people who work in the military installations in my constituency. What is the difference between the security implications for a Minister or his home, and the implications for highly sensitive military bases? By his failure to answer that question, the Minister underlines both the paucity and the danger of his proposals.

Another inconsistency has developed since the Committee has been in business. For reasons well known to all of us, in some parts of the United Kingdom services will not be put out to competitive tender. The Minister denies that at his peril. If that is acceptable, why is it not acceptable for services involving military installations and security bases not to be put out at all? The Minister must explain that inconsistency tonight. I have to tell my constituents that PSA work services in certain parts of the United Kingdom will not go out to tender. However, they will go out at Faslane and at the Clyde submarine base because the Minister does not believe that the Clyde submarine base is a sufficiently high security service for it not to go out to tender. That is the only conclusion that I can draw from the Government's inconsistency. I hope that the Minister can at least smooth out that manifest inconsistency.

The Minister has shown that he cares little for the 200 or 300 jobs that will be lost in Scotland or for the 1,000 jobs that will be lost throughout the United Kingdom. I

[Mr. McFall]

can conclude only that by privatising the PSA the Minister may save some money. However, will he save lives at the bases that are affected? The Minister is being reckless by pursuing the privatisation proposal. He has not fully thought out the proposal and he does not have the full agreement of the security forces. He is jeopardising the lives of the service personnel in our United Kingdom bases. He should be ashamed about that, and that is why we will press the amendment.

8 pm

Mr. Livsey: The amendment is very important because the privatisation of the PSA will have considerable security implications. The PSA designs and maintains sensitive security sites such as RAF Fylingdales, GCHQ and, as has already been stated, the nuclear submarine base at Faslane. Therefore, PSA staff are vetted for those purposes and are also subjected to the Official Secrets Act 1911. The PSA also security vets every contractor working on a Government site and nearly one employee in 10 is rejected by that vetting. Vetting is expensive and time consuming and the whole procedure may be put in jeopardy because of the thrust towards privatisation in which profit may overtake security implications.

The American and West German Governments have already informed our Government that they will work only through British civil servants for design and maintenance on their military sites for which the PSA works. I understand that there are 500 civil servants in Germany looking after the building and maintenance of military installations. If the West German Government believe that they should remain in place because of the security implications, that is an important consideration. The West German and American Governments oppose privatisation. Will the Minister tell us what feedback he has had in his discussions with those Governments?

Will the Minister name any other countries in which the functions that we are discussing tonight are privatised? Other countries are not prepared to privatise such work. Ministers have also decided that security work on Cabinet Ministers' homes and their own homes will not be privatised while work on military and married quarters will be.

Recent tragic events have shown that the homes of military personnel are as vulnerable to terrorist attack as ministerial residences. If the privatisation of the PSA poses no security threat, why are Ministers' residences excluded from the privatisation plans? There is an inconsistency there which the Minister must answer. That is one of the reasons why my party will oppose the Bill tonight. We have not been satisfied by any of the assurances that the Minister has given about security.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The question of security has taxed the patience of this House for many years. Lapses of security have always created a sense of anger and sometimes frustration when we have not been able to get explanations from the Government—and by Government I mean Governments of all political persuasions. Security is a subject which in some form touches us all. However, whenever we show an interest in how to deal with it and how to put our views to the authorities about how security could be enhanced and ringfenced to provide the highest levels of public confidence, we are treated at arm's length.

The Bill is small, but it affects many people. When we discussed new clause 1 we were not satisfied that certain things such as empire building in the Departments—under the heading of replication—would not occur. Also we have heard nothing that persuades us of the case for privatisation.

The Government may have an argument on privatisation and security. They may be able to say that large areas of private enterprise deal with sensitive security matters where there are no problems. The Government may be justified in claiming in those cases that there are satisfactorily ringfenced and regulated accountability conditions so there is a higher level of support for work to be placed in the private sector than in the public sector. Very often there are unfortunate lapses in the public sector. However, that is not a good argument.

My colleagues have already said that an outstanding disparity follows the unfortunate reasoning behind the privatisation proposal. Why will we exclude Ministers' houses from the proposal? Why should it be a logical conclusion that what is good for Ministers' houses is not good enough for other properties? In many cases people are more in the front line of danger than Ministers.

I remember being very worried when I was a young officer in the last war. Over the years since then I have pondered about how silly it is for us to send young boys of only 17½ and 18 to Ireland. They do not even know where the enemy is. That is an example of people at the sharp end of the problem who are in danger.

I do not want to underestimate the importance of the work of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, because his is a very dangerous job. However, he is guarded every moment of the day. Therefore, the Bill falls short. We are treating Ministers differently. That cannot be logical.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, when he describes Ministers, he should also refer to former Ministers, some of whom are his colleagues?

Mr. Leadbitter: Some of them are so long past that I often have a sneaking suspicion that they enjoy their security too much to allow it to wither away. Nevertheless, one does not want to be too critical about dangerous situations. We must act responsibly.

Is there a case for privatisation? To put it another way, when we have satisfactory security in defence programmes throughout the United Kingdom, will we put security at risk if we privatise security at defence installations? That is a very good question, and the Minister should be able to answer it. The issue is not party political. Hon. Members have a common interest. We want to know whether, although there is a case for responding reasonably to high standards of security in the private sector, there is a case for widening it and, therefore, possibly weakening it.

There has been ample time for consultation. What representations has the Minister received from security officers and from representatives of the PSA? Have they indicated any concern, and has the Minister responded to them? Hon. Members may be more confident if the Minister is able to tell the House that consultations have

satisfied him and, therefore, that they should satisfy us. I suspect that he will not be able to tell us that with any confidence.

Mr. Soley: This has been an important debate. Hon. Members may recall that this subject was important also on Second Reading and in Committee. As I said on Second Reading, the Government have not thought through the consequences of their actions in privatising the PSA and the Crown Suppliers. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) has moved amendment No. 2 dealing with security. Amendment No. 4 would exclude Northern Ireland from the scope of the Bill. On Second Reading, I said that the Bill would allow paramilitaries operating out of Northern Ireland to have greater opportunities for terrorism in this country and in Northern Ireland and for raising money in Northern Ireland.

One of the best speeches in Committee was made by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) on behalf of the SDLP in Northern Ireland. He pointed out what I and other Committee Members have known for all too long, which is that paramilitary groups on both sides—Unionist and Republican—obtain significant sums of money from threats and extortion. The most vulnerable groups include the private building sector and related organisations. The hon. Member for South Down pointed out that it is well known in the Province that 20 per cent. is usually added to the cost of a contract, and that sum is passed on to paramilitary groups.

8.15 pm

If hon. Members are satisfied with that, it would be a shame. They cannot be satisfied. If we include Northern Ireland in the scope of the Bill, and we privatise several organisations, there will be the real danger that funding for paramilitary groups will be increased. I put it no higher than that. I do not expect the Government to say how they have adequately coped with that. However, on Second Reading, it was clear that they had not thought about the consequences. In Committee, it was clear that the Minister did not know all the answers. Perhaps one should not expect him to do so, because the information is particularly sensitive, but I have no reason to believe that adequate thought has been given to how to proceed with the privatisation.

When a service in Northern Ireland is privatised, company directors are threatened that, if they take on Crown contracts, they or their work force may be shot. That is precisely what happens there—they are shot. Several people have been shot in the past few months. If the Government have got this wrong, it is literally a fatal warning to people in Northern Ireland. I would much prefer that this matter is kept out of the Bill so that we do not create that possibility.

If we are satisfied with present security—the Government are always telling us that they are doing everything possible to improve and maintain security—surely we should not be changing the practice. If they think that this measure will improve security, surely they can say so. They have not said whether it will improve security or make it worse. The most that we have had is an indication that, somehow or other, the measure will not do any damage. It is deeply disturbing that the Government's policy is not well thought out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton, who was ably supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), referred to Ministers' cars and homes. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton and I challenged the Minister on the privatisation of the car driving service and the security of people's homes and the exclusion of Ministers' cars and homes. The Minister said:

"The hon. Member for Linlithgow knows that a review was carried out in 1988 after the announcement of our intention to privatise the Crown Suppliers. That review concluded that the ministerial car service and some of the Crown Supplier's work on security furniture and equipment should be retained within Government. The reason in the first case was the nature of the terrorist threat to Ministers. In the second case, security considerations argued against delegating to a private firm either the design and development work of the Crown Suppliers security branch or their work in choosing and approving manufacturers."

The House should note those final words: "choosing and approving manufacturers."

The Minister has just intervened to respond to the argument about why Ministers' cars and their home security were excluded from the provisions. His defence was, incredibly, that it was all right because it applied to Ministers of both parties, from this Government and from previous Governments. That is unacceptable. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton said, that will not apply to service men's families or homes or to a number of senior civil servants who are at least as much at risk—and in some cases more at risk—from terrorists than Ministers. According to the Minister in Committee, the security is necessary for Ministers, so why is it not also necessary for senior civil servants and the families of service personnel, who are at least as much at risk?

I repeat what I said on Second Reading. The Labour party is not prepared to accept a second class of security for civil servants or for service men or their families compared with that offered to Ministers, whether they are Labour or Tory Ministers, past or present. That argument is unacceptable to us and it should be unacceptable to all hon. Members.

The first time that a senior civil servant or a member of the armed forces or one of their families is killed or seriously injured as a result of a second-class service, the responsibility will be on those who have supported the Government on this Bill. The position is that serious. That is why the Opposition are so opposed to the Bill and that is why we are now seeking to exclude Northern Ireland from the provisions and exclude the security group of the Property Services Agency and its related design facilities.

Mr. Leadbitter: My hon. Friend must convey distinctly and clearly that the lesson is that if the Government cannot show that their proposals do not put security at risk, they should not put them into practice.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Sadly, he did not serve on the Standing Committee with us; his expertise and knowledge would have been useful. The tragedy is that, over and over again, the most that the Minister has been able to tell us is that he does not think that there is a risk. That is not sufficient. As I have already said, if the Government were to suggest that by keeping Northern Ireland on the face of the Bill—in other words, including privatisation provisions for Northern Ireland—security in Northern Ireland would be improved, it is probable that we should have to accept that as the Government's judgment because, although we cannot ask

[Mr. Soley]

for evidence on the Floor of the House, at least we would have something to work on. However, the Government will not say that. They simply say that, in their judgment, the provisions will not make security any worse.

As I have already said, the hon. Member for South Down, who lives in Northern Ireland and knows the scene there and who put the case so forcefully and so well in Committee, has not yet had the response that he deserves to his serious speech.

Further to the intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool, the issue of Ministers' cars and homes is the clinching argument. If, according to the Minister's own words, this level of security is so necessary for Ministers of the Crown, why is it not necessary for civil servants or for armed service men and their families? Either security for Ministers is better, in which case we should bring everyone's security up to that level, or it is worse, in which case we should improve security for Ministers. The Minister's statement in Committee was clear. He said specifically that the facility should not be privatised for security reasons. Therefore, one assumes that that is because the PSA offers a higher standard than could be achieved in the private sector. If that is the argument—and it must be the only argument unless the Minister has any other suggestions—its logic should also apply to senior civil servants and to members of the armed forces and their families. There should not be a second-class standard or second-class delivery of security services for such people. That is the force of our argument and we should believe that it is a powerful argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton made some extremely important comments. When considering the design of military bases in this country, we must also consider not only what happens on the base itself, but the perimeter security and everything that goes with that in terms of the people who enter the base to work on it. If my memory serves me right, it was the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) who said in Committee that it was quite normal for outside contractors to go on to United States or German bases to provide, for example, fast-food outlets. We know that. But I shall refer again to his exact words in Committee. Although I have already quoted this passage, I emphasise the words at the end. The Minister referred to

"the design and development work of the Crown Suppliers security branch or their work in choosing and approving manufacturers."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 11 January 1990; c. 84.]

What is going to happen when a company is chosen to do some work at Faslane, Aldermaston or one of the other bases in this country? At the moment the PSA has some say about which company should carry out the work and takes into account security factors and the people who work for the company, to the extent that one in 10 of all employees are excluded on security grounds. Although we are told that that system will end, the Government's secret argument is, "Ah but, it will not disappear because we shall transfer it to the relevant Department. It could be transferred to, for example, the Ministry of Defence."

Although we are also told that there will not be any mini-PSAs, in fact, that is exactly what we shall have. Presumably, the Ministry of Defence, the Northern Ireland Office, the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and a number of other key Ministries will all have their own mini-PSAs for security work. The alternative is to keep the whole thing as a national body, in which case why are we privatising it? Why do the Government not say, "We accept the two amendments, one excluding Northern Ireland and the other excluding the security group and its related work"? I can well understand that the Minister may keep the security group out of the privatisation, but I am concerned about the related security work.

Let us consider the lighting that is necessary on the perimeters of secure establishments. The design, location and the lighting itself are the work of the PSA and can be crucial. Experimental work is carried out into the anti-blast properties of the materials that are used in the homes of, for example, service men's families, senior civil servants, Ministers and at military installations in general. That work is not only controlled and supervised by the PSA, but carried out by the PSA itself in many instances. However, much of the work is now to be carried out either by in-house PSA in the relevant Ministry or by a private contractor.

The problem does not stop there. Let us consider Broadmoor and Britain's prisons. Again, the work of the PSA is essential to security. That is why I want to make it clear that, leaving aside the amendment covering Northern Ireland, we are raising the full range of security issues that are affected, in relation not only to terrorism or defence, but to all the secure establishments that are necessary in our society.

I repeat for the third or fourth time that the Opposition do not expect the Minister to give us details of the security thinking or of the discussions that have taken place. However, if the Minister cannot explain his comments when he said that for security reasons it is necessary not to privatise Ministers' cars and the design, selection and approval of their manufacturers, he should explain why that is necessary for other areas and for other groups of people, such as civil servants. If he is not going to privatise any of those categories, he must address the argument about the mini-PSAs and tell us whether there will be a national group.

The Minister should be able to say categorically that if the Bill is to apply to Northern Ireland, in the judgment of the Government it will improve the security position there. If the Government cannot make that statement, it will not be enough to say that the Bill will make no difference. All the remarks of the hon. Member for South Down about the activities of paramilitaries and all that we know about threats to employers and companies that do Crown work show that the Bill would risk making the position worse. The Opposition believe that that risk is not worth taking.

8.30 pm

Mr. Warren: Many of the matters about which I was going to voice concern have already been raised by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), with whom I share considerable anxiety about security.

If I had been on the Standing Committee, I should have tried to obtain more detail than seems to have been obtained—but from what I have read of the report of the Committee, I am confident that my hon. Friend the Minister will give us some reassurances.

I am worried about a particular matter. The unions have drawn the attention of the House to the dangers that they regard as inherent in what they call the Trojan horse

of allowing repairs and maintenance to be done by sub-contractors who are not covered by security clearance when the work requires clearance.

As Opposition Members said, we do not expect my hon. Friend the Minister to describe in public the security arrangements of those who need the cover of security. Nor do I believe that all Members of Parliament are at risk from terrorist attack. We must take our own precautions according to what is required. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will tell the House that those who require the cover of security for repair and maintenance work to their property or transport will continue to receive it. If the chauffeur service is not to be privatised, what about security clearance of those who carry out repairs and maintenance on the vehicles? What about unknown contractors who carry out repairs and maintenance work in the homes of civil servants? In Northern Ireland civil servants carry out everyday duties which here on the mainland are regarded as straightforward, but which carry an inherent risk there because the nature of those duties is considered by terrorists to be contrary to what they stupidly deploy as their views.

I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that the matter does not divide the House but unites it. I hope that he will bear that in mind when he replies.

Mr. Chope: I give an absolute assurance to every hon. Member who has spoken and to the House that security is not jeopardised by the Bill one iota. The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), who opened the debate, expressed anxieties about security. Perhaps I can remind him of the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave to a question tabled by the hon. Gentleman on 6 February. The question was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the security of military installations of privatisation of the Property Services Agency."

My hon. Friend replied:

"The arrangements for the security of military installations will not be adversely affected by the privatisation of the Property Services Agency."—[*Official Report*, 6 February, 1990; Vol 166, c. 593.]

Opposition Members do not seem prepared to accept that that is the position. I find that a sad reflection on them.

All aspects of the security of service married quarters will remain the responsibility of the relevant armed service and will continue to be taken seriously. Up to now the PSA has acted as the agent of the Ministry of Defence for the construction and maintenance of married quarters and other service buildings. It will continue to do so in future. The PSA and the many civilian contractors that it already uses are subject to the general and local security arrangements in force at the time. The privatisation of the PSA will not affect such arrangements in any way. All security matters will remain the responsibility of the appropriate service commander. Therefore, it is absolute nonsense for Opposition Members to suggest that a double standard is being applied. Security is provided with a single standard for the whole of Government business.

In Committee, the Government were guided by the advice that they received on security matters. When we were considering the details of the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers and deciding which parts of it should be privatised, we were guided by that advice. I assured the Committee, and I assure the House today, that we shall accept the advice tendered. The advice tendered on the ministerial car service was that it should not be privatised. Although I know that some of my colleagues and some Opposition Members feel that it would be perfectly reasonable to privatise the service, we shall not privatise it because our advisers tell us that it would be wrong to do so on security grounds. That shows that the Government regard the issue of security as of paramount importance.

Mr. Soley: Were the security services consulted about the risk of privatising the PSA where it affects the security of service men and their families and civil servants? If so, what did they advise?

Mr. Chope: Private companies are already involved in the security of, for example, Ministers' residences. The hon. Gentleman and others have suggested that virtually all Ministers have security at their residence. The House will know that only a few Ministers have security precautions at their residence. Those who have security arrangements have them because of the position that they hold or have held. That includes former Ministers from both sides of the House.

Mr. Soley: My question was about a matter on which the advice was clear. The Government were told not to privatise security for Ministers' cars and homes. I am asking whether advice was requested on the security of service men and their families and civil servants. If so, what was the answer? Was it that it was OK to privatise that service because it was not a security risk? If so, what was the difference?

Mr. Chope: There is no difference. The present arrangements for Ministry of Defence establishments and employees will apply in the future. The arrangement is that Ministers and, where necessary, senior officials and service men on official business all have access to secure forms of official transport, either civilian or military, as their duties require. That is the position now and will be the position in future.

Mr. Leadbitter: The Minister must bear it in mind that the House will not be critical of the advisers to whom he must listen. However, the House must consider the history of advisers. Sometimes advice is good and sometimes it is bad. Only experience can tell us that. This matter unites the House. To what extent has consultation with the people affected by the Bill, whose future will be determined by it, and who are worried about the security services, supported the advice that the Minister has been given?

Mr. Chope: We have completed the consultation on privatisation of the Crown Suppliers. The process has been carried out to the satisfaction of all parties. I am sure that the same will be true of the privatisation of the PSA. The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) is aware that the PSA is not to be privatised until the second half of 1992. At this stage the finer details of security matters have not been worked out. That is why I give the assurance that the Government will listen to and follow the advice that they receive on those matters and will not put security at risk in any way. I hope that that will be acceptable to the House.

Mr. McFall: The Minister said that ministerial cars and homes, and civil servants' homes, will not be subject to tendering. Is he telling us that politicians and civil servants face a greater threat and that their security interests are

[Mr. McFall]

more paramount than those of military personnel and their families, and military installations? That is the only deduction that we can make. Is that the case?

Mr. Chope: That is not the case. The Government accept the advice that they are given by their security advisers. The Ministry of Defence listens to security advice and decides how to act on it in relation to its serving personnel and their dependants. Likewise, the Government listen to security advice and act on it in relation to the protection of Ministers and former Ministers. I am sure that most people would accept that that is a reasonable way to proceed. The Government do not second-guess security advice; they receive advice and act on it. That is a responsible way to behave.

Mr. Soley: I wish to pursue this on a further intervention because the matter is extremely important. The PSA and the Crown Suppliers operate across a wide range of services. Two of the Government-appointed bodies that reported said that privatisation should not take place. The third report, the only one that dealt with how to privatise, was asked a different question. It was asked not whether privatisation should take place but how it should take place. If the first two reports advised against privatisation, was security one of the reasons for that advice? Given that the Minister made it clear in Committee that all the security work of the Crown Suppliers should not be privatised, is he saying that it will not be privatised, so the Government accept amendment No. 2?

Mr. Chope: No advice that we received on those earlier reports was directed towards the issue of security, but one report mentioned security in relation to the Government car service. The advice was that the service should not be privatised on security grounds. I am sure that it comforts the hon. Gentleman to know that the Government are following that advice.

Mr. Soley: I apologise to the Minister for intervening before he has answered my second question. What troubles me about that is that it suggests that the Turton report and the second Government-appointed group took account of only the Government side of the work and not the wide range of work beyond that. The least that the Government should be able to tell us is that the security implications of the Bill across the whole range of work, including prisons and special hospitals for the security services or the relevant group of police who deal with these matters, were given detailed consideration.

Mr. Chope: Perhaps I can come to those issues. Certainly I can deal with the point about the amendment and why it is not acceptable to the Government, and the extent to which the Government accept the spirit behind it.

The intention behind the amendment is to prevent the PSA from undertaking security sensitive work once it is in the private sector. The effect would be to make a clumsy impracticable and unnecessary division of the work undertaken by the PSA, between that included in a scheme in clause 1 and that retained in Government. The amendment is clumsy and impracticable because it assumes that there are clear distinctions between management of security sensitive and non-security sensitive work. That is not the case. In most areas, the work contains a mixture of both. That is why the amendment is unacceptable.

More than two thirds of the PSA's new construction and maintenance programme is for the Ministry of Defence. The PSA is currently responsible for the project management, oversight and design of the facilities for the Trident submarine base at Coulport, Faslane and Rosyth. It manages the maintenance of all the front-line operational RAF and USAF air bases in the United Kingdom. It is the agent for arranging the construction and maintenance of barracks and married quarters for the British Army in the United Kingdom and overseas.

8.45 pm

On the civil side, the PSA has responsibilities that include overseeing the design and building of new high security prisons for the Home Office. It is also responsible for works services at Buckingham palace, Windsor castle, the Palace of Westminster and No. 10 Downing street. It maintains buildings and services at GCHQ in Cheltenham.

Although the PSA manages all those works, that does not imply that it is responsible now for determining security requirements. It is the responsibility of the client Department to assess the level and nature of the threat to its various facilities and to decide what type of protection is needed. That is true, for example, of the weapon resistance of hardened aircraft shelters and the physical protection of individual Government buildings. The PSA's task is to take the requirements specified by the client and arrange to design facilities that meet those requirements.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister says that the PSA is responsible for No. 10 Downing street. Will he confirm that on 24 January the Prime Minister went to the Tate gallery to see its £1 million revamp and said of the gallery management:

"I know, because they have told me, that since they didn't have to go to the PSA they have got a lot more value out of the money they've had. And, of course, I must tell you we have found the same in No. 10 Downing Street."?

Does the Minister share the Prime Minister's criticisms of what happened at No. 10 Downing street?

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend was commenting on the benefits of untying, which allow customers to decide what they want and where to get it. In effect, it gives customers choice. My right hon. Friend and I are in favour of choice and I hope that the House supports the Government on that.

Mr. Dalyell: Before a Prime Minister says such a thing, what cost comparisons are made between PSA work at Downing street and that which would be done by private firms?

Mr. Chope: I cannot go into the details of particular cases. The principle is that it should be for individual clients to decide whether they wish to use the PSA and then to invite quotations from those who may wish to tender. Following the financial management initiative, I am sure that this is becoming common practice throughout Whitehall and that as a result the Government are obtaining better value for money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) was worried about clients' responsibility for security clearances of staff and contractors. To ensure that sensitive information does not get into the wrong hands, the PSA, like all Government Departments and private

sector contractors, for example, in defence procurement, has arrangements for its staff to be security cleared. More rigorous clearances are required for the most sensitive work. There is a wide range of private sector consultants who, for many years, have been carrying out many aspects of design on sensitive projects under the PSA's overall direction. For example, almost all the work of construction, other than small scale maintenance jobs, is done by private contractors. The main radioactive liquid treatment plant at Aldermaston and the floating jetty for Trident submarines at Coulport have been designed by the private sector. All the staff involved were appropriately security cleared. No security distinction is made between a design done by secure consultants and that done by civil servants.

The PSA does certain types of design, such as prisons or airfield pavements, with its own staff rather than with consultants because, over time, it has developed those areas as specialisms, not because the design has been kept in-house for security reasons.

In answer to my hon. Friend, when the PSA is privatised it will be in the same position as the consultants with whom it will compete for work and its staff will be vetted in the same way as are the staff of the present consultants. Decisions about clearance requirements will turn on the nature of the work that the PSA wins or the arrangements that its Government customers demand, since it is the client, and not the consultant, that settles the security regime to be followed.

As I said earlier, although the vast majority of the PSA's current work is such that we are confident that privatisation will have no deleterious effect on security, there are exceptions to that. There is the remaining very small proportion of work that will be retained within Government. In the case of the Crown Suppliers, a review that we carried out in 1988 concluded that some of the Crown Suppliers' work should be retained within Government. In the case of the PSA, there are one or two areas where more work needs to be done before final decisions are taken about precisely which activities should be retained in Government. The security and privacy of Her Majesty the Queen and the royal family will be an essential consideration. Other activities concern specialised work at very sensitive facilities, including the development, installation and maintenance of high security equipment that the PSA carries out for a range of Government clients.

Discussions are currently taking place with all the interested parties in Government to decide how those functions should be handled in the future. But the privatisation of the PSA cannot take place before late 1992, so there is adequate time to make sure that we take the right decisions. If it is necessary, as it may well be, to retain specific functions in Government to preserve security, we shall certainly do so. I can assure the House of that.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) raised the issue of United States forces. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the building work managed by the PSA, with few exceptions, is undertaken by private sector building contractors, which have far more men on site at any one time than the PSA has. The United States air force has no general security bar on the use of private contractors on its bases in relation to the sort of services that the PSA provides. Indeed, it has private contractors on its bases for a number of purposes. I know that on one base it has a private sector security agent as well. Following privatisation, the PSA will be in the same position as are the other private sector companies on those bases.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) referred to Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, security is the responsibility of the customer who commissions the work, rather than of the PSA. The PSA undertakes work in Northern Ireland that is not related to the security services. For example, it works for Northern Ireland Departments, such as the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture, and it maintains Hillsborough castle. Those who have been to the castle recently have been much impressed by the work that the PSA has done there. It also works for the Inland Revenue and for Customs and Excise, and in the new competitive world that it now faces it could well offer very attractive services in areas in which it has skills and resources.

The purpose of clause 6(2) is to allow the PSA's organisation and facilities in Northern Ireland to be included in the privatisation. They represent a sizeable slice of the PSA's business, and Northern Ireland offers an important area of the United Kingdom where the company could seek to expand its markets.

Mr. O'Brien: Do I take it that the Northern Ireland Office, like the other Departments, will have its personnel —accountants, consultants, architects, the people who oversee the work—in place? Will the Northern Ireland Office have in post the same type of people as other Departments have in post?

Mr. Chope: The Northern Ireland Office will have in post the people who are necessary. For example, the Hillsborough castle project is under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Office. That Department has a project sponsorship role. The principles that apply to the Northern Ireland Office will be the same as those that apply to other Government Departments.

Mr. McFall: The Minister says that the same principles will apply. Does that mean that, in Northern Ireland, works services will be put out to competitive tender, as happens in other parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Chope: The details of how works services in Northern Ireland are dealt with have not yet been finalised. In his earlier remarks the hon. Gentleman jumped to a conclusion. No final decision has been taken about the way in which works services in Northern Ireland are to be dealt with. Obviously, security will be paramount.

Mr. Soley: When the PSA is privatised, the people in Northern Ireland who work for it will cease to be civil servants. At present any civil servant who comes under a serious death threat in Northern Ireland can be moved, not just from his home, but to a totally different job elsewhere. When the PSA is in the private sector, what safeguard will there be?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman speaks as if there were no private sector people working in Northern Ireland at present. Certainly the PSA people who work in Northern Ireland whom I have met, despite the threats under which they operate—and let us not kid ourselves: there are threats against PSA personnel in Northern Ireland, just as

[Mr. Chope]

there are threats against other people there—enjoy working in Northern Ireland and wish to continue doing so. I am sure that that will continue to be the case, whether they are in the private sector or in the public sector.

Mr. Soley: I am sure that those people enjoy working in Northern Ireland. They are also very brave. But the Minister is avoiding the question. The situation is that if one comes under a death threat, one can be moved from one's house. One can be moved to a Civil Service job elsewhere, even in another part of the United Kingdom. How could that happen if the organisation were in the private sector? In the private sector at the moment, one can be shot. Often, as happened very recently—it was reported in the press—companies withdraw from contracts. Are we going down that road? I want to know. When those people cease to be civil servants, and end up in the private sector, will they simply withdraw from the contract if they are threatened, or will there be arrangements to move them as if they were still civil servants?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is jumping to conclusions and is overstating his case. Indeed, he is doing so in a rather irresponsible way.

Mr. Soley: I do not accept that. Both I and the Secretary of State have had experience of the problems of Northern Ireland. I should be quite happy if the Secretary of State were to have a word with the Minister about this matter. We know that what I have just said is factually correct in every detail. I appreciate that the Minister may not have been told what the process is, but somebody somewhere must have given this matter some thought.

Mr. Chope: I do not think that it would be appropriate this evening to go into the details of what happens at present when such a situation arises in the private sector.

Mr. Soley: We know what happens.

Mr. Chope: I think that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed as to exactly what happens at present, as to the arrangements in particular circumstances when this occurs in the private sector. I do not think that it would be helpful to go into that tonight. Obviously, such considerations are very much in the forefront of the Government's mind in deciding what to do about privatisation of the PSA in the context of Northern Ireland. I do not think that the security of any individual in the PSA will be affected adversely by the arrangements.

Mr. McFall: The Minister has said that we are jumping to conclusions, but he is misleading the House, or talking ignorance. From public documents I can tell the Minister that works services will not be put out to competitive tender. I challenge the Minister on that point.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is making assertions and challenges, but I think that he is referring to a study that is now under way. The question is whether, initially, maintenance and minor works services will be put out to tender. In the first instance it is for the Ministry of Defence to consider the extent to which it will be involved in market testing. To my knowledge, no final decision has yet been taken on the matter and I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to speculation and studies that are now being undertaken. Ultimately, it will be for the MOD to decide how it will procure its works and maintenance in Northern Ireland. I assure the House that a decision has already been taken in principle that there will be competition for all major new works in Northern Ireland.

9 pm

To identify within legislation the security group as the part of the PSA to be retained within Government would be an imprecise and blunt instrument of administration. Currently some activities outside that group, such as emergency planning, may need to be retained within Government. Equally the review currently in progress may identify work that could readily be undertaken within the private sector.

All those issues are being reviewed and I hope that Opposition Members will accept that we treat seriously the question of where certain security activities should rest. Hon. Members will be aware that we brought into the PSA certain secure activities from the Crown Suppliers, which we thought were unsuitable within the private sector. Those and other activities in turn are likely to transfer to Property Holdings or elsewhere within Government.

I assure the House, as I did the Committee, that nothing will be done under the Bill that is against security advice. Security advice was taken in deciding those parts of the Crown Suppliers which are to be privatised and those parts which are not. We took decisions fully in accordance with that security advice. I hope that that gives confidence that we shall likewise take decisions fully in accordance with security advice when dealing with the detail of what is or what is not to be privatised in the PSA. Obviously, as privatisation is not due until 1992, there is plenty of time in the interim.

I hope that I have been able to allay hon. Members' concerns about security and that I have been able to show that the Government take the issue of security extremely seriously. The Bill in no way jeopardises that security.

Mr. Soley: With the permission of the House, I just wish to place it on record that our concerns have not been allayed, nor are we happy about this. We do not intend to press the amendment to a Division, but this is one of the issues on which we shall press for a Division on Third Reading.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2

TRANSFERRED STAFF

Mr. Dalyell: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 20 to 24 and insert

'the transferee shall

(a) provide pension rights and benefits which are comparable to those presently arising out of the principal Civil Service pension schemes; and

(b) provide so far as possible, redundancy compensation rights which are identical to those presently arising out of the principal Civil Service pension scheme, and no rights arising by virtue of this subsection shall be regarded as identical unless they are adequately funded and guaranteed.'.

I move this amendment on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and my other colleagues.

There is great concern about the issues of the terms of severance.

On 8 February the Minister wrote to me about matters of policy and administration not covered by the

Solicitor-General's written replies to questions raised in Committee. In the fourth paragraph of his letter, the Minister stated that a statement of terms of employment would be sent to staff while they were in the employment of the Government-owned company. He went on to say that this statement would then be binding on the purchasers of the shares in the company and would be enforceable against him by the staff.

How will that statement bind the eventual purchaser?

Does the Minister agree that the new owner will only be bound by the normal application of the rules of the law of contract?

Does he agree that the terms referred to may be changed by a new employer giving notice of alteration of those terms?

Does the Minister agree that in such circumstances the only options available to staff will be to accept the new conditions or refuse to accept them by quitting employment and claiming unfair dismissal?

Does he agree that the maximum compensation available under such a claim is limited to little more than £14,000? That is not adequate compensation for the loss of severance entitlements which may easily be worth in excess of £100,000.

The Minister should accept that a new employer who is constrained only by the normal rules of contract law is not bound in relation to terms. He must face up to the fact that the terms are easily changed by the new employer and the arrangements proposed in the third paragraph of his letter do not bind the new employer in any meaningful sense of the word.

Does the Minister agree that none of the arrangements proposed in the third paragraph of his letter protects the staff in the event of the new company being put into liquidation? In paragraph 4, the Minister says:

"If the new owner failed to pay the agreed redundancy terms the employee could sue . . . for breach of contract, and ask for summary judgment. The damages could be quantified because they could be ascertained from the statement of redundancy terms issued to staff."

In that paragraph the Minister describes one of the few circumstances in which a breach of contract could result in the recovery of damages approximating to severance entitlements. Those circumstances are limited. A redundancy payment would have to be under the terms of a transferred contract that had not been altered by the new employer.

Does the Minister agree that no prospect of recovering damages exists when no redundancy exists, an employer has given notice to vary the terms and no actual redundancy arises during the course of that notice or when the employer gives no notice to vary redundancy terms and the individual is not affected by redundancy during the period of notice that should have been given?

Will the Minister admit that a large variety of circumstances could arise in which staff could not take action for damages?

As a constituency Member of Parliament, I am extremely reluctant to advise any constituent to go to law unless he or she has an absolute cast-iron assurance of legal aid. In the cases that I have described legal aid might not be forthcoming.

Does the Minister agree that the only sure means to ensure that staff retain a practical course of action for damages is by making severance terms a statutory right? In any other case, terms may be varied and staff would have no means of redress except unfair dismissal.

Does the Minister agree that severance terms are at risk in the private sector? Will he propose some means to minimise that risk? That could be done by the Treasury underwriting the terms, as with the ordnance factories and dockyards, giving staff a statutory right to redundancy terms or setting up some kind of trust fund.

Does the Minister believe that there are no risks in the private sector? The furniture and furnishings trade is in deep recession at present and the Crown Suppliers is making a loss of £2 million.

Will the Minister admit that there is a risk that severance terms may not be honoured in the private sector? Where there is such a risk, it is incumbent on the Government to admit that severance pay might be at risk in some circumstances and protect staff when necessary.

The staff at the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers regard the security of their pensions and their redundancy compensation as crucial. They are alarmed at the Government's refusal to provide any protection other than that contained in the transfer of undertakings in the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, about which we had so much to say in Committee. I shall tell the House why.

This privatisation is unique, in that the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are neither monopolies nor established businesses. Both organisations are Government functions and as such are highly unsuitable for privatisation. The Crown Suppliers prove the point. Its main furnishings activity is in ruins. For 1989, its audited accounts will show a loss of about £9 million.

So bad are its prospects that the Minister has been begging other Departments to guarantee it work. In particular, he has pleaded with the Ministry of Defence to sign contracts which would have the Crown Suppliers provide exclusively all furnishing needs for the next two years. Without guaranteed work from the Government the management buy-out will lose its financial backing and other prospective purchasers will lose interest. The privatisation would collapse. How rich in irony it is that this Minister, the great advocate of open competition who so loudly has proclaimed that the customer must have the greatest possible choice, has performed a U-turn and is now imploring his fellow Ministers to forgo competition and guarantee the Crown Suppliers work.

Has the Minister suddenly become worried about what might happen to the Crown Suppliers' staff? The problems of a collapsed privatisation are serious. Guaranteed work over a limited period might satisfy bankers, but it does not satisfy the staff. The staff want a guarantee but of a different kind. They want their redundancy entitlements and their pensions guaranteed against future change imposed by the new owner. If accepted, the amendment would give them just that.

The Minister has come under great pressure on pensions and redundancy payments from staff and their trade unions. He recently sent me a letter seeking to provide further assurances about redundancy compensation. He said that the purchaser would be required to provide redundancy terms by

"sending a statement of the terms to the staff while the company in question is in Government ownership. That

[Mr. Dalyell]

statement would then be binding on the purchasers of the shares in the company and would be enforceable against him by the staff."

As to the actual payment of redundancy compensation, "if the new owner failed to pay the agreed redundancy terms the employee could sue . . . for breach of contract and ask for summary judgment. The damages could be quantified because they could be ascertained from the statement of redundancy terms issued to staff."

That might sound helpful, but I am advised that the assurances are not worth the paper they are written on, because the new owner can give notice of changes to the redundancy terms from day 1 of the sale and after an extremely short period of notice can then impose new terms.

The Minister is trying to pull the wool over our eyes. The notion that the letter drafted by the Crown Suppliers privatisation unit provides any meaningful protection is as fanciful as the notion that the Crown Suppliers privatisation unit knew nothing about the Crown Suppliers' extended contracts long before Second Reading of the Bill. The only real protection is through ensuring by statute that redundancy terms and pensions cannot be varied by the new owner without the agreement of staff.

The Minister has often said that the future for the PSA and the Crown Suppliers is bright. If that is so, the new owner will not be concerned by the amendment.

9.15 pm

I must return to the episode with the Prime Minister and Downing street. The Prime Minister cannot think that the future is bright because she virtually guaranteed that it would be rather dim. On 24 January she went to the Tate gallery to see its £1 million revamp and said:

"I know, because they"—

the Tate gallery management—

"have told me, that since they didn't have to go to PSA they have got a lot more value out of the money they've had. And, of course, I must tell you that we have found the same in No. 10 Downing Street."

That is not exactly a wonderful advertisement for the sale of the PSA; what a kick in the teeth it is for the staff of the PSA. Of course, the Prime Minister was not right. The Tate gallery did not invite the PSA to bid for the work, and No. 10 has had no work undertaken in which a cost comparison between PSA and private firms has been made. The right hon. Lady was wrong, but because she made those remarks, and because her Ministers and civil servants will be forced to make excuses, other Government Departments and potential customers in the private sector will believe her and will be less inclined to go to the PSA.

The right hon. Lady should admit the truth, and as compensation for the effect of her remarks she should instruct the Minister to agree to guaranteed severance and pensions by accepting this amendment.

The position on pensions is worse. The Minister has said that he will invite purchasers to provide broadly comparable pensions and that he will insist on it. He has also said that if the purchaser's pension scheme is inferior, the Government Actuary will be asked to assess the difference and to recommend a compensatory amount. However, the amount will not be sufficient to buy a pension equivalent to a Civil Service pension. It will merely be an amount to acknowledge the loss—in other words, to recognise that staff have suffered detriment and it will not compensate staff for the loss.

The Minister's intention is even nastier. He has said that the Government Actuary will take into account overall differences between the terms that staff now have and those offered by the purchaser. Therefore, if the purchaser offers more pay, a company car or better leave, the Government Actuary will put a value on those extras and deduct it from the compensation. If the new owner withdraws the better conditions soon after the sale, staff will have no entitlement to seek extra compensation from the Government.

There is no point in the Minister going on about breach of contract. The new owner merely has to give notice of a change, and once that notice has expired he or she is free to impose new terms. Even if the new owner does not give notice, the amount of damages that a court might award would be only the sum of the calculated loss during the notice period. The law is no friend of the employee in this matter.

The PSA and the Crown Suppliers staff believe that the Minister is prepared to swindle them out of thousands of pounds of hard-earned severance and pensions, and they have said as much in letters to hon. Members and by their actions. Recently the technical staff at the Crown Suppliers were asked whether they wanted to stay with the Crown Suppliers or to take early retirement or redundancy. More than two thirds said that they wanted to get out, but only one third will be allowed to leave.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith and I had the privilege of addressing many of the Crown Suppliers staff who came to a rally at the Central hall, in Westminster. There can be no doubt that they are loyal Government employees who feel considerable dissatisfaction. The PSA's employees' unions have skilfully manipulated the Minister to agree to ask the staff whether they want to stay, to move to other posts in the Civil Service, or to take early retirement or redundancy. This preference exercise will take place in March. The exercise is eminently sensible since the Minister is not prepared to play fair with their future conditions of service. However, the Minister, who says that he is a great proponent of free choice, will allow staff to leave only if they are not needed. If they are needed, he and the PSA's new get-rich-quick controllers will force staff to remain. I ask the Minister to tell the House the terms of the preference exercise, and the results when they are known.

I say bluntly to the House that Ministers are abusing their power. Their actions and intentions are undemocratic, hostile to the work force and add up to a good reason for voting Labour, as 23,000 staff will find when it comes to casting their vote.

Some of us have, perforce, put a quick legal case. Even if the Bill passes into law, my hon. Friends and I who were on the Committee will use every procedure of the House to monitor what happens to the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency staff. The matter will not go away. The severance terms for loyal staff who have served successive Governments are an absolute disgrace to our society.

Mr. Warren: My hon. Friend the Minister well knows the many concerns that I have expressed over several months about procedures for the privatisation which, in principle, I support. I hope that he does not think that I am being too hard on him when I say that as this is not the first privatisation by the Government, I would have expected to see a rule book to which he and my right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State would have had access so that there would not be tumult and concern among so many of my constituents.

The PSA is the largest single employer in my constituency. Over 1,000 staff work at Ashdown house and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) also has constituents employed by the PSA. All the concerns that have been raised by my constituents could have been alleviated by clear declarations on Second Reading or before about the intention of Government in relation to the future terms and conditions of those employed by PSA after privatisation. There are precedents for that which I am sure are well known. On Second Reading of the Ordnance Factories and Military Services Bill, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said:

"the new company pension scheme . . . will provide benefits"

for transferred employees

"comparable to those that they currently enjoy, including the continuation of index-linking."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1984; Vol. 52, c.104.]

On Report Lord Trefgarne said:

"the Government have undertaken that the company will provide for transferred employees a pension scheme which is comparable to the Principal Civil Service scheme . . . the benefits of the scheme will be comparable to those of the principal Civil Service pension scheme and will be index-linked in line with the 1971 Act."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 October 1984; Vol. 455, c. 954-55.]

All that could have been made clear at the beginning. I have received many thousands of letters and met many delegations, and people are rightly concerned that having chosen a life in the Civil Service, which included a pension scheme to which they contributed, it should be secure at all times. Doubt has been the source of concern and that has besieged me, quite correctly, as the Member for Hastings and Rye.

These good people have loyally served the Crown. As the Minister has said, the PSA will not be privatised for two and a half years. Therefore, with three years of anticipation of privatisation I should have thought that an assurance would be in the mind of the Government rather than to allow doubts to dwell and grow.

I am grateful to Sir Gordon Manzie who, with his senior staff, visited Hasting in December. I pay tribute to him for the many years of loyal service that he gave to the PSA and to the Government service before that. He will be sadly missed. He was probably surprised at the way in which the needs of the employees of the PSA have not been considered in the higher echelons of that organisation. I hope that the Minister will be able to put those doubts to rest once and for all. I was grateful for a letter that I received from him on Friday in which he gave an assurance that I am sure he would like me to quote. He said:

"On pensions the government has given very firm assurances and is certainly not seeking to escape from its commitment. We have said that the Government will expect staff to be offered arrangements for pensions that are broadly comparable to those they now enjoy. If the purchaser's proposed pension arrangements are different from the PCSPS, then the scheme will be evaluated by the Government Actuary."

That was mentioned by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The Minister continued:

"If he concludes that it is not broadly comparable, the Government will seek in negotiation to improve the pension terms, or to compensate in some other way, for example by improving other terms and conditions of employment. Finally, but only if all those routes proved impossible, the Government would compensate the staff for any remaining pensions disadvantage."

I am delighted to hear that, but, with respect to my hon. Friend, that could have been made clear from the start. I hope that he will clear up those doubts and offer a commitment that can be included in the Bill to show that the Government accept their duty.

My second point—and I trust that I will not deviate from the amendment on redundancy and compensation rights—is about the future employment of staff. It has been said that this privatisation is three years away. A letter was circulated to Government Departments by the PSA suggesting that up to 800 staff of the establishment of 1,200 in Hastings would lose their jobs because it could not be foreseen what work they would do. That was the essence of that letter—I have not been privy to a sight of it—and it got back to the employees in some form or another. Two thirds of the people in that establishment believed that their jobs would be wiped out, yet that wiping out was many years away.

These people are loyal civil servants. I cannot speak for all of them, but they probably want to remain civil servants. Some of them are mobile, but some are not. Their future should have been made clear to them, rather than it having to be left to their Member of Parliament, who is eager to represent their interests, to say, "What will you do about these 800 people who will lose their jobs?"

The canvassing for job replacement should have begun much earlier. If 800 of the 1,200 staff were thought likely to lose their jobs, one wonders who will do the work that they have been doing. I have been reassured by my hon. Friend the Minister, who has told me in the past week that the efforts to attract other Government work to Hastings are starting to bear fruit. I am delighted to be able to report to the House that he has said that Customs and Excise has confirmed that it expects to open a new VAT office in Ashdown house, Hastings in the autumn and that he will maintain pressure on other Government Departments.

Good employer-employee relationships rely on employees expecting their employer—and in this case it will be the Government for the next two and a half years—to put loyalty to the employee first and foremost.

I have made clear that my constituent's concerns can be laid to rest by the Minister, and I trust that he will not fail to do so.

Mr. Livsey: The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) gave one of the main reasons why we cannot support the Bill. The PSA has 21,000 employees, and national estimates show that up to half of them could lose their jobs.

Amendment No. 3 at least provides pension rights and benefits comparable to those under the principal Civil Service pension scheme. During the privatisations of the royal ordnance factories and the royal dockyards, concrete assurances were given in the House and in the other place that such rights would be offered to the satisfaction of employees. Why cannot the Government offer the employees of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers the same guarantees? That does not seem unreasonable.

The other part of the amendment, which refers to

"redundancy compensation rights which are identical to those presently arising out of the principal Civil Service pension scheme",

is also essential.

[Mr. Livsey]

We are asking for common decency in the treatment of these employees. Ministers have not given employees the cast-iron guarantees that we would want to be provided. The amendment provides a minimum requirement, so it is not asking a great deal. Employees deserve that provision. They are loyal civil servants who have carried out their tasks and who are prepared to change their type of work and even to work in different places as needs be. It will be poor recompense if, in two and a half years when the PSA may be privatised, they do not have a just pension or redundancy scheme. We are asking for the minimum and the Minister should respond positively to our demands.

9.30 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): One would not think from the contributions of the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that the detailed assurances that they rightly seek on behalf of existing employees of PSA and the Crown Suppliers were given and discussed in great detail by my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee. They are asking for direct repetition of what was said in Committee, but the amendment goes further and asks us to quantify the unquantifiable.

We have heard from the hon. Member for Linlithgow something that started and expanded in Committee. He attempted—I do not think that he will wish to dissociate himself wholly from this charge—to talk down the business of the Crown Suppliers, and I use that as an example. No reliable figures are available yet, but when the supposed loss of the Crown Suppliers was first mentioned in Committee it was estimated to be £1 million. We have heard tonight that it is £9 million. We have heard tonight that the supposed redundancies among employees of the Crown Suppliers and PSA have risen from one third to one half of the work force. Such exercises by the Opposition may well be advisable politically, but they do no favours to the staff and the future of those organisations.

I should like to refer to one aspect that makes the amendment look even more out of line. Let us forget its exact wording. I gently chide those Opposition Front-Bench Members who tabled the amendment. We are dealing not with an amendment in Committee tabled for discussion purposes but with an amendment to a Bill that will soon leave the House for another place as a legislative proposal. We owe it to the other place and to our constituents to ensure that such legislation is workable, yet paragraph (b) states that it will be a matter of law to

"provide pension rights and benefits which are comparable to those presently arising".

Apples and pears are comparable, but comparison does not have great meaning. I am not sure that it does the Opposition any credit to propose words so loosely chosen as to be meaningless. The media tell us that the Opposition have ambitions one day to form a Government. All I can say is that if that is the sort of law that they are going to propose they are clearly a long way from enabling us to take their ambition with any seriousness.

As we said in Commitee, what the amendment asks is impossible to implement and, in many instances, undesirable. I would not wish any married woman, divorcee or recent widow to be forced to accept the pension scheme standards currently operating in the Civil Service, and the amendment would make matters even worse by leaving the Government free to determine which Civil Service pension scheme should be used for the purpose of comparison.

Any pension scheme represents a compromise between the rights of different employees at different stages in their careers. In any scheme some classes of employee will do well and some badly. Surely it is right for us to adopt the Government's approach and offer employees an overall valuation of any alternative pension that is offered, with compensation where necessary, rather than laying down a rigid rule that would ensure that those who do badly under the present pension scheme also do badly under any future scheme.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) may well be right in saying that the amendment is not ideally worded; I am not a lawyer, so I do not know. What I do know is that I wish that the amendment has been part of the original Bill. It could then have been amended in Committee according to my hon. Friend's wishes and with all the details that he requires, and we would have known whether we were talking about apples or pears.

Failing that, I wish that this had been a Government rather than an Opposition amendment. Despite my hon. Friend's comment that firm assurances have been given at each stage of the Bill, the fact is that PSA staff in my constituency—and, I am sure, elsewhere—are not convinced of the adequacy of the assurances that they have been given. I say that as a supporter of the principle of the Bill: I have told my PSA constituents that I consider it good and sensible.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), to whose contribution I listened very carefully, said that he could draw on examples that suggest that the PSA does not necessarily offer the best value for money. I am not sure whether his examples are well chosen, although I assume that he has chosen them with his customary care. I have suggested to the PSA employees in my constituency that there are advantages in being in the private sector, where the pressures of competition will ensure that the new firm offers a service that gives value for money, but they remain concerned about their redundancy payments and pension rights.

The Minister—who is a not-too-distant neighbour of mine—will probably know one reason why that is particularly true in Portsmouth, where many employees are experiencing privatisation for the second time, having been employed in the royal naval dockyard. They have every reason to say not only that for the second time in a supposedly secure Civil Service lifetime they have been faced with upheaval, but that on the first occasion they were given clear assurances about the establishment and guaranteeing of their future. This time, for some reason, the Government's promises have been wrapped up in jargon that they do not understand.

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister when he replies to recognise that for good or ill there are employees—loyal civil servants—who are greatly concerned about the future of their redundancy payments if they become redundant. The trouble is that none of those employees know whether they will be made redundant. Neither are they aware whether they will be allowed to take early retirement. They are also not aware of what pension conditions will apply if they remain with the privatised company. No wonder they are worried.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West said, perhaps assurances have been given. However, the assurances that I have read would not allow me to say to my constituents, "Look at that. There's the answer. Go away and don't worry." Some of my constituents visited the House a few weeks ago and they told me that they were very concerned about these issues.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I hope that he will spell out in words of two or three syllables—as redundancy cannot be encompassed in words of one syllable—what guarantees exist for my constituents. Some of my constituents have already suffered redundancy and moved from the royal naval dockyards to the PSA. What guarantees do they have that in two years' time they will not face worse redundancy or pension terms than they would have had if the PSA remained in the public sector?

If my hon. Friend the Minister can provide assurances, I promise him that I will tell my constituents that they will benefit from the Bill. The Government have every reason to offer such assurances tonight. They would then be setting the tone for the debates in another place which, again, must be to the advantage of the Government as well as for those who are worried about their future. The PSA employees have served us well and I hope that the Minister will consider them tonight.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to be able to respond to this very good debate which has covered the all-important issue of terms and conditions of service for PSA staff. As several hon. Members have said, the PSA is blessed with good and loyal staff and the Government are as aware as anyone of the need to ensure that the PSA staff are well looked after. I want to deal with the effects that the amendment would have and explain why the Government cannot accept it. In doing that, I will respond to the points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) and for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) on behalf of their constituents. I will also pray in aid of some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). I will also deal with some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

The hon. Member for Linlithgow wanted to have it both ways. On the one hand he suggested that the privatised companies would be in such dire financial straits that they would not be able to meet their redundancy obligations. On the other hand he said that those companies would be controlled by, as he put it, get-rich-quick controllers. No controller will get rich very quickly if the business does not flourish. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's reference to that is an acceptance that the businesses will be able to flourish in the private sector and that all the employees, whether in a management or a subsidiary role, will be able to share in the fruits of the success of the enterprises.

The amendment would have several effects. It would require the new owners of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers to provide the staff with a pension scheme comparable to the principal Civil Service pension scheme. It would also require the new owners to provide the staff as far as possible with identical redundancy terms to those that they have at present. It also appears to require redundancy terms to be guaranteed out of public funds. It will also delete paragraphs (a) and (b) of clause 2(2).

On pensions, the Government have no doubt that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply to the sales. As hon. Members know, the regulations give effect to the European Community's acquired rights directive. The regulations ensure that staff contracts of employment are not terminated by the sale of a commercial undertaking. They also have the effect of transferring unchanged all their existing terms and conditions of employment, with the exception of those relating to pensions. That omission is because, given the diversity of pension schemes, it would be unreasonable to require purchasers exactly to reproduce the existing scheme.

That is not to say that employees' pensions provisions are unprotected. It may be helpful if I quote what my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General said in Committee. At one stage, Opposition Members cast doubt on whether the TUPE regulations were to apply to PSA staff. From what my right hon. and learned Friend said, it is quite clear that the TUPE regulations apply. He said:

"in the case of a person transferred, under TUPE the transferor and the transferee must so arrange things that the pension rights enjoyed by staff after the transfer are broadly comparable with those enjoyed before. That is the legal requirement".

He went on:

"If they do not, or cannot, the Government and the Crown will need to ensure that staff are compensated for any disadvantage."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 18 January 1990; c. 202.]

I assure hon. Members that the Government accept those legal obligations and will comply with them.

9.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye referred to assurances that were made to staff, irrespective of the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories and the royal dockyards. Those privatisations were more advanced when the assurances were given. As the sales of the Crown Suppliers and the PSA proceed, it should be possible to give firmer assurances about the comparability of pensions terms. Obviously, until we know who is to purchase the business, it is not possible to know what the purchaser's pension arrangements are and what he is offering. In cases such as the royal ordnance factories, when the Bill was before the House and was being considered by hon. Members, it was clear who was to be the purchaser and what his pension terms would be. That is why there is an inevitable distinction between what happened in that case and what happens with the PSA.

On redundancy, the amendment falls into two parts. The first part concerns the redundancy terms themselves. The amendment would require the new owners to provide redundancy terms that, as far as possible, are identical to those that they have at present. That is precisely the commitment that the Government have given the staff. Hon. Members will have realised that, on pensions and redundancy terms, the amendment would do no more than the Government are already seeking to achieve. Those are requirements that arise from existing United Kingdom law and from the Government's obligations arising from our membership of the European Community. I believe that it is unnecessary, and indeed undesirable, to clog up the statute book with provisions that merely repeat existing requirements. My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North asked why the Government did not put that provision into the Bill. The reason is that it is unnecessary and superfluous. It is already the law of the land, and the Government will comply with the law of the land.

The second part of the amendment dealing with redundancy refers to guarantees. The trade unions concerned and Opposition Members have made clear their views on the need for guarantees from public funds. That is an important point on which the unions have made representations, and I can assure the House that their views are being considered. Of course, their fears are greatly exaggerated. During the sale competitions we shall give preference to potential purchasers who demonstrate a willingness and ability to run the businesses as going concerns and also have the necessary financial robustness to do so. It is not the Government's general experience that firms act unscrupulously or in bad faith by contriving redundancies for which they cannot or will not pay. It is not easy for employers to avoid their obligations, and they generally prove very reluctant to damage their reputations in the marketplace and with their staff. One of the criteria for selecting the purchasers will be an assessment of their ability to finance any redundancies that become necessary after privatisation, and I do not believe, therefore, that there is any need for guarantees of public funds.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. I am referring to the various allegations that he made about the effect on terms and conditions if an employer who purchased the business changed those terms and conditions. I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's statement. Much of the material that he used as his source was issued by the trade unions and suggests that there is no protection for an employee if the new employer wishes to impose changes in the terms and conditions after privatisation. An employer cannot do that. The general principle of law is that fundamental terms and conditions cannot be changed without the agreement of the employees. If, therefore, an employer tries to impose changes in the terms and conditions, such as those relating to redundancy, the employee merely has to inform the employer that he does not accept the new terms and if the employee is then made redundant after a period of notice, he can insist on the payment of his old redundancy rights. The hon. Gentleman seemed to think that the employee would be limited to his statutory rights, but I repeat that such an employee would be entitled to his old redundancy rights on a contractual basis.

I accept that if the purchaser went into liquidation, an action for damages might fail to achieve redress, but we shall be at pains to choose purchasers who are financially robust.

Mr. Dalyell: When the Minister and his advisers have had an opportunity to reflect on my speech in print, may I expect a letter of clarification on the points raised?

Mr. Chope: If, after reading my speech in print, the hon. Gentleman feels that any further clarification is necessary, perhaps he will write to me and I shall deal with the matter.

There has only been one Civil Service case in which the Government have agreed to pay redundancy costs. That was Devonport dockyard. It was justified in that case because of the Government's own decision to run down the work load there. We expect the Crown Suppliers and PSA to succeed commercially, which is why the cases are different.

The fourth and final effect of the amendment would be to delete paragraphs (a) and (b) of clause 2(2). These provisions, which have appeared in all recent Acts for privatisations involving members of the principal Civil Service pension scheme, are to deal with a quirk in the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants. Because their redundancy terms are included in the pension scheme, and because when they are transferred out of the Civil Service they must cease to be members of the pension scheme, they would automatically become entitled to redundancy compensation as well as their jobs. The staff will, of course, in no real sense be redundant when PSA and the Crown Suppliers are sold. They will have their jobs, their existing terms and conditions of employment, and pensions and redundancy terms as I have just described. To expect the taxpayer to pay what would amount to very substantial sums in redundancy compensation for all staff transferred could not possibly be justified in these circumstances. That point was accepted in Committee.

In conclusion, I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye that I am well aware of the concern in his constituency about the rundown in the number of staff employed by the PSA. However, that is not a consequence of privatisation. It is a consequence of untying, of reorganisation and of a cost-effectiveness exercise. As I stated in the letter to my hon. Friend to which he referred, we—not only myself, but other Government Departments—are doing all that we can to ensure that alternative employment opportunities are available in Hastings. I have already visited Hastings once and have made arrangements to visit the town again soon. I hope that I shall have the opportunity of meeting the staff there and of allaying their concerns.

For the reasons that I have outlined, I hope that the House will reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 2, line 25, leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. Chope.]*

Order for Third Reading read. [Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified]

9.54 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

When I moved the Second Reading, I said that, although short, the Bill was significant. I am glad that it received thorough scrutiny in Committee. The Committee's proceedings exceeded 26 hours, of which more than 20 hours were devoted to the first two of the Bill's six clauses. The debates on those clauses concentrated mainly on the effect of the Bill on the Government as a customer of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers and on the position of the staff.

The Government are convinced that the PSA and Crown Suppliers face a better future in the private sector. We also believe that the customers of the two organisations will benefit from the change. Naturally, the Government accept that some of the activities undertaken in the past by the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are not suitable for privatisation. Those parts of the Crown Suppliers that fall into that category have already been moved to other Departments and similar arrangements are being made for the PSA.

Anxieties have been expressed about the consequences for staff of the two privatisations. We have been at pains to point out that the Bill does not affect the employment

rights of staff. Those rights were protected and transferred under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. As I explained in Committee, where they are not covered by those regulations they are protected by United Kingdom employment law.

I hope that the House will acknowledge the care with which the Government have addressed the issue of staff employment rights. I repeat the assurance already given to employees and to the House that the staff of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers will not be disadvantaged as a result of privatisation. I believe that the staff will gain from the measure and that the PSA and Crown Suppliers face a much better future in the private sector.

I hope that with those brief remarks I have demonstrated to the House that customers, Departments and staff of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers have nothing to fear from privatisation and much to gain.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the skilful way in which he has piloted this important Bill through its various stages. I have no hesitation in commending it to the House.

9.57 pm

Mr. Soley: We regard the Bill as the pursuit of ideology for its own sake. There will be many mini-PSAs. No doubt they have already been set up in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We shall have to re-invent the PSA in years to come, and we all know it. If the Bill has not been enacted by the time that Labour takes office, we shall stop it and rebuild what has been destroyed.

We have had lengthy and detailed debates about the security aspects of the Bill. We are far from happy about it. I do not accept, and the House does not accept, that privatisation of Ministers' cars and the security of their homes should be exempt from privatisation while the means of security of our forces and their families and of senior civil servants should be privatised. There must be something wrong with that, and we all know it.

Security in Northern Ireland is even more important. When private contractors are threatened with being shot or have to withdraw from contracts because of such threats, it cannot be right to transfer activities to the private sector.

I was interested to note that we received the support of a couple of Conservative Back-Bench Members on pensions and redundancy. If all Conservative Members had 2,000 employees in their constituency, perhaps we should have better pension and redundancy schemes.

It is clear from a leaked document from the Department that jobs will be lost as a result of the measure. We know that. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) referred to the insecurity of the work force in his constituency which has already suffered the privatisation of the royal dockyard. The same could happen again.

Finally, there is the danger of sweeteners, which occurred with the Rover and British Aerospace deals. We shall watch out for that carefully because we know that in the past the Government have used taxpayers' money to persuade the private sector to buy an undertaking that should not have been sold in the first place. That is our position, and why we shall vote against the Bill tonight.

9.59 pm

Mr. Livsey: The principle of the Bill is worthy of consideration. It falls down because we are looking at the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers, which is making a loss, at a Government service and a completely new principle of privatisation. Costs will undoubtedly increase to Government Departments and the estimate for consultancies is an increase of 20 per cent.

The issue of pension rights is absolutely crucial and we have not received sufficient assurances about them. Two reports from within Government, one in 1985 and the other in 1987, said that this is a bad idea.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

Mr. Livsey: The decision for privatisation has not been substantiated in our debates. The arguments about the proposals to privatise the PSA and the Crown Suppliers have not been sustained convincingly. For that reason, we are not prepared to support the Bill on Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 233, Noes 200.

Division No. 72] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Body, Sir Richard
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan

Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

That the draft Horticultural Development Council (Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 18th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As this debate relates to the North of Ireland, I am sure that my colleagues will not take it amiss if I refer, with sadness, to the passing of our friend, Harold McCusker. Shortly after he was elected a Member of Parliament I spent the day with him, as did others, in his constituency. It was an interesting experience because he was a marvellous host, and we learnt a lot. We mourn the passing of this courageous and brave colleague.

On Wednesday 15 November 1989, *Hansard* records that I asked the Prime Minister

"what recent representations have been received by her Cabinet secretariat relating to events at the Kincora boys' home in Northern Ireland."

The Prime Minister replied:

"I am advised that there have been no such representations from Members of Parliament and members of the public."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 269.]

The word "such" was underlined. I cannot assert that never, in a parliamentary answer, has one word been underlined, but never in the recollection of four of the most senior Clerks of the House of Commons—not in the recollection of Sir Clifford Boulton, Mr. Sweetman, Mr. Limon or Mr. Winnifrith—has a word ever been underlined. Therefore, we must ask why that happened.

On 27 November 1989 I asked the Prime Minister

"why, in her answer, *Official Report*, 15 November, relating to representations received by the Cabinet Secretariat relating to events at the Kincora boys' home she underlined the word 'such'".

The answer will not come as a shock to my hon. Friends. She said:

"I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 15 November at column 269."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 92.]

As there were no such representations, the question that I wanted to put down but, under the Table Office rules, could not was to ask why there were representations from Sir Michael Quinlan, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, and Mr. Len Appleyard, the deputy secretary in the Cabinet Office. The question of which I have given the Minister warning is this: if there were no *such* representations, what representations were made and what were the terms of reference?

The second question of which I gave notice to the Attorney-General's office, to whom this Adjournment debate was addressed, was to ask about the letter of the shadow Attorney-General, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)—and I thank him for his presence. He wrote on 1 February:

"Dear Prime Minister,

I have read with care your letter of 30 January 1990 to Mr. Terence Higgins. Since the issues raised cover a number of departmental responsibilities I am writing to seek clarification of certain aspects of your letter.

I would be glad if you could clear up the following:—

1. Which statements in your letters, Ministerial statements and official correspondence were in each case either incorrect or require clarification?

2. What in each of the said letters, Ministerial statements and official correspondence was either incorrect or requires clarification?

3. Which, if any, of the Ministerial statements referred to were made in the House?"

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

I remind the House of what the Prime Minister said on 30 January in her letter to my right hon. and learned Friend:

"I regret to say that a re-examination of Departmental papers has brought to light information which shows that there were a number of statements in my letterss, and in other Ministerial statements and official correspondence, which were incorrect or required clarification."

My right hon. and learned Friend received an answer to his questions on the very same day:

"Dear Mr. Morris,

I am writing on the Prime Minister's behalf to thank you for your letter of 1 February"—

he does not yet have an answer.

"This is receiving attention and I shall ensure that a reply is sent to you as soon as possible."

Even Conservative Members will understand that this was not quite a routine letter. How many of them receive letters from the Prime Minister's secretary signed, "Yours sincerely, Charles Powell." Mr. Charles Powell does not spend his time acknowledging routine letters. What on earth did the principal private secretary to the Prime Minister, responsible for foreign affairs, have to do with the case of Colin Wallace and the statements made by the Prime Minister on it?

I can only imagine that the Prime Minister said to him, "Charles, this is a matter for you to handle. After all, you have all the expertise from the Westland affair." So I regurgitate my right hon. and learned Friend's letter and I ask for a full explanation. I shall give the Minister plenty of time in which to reply, and I am sure that he will welcome the opportunity to answer me fully.

I wish to ask the Minister a final question of which he has had notice: why on earth was General Gerald Whiteley, the director of Army legal services, ever involved in the case of Colin Wallace? What on earth was he doing meddling with the Court of Appeal?

These are serious questions; the House of Commons deserves a full answer to them.

10.23 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): First, I echo the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the loss of our colleague Harold McCusker. We send our condolences to his wife and family.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow *[Interruption.]* Were it not for his intervention in this matter I would not have read "War Without Honour", about the exploits of Captain Holroyd, or "Who Framed Colin Wallace?" by Paul Foot. The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of issues about the case of Colin Wallace, and, with his usual courtesy, he gave notice on Friday of the three particular questions to which he seeks answers. I shall deal with the latter tonight and with any other essential issues as time permits.

I know that my response will not satisfy all those who choose to see in Mr. Wallace's various allegations the evidence that they seek to justify their belief in an all-embracing conspiracy by Crown servants against the Government. That does not deter me from explaining the available facts to the House once again, since the facts are more important in this matter, rather than speculation that cannot be substantiated.

As many hon. Members know, Mr. Wallace was employed as a civil servant in the headquarters in Northern Ireland between 1968 and 1975. He served in the successive grades of assistant information officer, information officer and senior information officer.

It was worth reminding the House at this point of the situation that confronted the security forces in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s. By that time, law and order in the province had deteriorated to so great a degree that the Government concluded that it was essential to direct the Army to play a major role in support of the police to fight terrorism. That was a daunting task. The IRA was engaged in a campaign of bombings, assassinations and maiming on an unprecedented and horrific scale, supporting that violence with a campaign of virulent propaganda.

It is a tribute to the many Crown servants who served in Northern Ireland then that they put so much effort into dealing with the extreme difficulties that they faced. For them, the learning curve was steep. It was essential to regain the initiative, and effective measures were imperative to counter both the terrorists and their propaganda. Explaining the true purpose of the work of the security forces and countering IRA propaganda were key ingredients in restoring law and order in the community.

Mr. Wallace was one of a number in the Government information service who played their part. By all accounts, Mr. Wallace was an extremely hard worker. He devoted considerable personal effort to understanding any aspect of the complex world of Northern Ireland that might have been relevant to the fight against terrorism.

As each promotion increased his responsibilities, his efforts were increasingly widened. By all accounts, he took great interest in collecting any information, story, or rumour which might be of interest.

Like all information officers, his duties required him to exercise discretion when deciding how best to communicate with the media, and how much to say on each occasion. That does not mean to say that his exercise of discretion was unfettered. All information officers are expected to operate within the limits of the authority given to them, and to demonstrate constantly that they are interpreting their duties properly. In particular, the release of classified documents is not a matter which is left to the sole discretion of individual information officers.

The extent of Mr. Wallace's discretion in the handling of classified information falls within the ambit of Mr. Calcutt's inquiry.

After Mr. Wallace had been transferred to another post, and had left his job in Headquarters Northern Ireland, he provided a journalist with a classified document. He did so without seeking or receiving authority. The act was almost immediately discovered. Mr. Wallace initially denied and then admitted it.

The view was taken that his act required disciplinary action, and it was concluded that dismissal was appropriate. Mr. Wallace appealed to the Civil Service appeal board, which recommended that, in the light of his earlier good service, he should be allowed to resign. He and the Ministry of Defence accepted that recommendation, and he resigned from the Civil Service in 1975. He clearly felt that he had suffered an injustice, and he sought to air his grievances. In recent years, one of his contentions in this context has been that he was dismissed because he refused to engage in improper activities. He has alleged

that during the 1970s the security forces and Crown servants serving in Northern Ireland had engaged in a variety of activities which he seemed to think improper or illegal. He has also alleged that the security forces deliberately covered up information relating to homosexual activities at Kincora. In 1981 he was convicted of manslaughter and has since contended variously that the verdict was unsound and that he was framed. More recently his letters to Government Departments have included the allegation that the project called Clockwork Orange had been undertaken by Crown servants in Northern Ireland in 1974 and had included the issue of defamatory material aimed at Ministers and Members of Parliament.

Mr. Wallace's case has been brought back into the limelight by the written answer that I gave and letters that I sent to hon. Members at the end of last month. In them I volunteered information to correct the record concerning inaccuracies in information previously given to hon. Members by Ministers. I did that because it was right to do so. In the same spirit, inquiries have been commissioned into two related matters. I must tell the House again that nothing discovered in the process leading to the public correction of those inaccuracies constitutes any evidence to corroborate Mr. Wallace's allegations about illegal activities or about the use of disinformation by Crown servants to denigrate Ministers and hon. Members.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Mr. Colin Wallace has alleged that he informed his superiors when he was an Army information officer that he had evidence that boys in the Kincora boys' home had been abused and were being abused. Was that information acted on? Is there any record of those allegations having been made to superiors? There is grave disquiet in Northern Ireland and surely it would be much better to have a full investigation into the whole issue of the Kincora boys' home.

Mr. Hamilton: I remind the hon. Gentleman that there have been two full inquiries into the Kincora boys' home, one by Chief Constable Terry from Sussex and one by Judge Hughes. The opportunity was given to Mr. Wallace to give evidence to the Hughes inquiry but he found reasons for not doing so, which were that he would not be covered by the Official Secrets Act. There have been opportunities for him to give evidence and he has not done so. To date we have no evidence whatever, any evidence on which we can work, which indicates that Mr. Wallace had the sort of evidence that we needed to gain convictions over the Kincora affair earlier than actually happened.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it true that MI5 or MI6 obstructed or blocked an inquiry into the Kincora affair in 1973, 1974 or 1975?

Mr. Hamilton: Those are unsubstantiated rumours that have been put down.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are they true?

Mr. Hamilton: There is no evidence whatever that they are. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence that that is the case he should present it. There is no evidence about that whatever.

Some hon. Members have intimated that we would not have commissioned the inquiry by Mr. Calcutt had it not already become clear that Mr. Wallace should not have been dismissed. That is not so. Available papers record that Mr. Wallace did provide a journalist with a classified document, and that it was felt right at the time that he should be dismissed. The reason for asking Mr. Calcutt to look into the dismissal procedure is to enable him to consider whether, with the benefit of 15 years of hindsight, the presentation of his case to the Civil Service appeal board was entirely fair. Mr. Calcutt will consider whether, in comparison with the handling of a similar case today, Mr. Wallace was hard done by. No evidence has been found which justifies the theory of a conspiracy to remove Mr. Wallace because he refused to take part in Clockwork Orange.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow for giving me advance notice of questions. He asked me to identify those earlier ministerial statements which were incorrect and those which required clarification. As my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 30 January made clear, Mr. Wallace undertook duties beyond those described explicitly in his formal job description. An additional job description was drafted to cover those additional duties, but they are not recorded in any subsequent approved and issued job description.

The letter that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) on 30 March 1987 said that the job description given to the Civil Service appeal board was the only one applicable to Mr. Wallace's job. To the extent that it was the only one that formally existed, that was true, but it was felt right to acknowledge the existence of a draft that was brought to light last year.

Re-examination of files indicated that Mr. Wallace had undertaken unattributable covert briefing, which probably included disinformation designed to discredit the Provisional IRA. It was considered that this should also be put on the record to correct statements about the nature of Mr. Wallace's duties made in the Prime Minister's letter of 30 March 1987 to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and any misunderstandings that may unwittingly have been communicated to other right hon. and hon. Members.

My answer also explained that documents had recently come to light that made reference to a project called Clockwork Orange. Those documents made it plain that this was to have been an exercise to plant a story designed to discredit the leadership of the Provisional IRA but that its implementation was never approved. In a letter to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), dated 15 August 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) and in an answer given on 10 January 1989 my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert), each in his capacity as Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, stated that they had no evidence that a project of that name had ever existed. That was a true statement of the information available to them. When information relating to Clockwork Orange was found, it was considered proper to put the record straight.

I also wrote to the hon. Member for Brent, East to add to the information that I had been able to provide previously about a mock raid on Aldergrove airport. He had asked a number of questions on the subject and it was felt appropriate to make the additional information available to him. Two errors of fact were also corrected in that letter. The records previously examined showed only that Mr. William Black had been shot in 1974 with a Sterling sub-machine gun. Papers re-examined last year

[Mr. Hamilton]

contained the additional information that the weapon was a model L34A1, which is fitted with an integral suppressor or silencer. That information was pertinent to the questions that the hon. Member has asked. Other papers indicated that the Ingram MAC 10 sub-machine gun had been issued at an earlier date than had previously been indicated. That information was accordingly passed to the hon. Member to correct an answer given on 15 December 1988.

I should now like to turn to the reference made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow to the words "such representations." It is important to put that point, which the hon. Gentleman somewhat laboured, in context. The hon. Gentleman asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister:

"what recent representations have been received by her Cabinet secretariat relating to events at the Kincora boys' home in Northern Ireland."

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister replied:

"I am advised that there have been no such representations from Members of Parliament and members of the public." —[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 269.]

That seems to be a pretty standard answer. I take the hon. Gentleman's word for it that the word "such" was underlined. He should not ask me why that was, but I have nothing further to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Would the Minister like to comment on today's revelations that in 1973 Mr. Wallace's superior officer, Mr. Peter Broderick, saw and initialled Mr. Wallace's report drawing attention to systematic child abuse at Kincora? Does it not worry him that that continued for a further seven years after it had been brought to the attention of senior Army officers? Has he seen the statement in today's newspapers reporting the views of Sir George Terry, who conducted one of the earlier inquiries into Kincora? He says:

"I am sure that in the light of all that is now being said, any inquiry that can look at everything would be a very wise step".

Mr. Justice Hughes has been prayed in aid to say that we need no further inquiry. He now states that, contrary to the Government's position, he did not receive the papers that Colin Wallace submitted to the Prime Minister in 1984, although the House has been told that those papers were made available. The Minister has now told the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) that the originals of the documents submitted to the Prime Minister have disappeared from the Prime Minister's office and cannot be traced. Is that not causing the Minister concern? There is something more important than a job description involved here.

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot comment on all those points. If Mr. Broderick has evidence about Kincora, he should take it to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which is the body to deal with these matters. If he finds that difficult and feels that this is covered by the Official Secrets Act 1911, he should take the matter up with the Director of Army Security, who certainly will help him.

It is typical of all the allegations that we have heard that people are more than happy to make statements to newspapers about what should happen, but when they are given the opportunity to present the facts—we are looking for facts—to the authorities, we do not get them. That has been the history all the way. Massive assertions are made, but people are not prepared to present the facts to the authorities, who would be more than happy to deal with them.

I should now like to turn to a number of serious allegations that were raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) in the Adjournment debate on Tuesday 6 February. Those allegations about the conduct of civil servants, members of the security and intelligence services and others suggest that they have been or may have been involved in the dissemination of false information about Members of Parliament. I remind the House of the points that I made last Tuesday. It is no part of the official duties of any Crown servant to disseminate false information about Members of Parliament in order to denigrate them in any way. All Governments and hon. Members on both sides of the House would regard any such action as unacceptable. Government servants are well aware of the conduct expected of them and of the severe consequences that they might suffer in any case where those standards of conduct were breached.

I had hoped that the statement that I made in the debate on Tuesday would enable hon. Members to draw a clear distinction between disinformation aimed at hon. Members and cases in the early 1970s when disinformation was used to denigrate the Provisional IRA. As I said then, the Government judge that no useful purpose would be served by an inquiry now into disinformation designed to denigrate the Provisional IRA so many years ago, under previous Administrations, in a policy framework long since changed and amid all the operational stresses of the early and peak years of a very difficult emergency.

I repeat that the Government regard disinformation aimed at Members of Parliament or former Ministers as a quite different and special matter which was dealt with by the Prime Minister's statement in 1987. I must say again that no evidence of any substance has emerged from our review of papers to put that statement into question.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot give way because I have other comments to make.

There seems to be misapprehension in some Members' minds that unattributable covert briefing represents an unacceptable practice and that use of classified information in that context is improper. There is nothing wrong in using classified information during unattributable briefing, provided that the briefing is for proper purposes and that the disclosure of classified information has been properly authorised. I know of no reason to believe that, contrary to normal practice, Mr. Wallace was given total discretion to release whatever classified information he wished to disclose.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): May I tell the Minister plainly that the inquiry by the former Prime Minister and myself into dirty tricks certainly did not include the disinformation against Members of Parliament between 1971 and 1975? That should be inquired into, because someone authorised that to be done.

Mr. Hamilton: I am sorry, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. I was referring to the inquiry carried out by the head of the security services, under the auspices of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That inquiry investigated that matter in great

depth and the head of the security services found no evidence that that campaign of disinformation had been carried out by his security services or even by a disaffected group within the security services.

As my right hon. Friend and I have assured the House, the papers that have come to light on the Colin Wallace case do not contain any evidence to support his allegations about a "smear" campaign about Members of Parliament. As I have described already, the only element of his claims about disinformation that has been confirmed is that an operation known as Clockwork Orange was conceived. The documents found show that that operation was, I repeat, aimed at the Provisional IRA—not at Members of Parliament—and was not approved.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 13 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Committee on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]* have power to adjourn from place to place.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Women Workers

1. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the need to attract more women into the work force.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): It is estimated that women will take up 90 per cent. of the additional jobs that will be created between now and the year 2000. Employers will need increasingly to ensure that their work arrangements meet the needs of women.

Mrs. Hicks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government's dramatic attitude in recognising that women should go to sea and should become Royal Air Force pilots must act as a great inspiration to employers who have been rather reluctant to consider taking on ladies and rewarding them? With a tremendous labour shortage in prospect in the next five years, should not we now advise those employers to wake up to that great source of untapped talent, and to do all that they can to recruit and retain women workers? Finally, I ask my right hon. and learned Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question is fairer to the hon. Lady's colleagues.

Mrs. Hicks: Will my right hon. and learned Friend have a word in the ear of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to encourage in these pre-Budget days any tax reforms that may assist women to return to work——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is too much.

Mr. Howard: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for her tireless and, indeed, ceaseless campaigning on behalf of women in work. There are more women in work in this country than in any other member country of the European Community. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to deal with any representations that I may or may not be making to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Ms. Abbott: Does the Secretary of State agree that although there are more women in work in Britain, for the most part they are in poor conditions and are crowded into low-paid jobs? Does he care to enlighten the House on what the Government as an employer are doing for women and, specifically, what the Civil Service is doing in the provision of workplace nurseries and arrangements for women's careers so that they can come back to work after maternity?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept for one moment the premise behind the hon. Lady's question. I shall give her one example of what the Civil Service is doing. If she examines the most recent report of the Select Committee on Employment, she will find that particular tribute is paid to the attitude of my Department to the provision of part-time work. That provision is, perhaps, the most important factor in enabling women to combine work and responsibilities to their families.

Mr. Marlow: Can my right hon. and learned Friend work out the value to the national economy, in terms of gross national product, of those married women who stay behind, look after their children and ensure that they have a decent social background and upbringing? When he has done that, will he junk all ideas of providing tax incentives for workplace nurseries and, I presume, nannies? If he is to provide tax incentives, will he provide them for the mothers who stay at home and do a decent job looking after their children?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of the role that women who stay at home to look after their children fulfil. It must be a matter of choice for women whether they stay at home to fulfil that valuable role, combine it with work or go out to work. In response to his question about tax changes, I repeat to my hon. Friend what I said earlier.

Mr. Blair: Is not one of the major obstacles faced by women at work the absence of workplace nurseries in many parts of the country? Would not it be best to remove the tax on workplace nurseries and, therefore, the tax on women at work?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman asks me for the third time a question which, as I have already said, it would not be appropriate for me to deal with today. It is important to consider the whole range of facilities available to women who wish to go out to work or return to work, rather than concentrate unduly on a particular aspect, as the hon. Gentleman did in his question.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the bulk of women who stay at home to look after children are single parents, many of whom would dearly like to return to work if issues such as child care were settled? Is he aware that if we encouraged the quarter of a million single parents who are currently on benefit to return to work, the saving to the Exchequer would be over £1 billion?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will be aware of the exceptionally generous arrangements available to single parents who wish to take part in our employment training programmes. That is the key to their return to work. I hope—I am sure that she will—that my hon. Friend will give full recognition to the Government for that initiative.

Employment Training

2. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the take-up and retention rates on employment training schemes.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): Over 580,000 people have started employment training in little over a year. That is the biggest take-up of any adult training programme ever. People are currently spending an average of just over six months on the programme.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister confirm that a substantial number of people who are offered employment training places drop out, frequently because the schemes are poor, under-resourced, and badly managed? In view of Britain's increasing and serious skills shortage, does he agree that a new approach is required that includes the trade unions? What is he prepared to do to persuade the trade unions to participate with him in his determination to improve skills in Great Britain?

Mr. Eggar: The key point is that 58 per cent. of people on employment training were shown in a recent survey to find jobs, to go into self-employment or further training or to go on to education when they had completed their training. Those who do not complete employment training do not have such a good record for entering jobs. The message is absolutely clear. Employment training is good quality training and if it is followed through, individuals are more likely to obtain jobs.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that if Opposition Members believe in the scheme, they should have a word with Left-wing councils that refuse to co-operate on employment training?

Mr. Eggar: It is extremely regrettable that a small minority of councils, including St. Helens district council, refuse to associate themselves with employment training. That is against the interests of unemployed people in those council areas.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that the Greater Manchester archaeological unit is about to put its ET scheme into effective liquidation? That will mean that in that city the first and second largest ET schemes will have gone out of business. Is he further aware that the reason why the scheme has failed is not poor quality management, but that the scheme is so underfunded that it is impossible to keep it financially viable? Is he aware that because take-up and retention are falling, many schemes throughout the country will go exactly the same way as that one in Manchester?

Mr. Eggar: Employment training is the best adult training programme that we have ever had in Britain. It will be taken over progressively by training and enterprise councils, which will have added flexibility to respond to local labour market conditions. That must be good for people who want good quality training when they have been unemployed for a time. I should be happy to talk to the hon. Gentleman in some detail about the training management to which he referred, if he so wishes.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for unemployment in the Basildon constituency.

Mr. Eggar: In December 1989 there were 2,509 unemployed claimants. That represents a fall of just over 15 per cent. in 12 months.

Mr. Amess: Will my hon. Friend kindly undertake to send a set of screws to the Socialist-controlled Basildon district council, so that it might restore to a prominent place the board that used to display the number of people who are out of work in Basildon, which supposedly fell down because the screws were rusty? Does my hon. Friend agree that the board could now display the excellent message that unemployment in Basildon has reduced steadily over recent years as a result of the skill and enterprise of local businesses and of the success of this Government's policies?

Mr. Eggar: I am not quite sure what the Public Accounts Committee would say about my using the departmental budget to buy screws to send to Basildon council, because my budget is devoted to training purposes. However, I certainly agree with my hon. Friend and have no doubt at all that the council should be urged to display prominently the fact that there has been a fall in unemployment of over 50 per cent. in the Basildon area since June 1987.

Mr. Speaker: I call the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, but the question is about Basildon.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not a fact that in Basildon there has been massive unemployment among estate agents in the past few years? Does the Minister agree that that is due to the collapse of the Government's housing and mortgage policies and that it will result in the unemployment of Basildon's Tory Member of Parliament at the next election?

Mr. Eggar: I bow to the hon. Gentleman's experience of estate agents.

Part-time Work

5. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will propose new measures to encourage people who are unemployed or, through a change of circumstances, become able to seek employment to take up part-time work if full-time work is not available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The Select Committee on Employment published its report into part-time working on 31 January. Ministers have read it with interest, and welcome the Committee's support for the concept of part-time work and its recognition of its value.

Mr. Michael: Does not that sound rather odd when the Minister reflects on the punishment experienced by people such as one of my constituents, because if somebody works for two days a week and gets paid £43 for that, he or she then loses all rights to benefits, and the rate of £43 is £13

less than the married man's allowance and, as a weekly rate, is less than average daily pay in this country? In the light of those facts, does the Minister agree that something positive needs to be done by the Government to encourage those who want to work part time if full-time work is not available which, sadly, is still often the case for many people?

Mr. Nicholls: I accept that a number of people have seen the new £43-plus per week rule as a disincentive for part-time workers. However, the position cannot be simplified in that way. Indeed, the Select Committee's report made the point, often denied by Opposition Members, that part-time work is a valuable part of the working life of this country and that a great many people find that it fits exactly into the pattern of their lives.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the opportunities for such people is self-employment? Will he therefore have discussions with his opposite number at the Treasury to find out why obstructions are so often put in the way of people becoming self-employed, including, for example, the Inland Revenue constantly reclassifying them as employed?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend makes a valuable point in drawing to our attention yet again the role of self-employment in bringing people back into the working life of our country. I am sure that he would not expect me to say what representations I might have wanted to put to the Treasury on the matter. However, anybody who has ever been self-employed will have considerable sympathy with what prompted my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister agree that one of the blocks facing many women returning to either part-time or full-time work is the absence of proper nursery facilities? Will he take to heart the comments made at the weekend by his former boss, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who said that if industry should take a lead, the Government should at least give some help? What steps is the Minister taking to try to overcome that barrier facing women who are seeking to return to the labour market?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman speaks of one barrier—as it is seen to be by some people—to returning to work. The position is not as simple as it might seem, and there is no universal answer to the problem of the provision of proper child care facilities for those who want to return to work. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) can now enjoy being more forthcoming about his thoughts than I can.

Mr. Dickens: Does the Minister agree that during the war years, the women of this country returned to the workshop floors to produce our shells and munitions? Does he further agree that part-time work is valuable to women and that there are skill shortages? Should not we encourage more women to take those highly skilled jobs, not just medium and semi-skilled ones?

Mr. Nicholls: We must be careful that in trying to ensure that women are given a fair deal and are able to go out to work if they want, they are not made to feel second-rate citizens if they want to stay at home to look after their families in a more conventional way. I accept what my hon. Friend says, that when the demographic wheel goes full cycle, we must not say that our women have, once again, to leave their jobs to go back to the kitchen.

Employment Training

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has for employment training in Cumbria.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training continues to play its valuable role in helping unemployed people in Cumbria to obtain the skills and experience that they need to obtain jobs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: There is a deep sense of concern in west Cumbria that the new training and enterprise council will be unable to provide employment training for the thousands of people who will be made redundant through the run-down of construction projects at Sellafield. We are talking about thousands of men and women. Will the Government give some assurance, because the former Secretary of State gave an undertaking at the Dispatch Box that he would look into the matter? Can something be done, because people are worried?

Mr. Nicholls: I entirely accept the hon. Gentleman's concern about the redundancies that will take place in his constituency. I think that he will agree that those redundancies are due to take place over two to three years. Just before Christmas, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), the then Secretary of State, told the hon. Gentleman that he would certainly do everything that he could to ensure that a contribution was made. In any case of widespread redundancy, the full resources open to the Department of Employment can be brought to bear in particular circumstances. With employment training, although one normally has to be trained for six months, a number of flexibilities in the system can be brought to bear. The Cumbria TEC is due to be operational from April and if, by any chance, the hon. Gentleman has not yet had the opportunity to go along and make contact with it, I certainly hope that he will do so because the TEC will want to play its part.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware of the survey by Newcastle university, which showed that 15 times as many jobs were created by small firms, employing fewer than 20 people, as by large firms? Are not the Government right to focus their training schemes on the needs of small firms in Cumbria and elsewhere, rather than to attempt to boycott schemes?

Mr. Nicholls: Some truths are so universal that they apply as much to Cumbria as to other places. My hon. Friend is entirely right—self-employment can have a valuable role to play. There is a range of Government initiatives and forms of assistance to help people start up in small businesses if that is what they want to do.

Training

7. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of employers providing training in Great Britain.

Mr. Howard: The latest survey carried out by my Department shows that more than 200,000 employers provided training for their employees in the year 1986-87.

That was 80 per cent. of the total. The survey excluded firms with fewer than 10 employees, agriculture and the armed services.

Mr. Clarke: What exactly does the Minister intend to do about the one in five of Britain's employers who make no contribution to training needs and who are happy to poach on other people's efforts? Is there no strategy for training in Britain? Is that why we are doing so badly compared with our competitors?

Mr. Howard: All the signs are that the number and proportion of employers providing training has increased since that survey took place about three or four years ago. But by setting up the training and enterprise councils, which will be employer-led, to ensure that the training that is provided in their local areas is sensitive to the needs of those areas, we are setting in train an exciting initiative to secure the maximum involvement of employers in providing the training that we need.

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. and learned Friend have a look at the system of employee contracts? It is right that an employer should invest very large sums in the training of his work force, and we all agree that that should happen, but he should be able to require employees to serve a reasonable period in order that his investment might be recouped. That is happening in some parts of the world, and it has been tried in this country. There are problems with the legal framework, but I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend will look into the matter.

Mr. Howard: It is my impression that the existing legal framework would make possible much of what my hon. Friend wants. However, I shall certainly look at the points that he has made to see whether any adjustments are necessary.

Mr. McLeish: Why is it that, after 10 years of this Government, the recently published report of a study that was commissioned by the Government shows that 52 per cent. of all employees receive no training, 20 per cent. of employers provide no training, and 42 per cent. of employees do not think that they should receive training? What has gone so wrong that we now face a skills crisis and that the Government seem intent on walking away from it?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the training problems that we face are a legacy of past generations. The fact is that we are spending six times as much on training as was spent by the previous Labour Government, and that that expenditure has resulted in tremendous advances and benefits.

Mr. McLeish: We have a mountain to climb.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is right: we have a mountain to climb. And we are climbing it.

Retraining

8. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on his policy for retraining the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Eggar: There are 207,000 people currently on employment training. Fifty-eight per cent. of those completing ET have gone into jobs, self-employment or further full-time training or education. Training enterprise councils, or local enterprise companies in Scotland, will be taking responsibility for employment training.

Mr. Hunter: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the fall that there has been in the number of long-term unemployed during the past two years or so? Is not that full clear evidence that the ET programmes are not only the largest of their kind in Europe, but the most effective?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, there has been a significant fall in long-term unemployment in this country. Indeed, the number of long-term unemployed has fallen more sharply over the past year or so than has the number of unemployed people as a whole.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister of State aware that in December the Training Commission told the Select Committee on Employment that 45 per cent. dropped out before getting to the training agent; that there was a further drop-out of up to 80 per cent. before getting to the training manager; that, of the small minority who actually started training, 70 per cent. did not complete their original action plan; and that, of those who completed their training, 42 per cent. did not get jobs? Does the Minister agree that that shambles is a result of the fact that the programme is underfunded? Does he realise that he will not be regarded as dealing seriously with the matter unless he puts more money into the system? Under the public expenditure plans that we shall be debating today, investment is being cut. Until he improves the programme, he is not likely to be taken seriously.

Mr. Eggar: As the whole House recognises, the hon. Gentleman knows a great deal about the matter. What he failed to point out is that all the statistics that he quoted are considerably better in respect of employment training than they were either in respect of the community programme or in respect of the job training scheme. Like him—and he took evidence from officials about drop-out—we are very much aware of the problem. We are considering ways of minimising that problem in a constructive way. An investigation is going on at the moment, and I am sure that, in due course, the hon. Gentleman and his Committee colleagues will be able to see the proposals that we shall bring forward to deal with the problem to which he alludes.

Training and Enterprise Councils

9. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the date for completion of the TEC network.

Mr. Howard: I expect the complete training and enterprise council network in England and Wales to be in place by the end of the year. That will be two years ahead of schedule.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the combination of the completion of the TEC network with the new youth training scheme by vouchers will provide exciting new opportunities to enable Britain's youth to meet today's needs?

Mr. Howard: The councils will provide an exciting framework and exciting initiatives, with or without vouchers, at which, as my hon. Friend knows, we are still looking.

Mrs. Mahon: Is the Minister aware that many of the employers he has put in charge of the TECs are the same employers who failed to provide training in the past? How does he expect anybody to have confidence in the scheme?

Mr. Howard: I am surprised that the hon. Lady should take that attitude to the TECs, which have received a widespread welcome and are setting about their tasks with tremendous enthusiasm. We should all welcome that. They represent one of the most exciting training initiatives ever in Britain.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the energy and enthusiasm with which his Department has pursued new initiatives over the years, which has been copied by local authorities, has ended up with a number of employers having no clear idea whether TECs are much more important than any other initiative? Will he ensure that they are made aware of the enormous importance of getting in early on the TEC act?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. We have more to do to bring home the advantages of the TECs to all concerned and I welcome his co-operation in achieving the objective.

Mr. Fatchett: Now that it is acknowledged that YTS has been a failure for a generation of young people in Britain, will the Secretary of State confirm that his Department is considering training vouchers for the 16 to 19 age group? If so, will he also confirm that those training vouchers will be under the control of the TECs, and will he give us some guarantee that their value will be sufficient to ensure that all youngsters can go on a course of their choice at a place of their choice?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's opening remarks were a pathetic misrepresentation of the youth training scheme. I have already confirmed to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) that we are looking at the CBI's proposals for vouchers. If we decide that they represent the way forward, we shall make an announcement at the appropriate time.

Tourism

10. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the United Kingdom's gross national product is represented by tourism income.

Mr. Nicholls: The total turnover of the British tourist industry was estimated to have been £19 billion in 1988. That represented 4 per cent. of the total United Kingdom gross national product.

Mr. Greenway: How do our earnings from tourism compare with those of other countries? Will the Minister confirm that the number of jobs in tourism has risen by 20 per cent. over the past 10 years? Will he try to divert tourists from watching the changing of the guard at Buckingham palace every day to enable some of us who have never seen it to do so?

Mr. Nicholls: I should like to think that I could solve my hon. Friend's problem, but I suspect that it may be beyond me. My hon. Friend is entirely right to refer to a 20 per cent. growth in jobs in the decade to September 1989. We rank after the United States, Spain, Italy and France in the world league which, given the size of the United States and the more beneficial climate of the other countries, is a remarkable achievement.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that there is a feeling in Wales that we do not maximise our attractions to overseas visitors because, unlike the tourist boards for England and Scotland, the Wales tourist board has no authority to market Wales overseas? Instead that is undertaken by the British Tourist Authority. Will he have a word with the BTA to ensure that at least by 1992 Wales has direct access to the EEC?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that the BTA hopes that it properly represents the United Kingdom abroad in trying to attract visitors, but I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's anxieties are made clear to the BTA.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why tourism is such a massive earner for the United Kingdom and employs so many people is the fact that it has a long and distinguished record of providing training for its employees? The service sector needs no lessons from the Opposition on how to provide training, and the example of the whisky industry is as good an example as I can give.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. It is also one of those industries where the diversity of jobs available to those who want to work within it is absolutely endless.

Economic League

11. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to outlaw activities such as those of the Economic League, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No, Sir.

Dr. Moonie: That was a typically pathetic answer. Will the Minister join us in utterly condemning the activities of organisations that seek to blacklist people for no other reason than legitimate trade union activities?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is behind the times. If he cares to have a look at the matter he will find in the Employment Bill, which is presently going through Committee, that it will not be lawful after the Bill is passed to discriminate against a potential employee merely because he is a trade union member. It causes his own Front-Bench spokesmen some embarrassment because it means that they would have to support the abolition of the closed shop. That is a matter that he will have to take up with them.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Tredinnick.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Order. I am being urged to speed up Question Time.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage the numbers of those unemployed for more than five years has fallen over the past year.

Mr. Howard: In the year to October 1989, the latest available figure, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for more than five years fell by 27 per cent.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the expansion in training prospects has been crucial in reducing the number of long-term unemployed? How can the Opposition criticise us when for every £1 that they spent on training we are spending £6?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The training initiatives that we have taken in the past 10 years, the youth training scheme and more recently employment training, have contributed a great deal to that remarkable drop in the figure for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Alfred Morris: What proportion of those who have been unemployed for more than five years are disabled people? Is the Minister aware of the findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that only 31 per cent. of disabled adults of working age are actually working? Does not that statistic shout discrimination against disabled people and the need for urgent action to protect them?

Mr. Howard: I am disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman does not give credit for the steps that we have taken to encourage the disabled back into work, in the special programme for which my Department is responsible—which was praised in a recent article by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)—and in the measures recently introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. We take the problems of getting the disabled back to work very seriously, and we are taking constructive action to help them.

13. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment in inner city areas has fallen since March 1988.

Mr. Howard: In the 57 local authority areas in England within which the Government target inner city programme aid, the number of unemployed claimants has fallen by 334,828 or 34 per cent. since March 1988. In the United Kingdom as a whole the percentage fall has been 37 per cent.

Mr. Stevens: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government's policies in encouraging enterprise are proving successful not only in outer urban constituencies like mine, where unemployment fell by 35 per cent. in 1989, but in areas considered to be some of the most deprived in the country?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The dramatic fall in unemployment in the inner city areas is a particularly encouraging feature of recent economic development, and a tribute to the success of the Government's economic policy.

Mr. Cryer: When does the Minister expect unemployment in inner city areas to sink to the level of 1979? Does he expect that current interest rates will make that happen more quickly or more slowly?

Mr. Howard: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not recognise, and give credit for, the fact that more people in the inner city areas are now working—as they are in the country as a whole—than in 1979. That is a tribute to the success of the Government's economic policies—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to desist from holding private conversations during important employment questions.

16. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in unemployment since June 1987.

Mr. Howard: Between June 1987 and December 1989, seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen by about 1·25 million, or 43 per cent.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for giving those figures, which bear eloquent testimony to the success of the Government's economic policies. Do not they also underline the importance of the Government's many training initiatives and, in particular, the critical need to encourage more part-timers, especially women, back into the labour force?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need a successful economic framework and effective training policies. The combination of both has led to the fall in unemployment to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Heffer: Why is the right hon. and learned Gentleman boasting about the fall in unemployment when, under the present Government, its level has risen dramatically since 1979? Can he explain why unemployment on Merseyside—particularly in Liverpool—although not quite as high as it was, is still much higher than it should be?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's acknowledgement, albeit rather grudging, of the progress that has been made on Merseyside—as elsewhere—in bringing down unemployment. I hope that he will also acknowledge that 1 million more people are now at work than in 1979, and that nearly 3 million extra jobs have been created since 1983.

17. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in Wirral as a whole since June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Between June 1987 and December 1989, the number of unemployed claimants in the Wirral local authority area has fallen by 8,232, or 34·7 per cent. The comparison is slightly affected by the new benefit regulations affecting those aged under 18 which were introduced in September 1988. Unemployment figures are not seasonally adjusted at a regional level.

Mr. Porter: The people of the Wirral will be extremely grateful for the fall in unemployment. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware, however, that Cammell Laird, the shipyard which is the major employer in Birkenhead, has recently announced 500 redundancies? Will he take the matter up with the Secretary of State for Defence to ensure that orders are placed with the yard and that the number of unemployed in the Wirral continues to fall?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend will accept that it would be wrong for the Government to try to suspend the commercial judgment of companies in regard to redundancies. I can tell him, however, that where there are

redundancies the full resources of the Department of Employment will be brought to bear to help those who are affected, and I certainly undertake to look at that.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding some welcome improvements in employment on Merseyside, and in the Wirral in particular, does the Minister accept that the closure of plants such as BAT and Higsons sets back the cause of full employment in those areas? What have his Government done to make representations to those companies to ensure that socially disastrous decisions are not made in areas of high unemployment?

Mr. Nicholls: As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), I accept that redundancies can have a very bad effect and can represent a good deal of personal tragedy for those involved. What the Government cannot do, however, is try to manipulate matters by telling companies that they should not exercise their commercial judgment. Ultimately, the companies will form a view on what is the best part of the country for them in all the circumstances, and doubtless that will apply to Merseyside.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the main things that the Government have done to help the Wirral and Merseyside is to alter business rates? Is he aware that the north-west region as a whole will benefit to the tune of £300 million—money which, particularly on Merseyside, will be used for industrial investment and hence the creation of new jobs.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right. One of the most beneficial effects of the uniform business rate is to ensure that those parts of the country which have paid more than they should are at long last getting a fair deal, and it will also ensure that Left-wing authorities will not be able to turn their areas into ghettoes by driving out the businesses that would support people.

19. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Howard: In December 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, was the lowest for more than nine years, and it is now significantly lower than the EC average.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that excessive pay claims in the private sector which are not matched by productivity could lead to increases in unemployment?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Everyone concerned with wage negotiations should take into account the longer-term implications of their actions, and the fact that excessive wage increases can clearly lead to job losses.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall preside at a dinner in honour of the Prime Minister of Poland.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister agree that the release of Nelson Mandela—a person who symbolises South Africa's cry for freedom—was made possible only because of pressure from the free world, including economic pressure from the rest of Europe and the United States? Does the Prime Minister accept that it is essential to maintain that pressure if a majority of South Africans are to be free to travel in their own country, free to have their own businesses, free to have access to higher standards of education and child care and the rest, and free—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question, not make a speech.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister agree that there should be pressure so that all the people of South Africa can be truly free citizens of a truly free South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I believe that improvements are coming about in South Africa because there is a general agreement there, and the world over, that apartheid is wrong and that it must go. Everyone there is coming to realise that. I do not believe that we should have got the results that we have, including the release of Nelson Mandela, had we introduced comprehensive economic sanctions—that would have caused increasing violence and bitterness—instead of doing as we have done, and steadily improved prospects for peaceful negotiations, which I am sure Mandela stands for, too.

Q2. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that her Government have no plans to allow local government councillors access to income tax returns? Will she also confirm that her Government have no proposals to penalise those who improve their homes by their own hard work? Does she agree that it is utterly cynical to refuse to give details of half-baked policies simply because local government elections are in the offing?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend on all three points. Details of income tax matters are private and between the taxpayer and the income tax authorities. They are not to be handed on to anyone else, as they are private and confidential. Moreover, it is wrong to discourage people from making improvements to their houses by increasing the local charge when they do so. We shall continue with the community charge, which is the best local tax that has yet been invented.

Mr. Kinnock: When Nelson Mandela says that sanctions must stay as an essential pressure for change, how can the Prime Minister think that she knows better than Mr. Mandela?

The Prime Minister: Mr. Mandela also said that he approved of armed struggle. I disagree with him on that; and I disagree with him on the present sanctions. When the South African Government were doing things with which we thoroughly disagreed, we put on some very minor

gesture sanctions to demonstrate our disapproval. Now that they are doing things which we have urged them to do and have helped them to bring about, I believe it is right to reduce the sanctions that we have, particularly as they are only voluntary.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister realise that for her to insist that she knows better than Nelson Mandela is both arrogant and absurd? Does she also realise that, if she says no to the single request that he has made to her and the international community, what she is saying to Nelson Mandela is, "You are on your own; we are turning our back on you"?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I think the right hon. Gentleman possibly takes his instructions from the African National Congress—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Prime Minister made some comment, will she rephrase it please?

The Prime Minister: I do not take my instructions from the ANC, which believes in comprehensive economic sanctions, which we have totally rejected——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I confess that there was so much noise that I could not hear what the Prime Minister said. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This sounds awful. If an unparliamentary expression was used, I am sure the Prime Minister would wish to withdraw it.

The Prime Minister: I shall start my reply again. The ANC believes in comprehensive economic sanctions—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given an opportunity to reply—*[Interruption.]* Order. The Prime Minister said that she would start her reply again.

The Prime Minister: I said that I would start my reply again having withdrawn the previous words. I have said that now three times and hon. Gentlemen cannot hear me. The ANC stands for comprehensive economic sanctions; so does the Labour party. It stands for armed struggle; so, apparently, does the Labour party. It stands for nationalisation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very disorderly Prime Minister's Question Time. We must hear the reply.

The Prime Minister: The ANC stands for nationalisation of most of the economic means of the country. Mr. Mandela naturally said he supports all three in what I would call his ritual speech. I believe he is making very much better and more peaceful speeches during his press conferences. I believe that what he said was ritual. There are other people in South Africa such as Chief Buthelezi and Helen Suzman who have been fighting for the end of apartheid far longer than many people in the House. They are absolutely against sanctions. I believe that it is right to encourage President de Klerk and the people in South Africa to go further in the way we want by removing some of the sanctions.

Mr. Shersby: Has my right hon. Friend, as a London Member, had the opportunity to study the first Metropolitan police customer survey that was published today? Is she aware that 84 per cent. of people who visited police stations expressed satisfaction with the way in which the police handled their cases and found them polite, efficient and courteous? Does she agree that that is a very good result?

The Prime Minister: Yes, That is a very good result. Most people would wish to express their thanks to the police for protecting us and upholding and enforcing the law.

Mr. Ashdown: How many of the Prime Minister's Community, Commonwealth American colleagues were consulted before her lonely call to remove sanctions at the weekend? Is it not rather odd that when she is asked to support unity and freedom in Germany she says that there must first be massive international consultation, but that when she is asked to maintain international sanctions on South Africa she is prepared to reject that unilaterally and alone?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman does not fully appreciate precisely what happened. As for United Nations sanctions, of course the arms embargo remains in place because we all agreed to it and are bound by it. Orders through the European Economic Community that passed through the House, in particular sanctions on iron and steel which suit some people, have to be upheld, as do those on Krugerrands. Those are orders and they cannot be changed without full agreement. I wrote to Mr. Haughey and have received a letter back from him agreeing that the recent measures in South Africa

"are indeed significant developments"

and that EC Foreign Ministers should consider next week

"to what extent profound and irreversible changes can be said to have already taken place in South Africa that would justify a relaxation of the measures imposed by the Twelve."

Those are orders which have gone through the House.

The sanctions to which I am referring are totally voluntary: a voluntary ban on investment from outside and a voluntary arrangement that we do not try to encourage tourists. Those are not bound by orders of any kind.

I was glad to see that the Archbishop of Canterbury also said—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important matters. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: There needs to be—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that not only is the House interested to hear about these major matters, but others outside are interested.

The Prime Minister: The Archbishop of Canterbury said:

"There needs to be some measure of encouragement . . . if that requires some release of sanctions, I think that will be understandable."

President Bush made it clear that he does not think—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on!"]—The right hon. Gentleman asked me a question and I am trying to reply. President Bush—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has a right to give her reply.

The Prime Minister: President Bush has made clear that he does not think that sanctions are necessarily the right answer, but he is bound by a law passed by Congress. In so far as we are bound by laws, we uphold them, and in so far as we are not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my right hon. Friend agree that issuing death threats is an extremely serious crime which in all circumstances should be pursued with the full and impartial rigour of the law? Does she agree that when a foreign Government start behaving like a gang of hoodlums and issuing death threats against a British subject, it is quite impossible for us to conceive of having normal, civilised diplomatic relations with them?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Issuing death threats is totally unacceptable. Freedom of speech and freedom to write is freedom to say things with which other people do not agree. That is one of our fundamental freedoms; we must uphold it, and will continue to uphold it. I do not believe that such words or such writing will do anything to damage the great religions, which are far older than those who write about them.

Q3. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Ruddock: If the Prime Minister had just spent 27 years in prison——

Mr. Kaufman: As she should.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have never heard the House behave in this way at Prime Minister's Question Time. I call the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who has a right to ask her question.

Ms. Ruddock: If the Prime Minister had just spent 27 years in prison, separated from her family, but found when she was released that she and people like her were unable to live or work where they wished and did not have the vote, would she not want the support of the international community in continuing sanctions against the Government of that country?

The Prime Minister: No. I do not think that sanctions have achieved anything—*[Interruption.]* As to getting rid of them, if the Labour party had had its way we would have had comprehensive economic sanctions, creating poverty and unemployment in South Africa and a good deal of unemployment here. That is not the way to keep South Africa as the most prosperous economy in Africa. Many people from the front-line states go to it and it will continue to be prosperous provided that it is run in the same way when the Government in South Africa are elected on the basis of one person, one vote.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order later. I call Mr. Michael Howard—*[Interruption.]* Order. The whole House knows that I take points of order after statements.

Skills Training Agency

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the Skills Training Agency——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House should reflect on the fact that the scenes that we have had this afternoon bring no honour on this place. I call the Secretary of State.

Mr. Howard: The Skills Training Agency provides training through a network of 60 skillcentres. It has experienced considerable financial problems over the years. It has broken even only once in the past five years, with a trading loss of about £20 million in 1988-89——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) must resume his seat. I have already told him, and he knows full well, that I take points of order after statements. That is when I intend to take them today.

Mr. Howard: That was in spite of an arrangement, up to 1987, under which fixed amounts of training were purchased from the Skills Training Agency by the public sector. That arrangement—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that the time to raise points of order arising out of Question Time is after the statement, and that is when I intend to take them.

Mr. Howard: That arrangement was criticised by the Public Accounts Committee and ended in 1987.

In March of last year my predecessor announced to the House that he had decided, on the basis of a feasibility study, that the STA should be offered for sale. Throughout the sale process it has been made plain that the Government's interest is in receiving bids from those who wish to run a training business.

I have now received advice from Deloitte Corporate Finance on the final offers received. In the light of that advice, I have agreed terms of sale with two bidders. Their offers together cover 47 skillcentres, plus the STA's head office, mobile training service, sales teams and colleges. The main successful bidder is Astra Training Services Limited, a company formed by a management buyout team in the STA head office. I am placing in the Vote Office full details of which parts of the STA I propose to sell, and to whom, together with the Government's objectives for the sale.

This is an extremely satisfactory outcome to the sale process. It enables the creation of a viable private sector network of training provision with good coverage of major centres of population in England, Scotland and Wales. Over three quarters of the skillcentres will be sold on the basis that they will continue to provide training.

This will also be the first successful management buy-out bid in the Civil Service. The management buy-out team knows the business and has detailed plans, backed by professional advice, to develop training both for unemployed and for employed people in a way that responds to the needs of employers. Its plans include investment of over £11 million in the first three years, and opportunities for staff to participate more fully in the business through an employee share ownership scheme.

The existing five regional offices and 13 skillcentres are not included in this sale package. The regional offices do not feature in the management structure envisaged by Astra, and were not part of its bid. The 13 skillcentres are poorly utilised and at some no training is currently taking place. I propose to close down the training businesses in these parts of the agency, and wherever possible the staff will be redeployed to other posts. Alternative arrangements will be made to allow trainees to complete training in progress.

In addition to producing a substantial private sector training network, I expect the course of action I am announcing today to yield a positive return to the taxpayer. The sale of the training business will involve a payment from the Government to Astra of some £11 million. This is a price determined in the sale process after open competitive bids and subsequent negotiations. It reflects the costs of turning around a business which is currently unprofitable and creating training businesses with good prospects of viability.

The sites of those offices and centres which are not included in the package to which I have referred will be offered for sale. Having obtained professional valuations, I expect the net proceeds from these sales to exceed by a significant margin the payments from the Government to the training business purchasers.

My officials will now consult STA staff and their trade union representatives on the implications of my statement for staff, including the measures I have taken to give effect to ministerial undertakings about pension and other arrangements for staff who transfer into the private sector. In due course, I shall lay orders before the House to ensure that when the sales are concluded, staff who transfer are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

I wish to pay tribute to staff who have continued to work unstintingly for the STA's success through a potentially unsettling period. For them, for the agency's customers and for the STA's contribution to our national training effort, the uncertainty of the recent past is now over and there are sound prospects for the future.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Will the Secretary of State agree that the 60 skillcentres, which employ over 3,000 people and which last year trained tens of thousands, are a major national training asset whose secure future is in the public interest? As for the 13 centres that are to remain unsold, am I right in thinking that they are to be closed? What about the training that is done at these centres? What guarantee is there that that will continue? As for the 47 that are to be sold, what are the terms as to the quality of training contained in the sale? Are there any such stipulations?

Given the fact that some of the sites to be sold will be extremely valuable, and given that the Government will be paying money to the management buy-out team to take the skillcentres off their hands, what protection, especially in the light of the Government's record, will we have against asset stripping and the making of unacceptably large gains through the sale of the sites?

What assurances will be given to trade unions about their interests and about time for consultation on them? As for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks about the record of skillcentres, it is not right that the report of Deloittes on the Skills Training Agency has been published? Will he confirm for the benefit of the House that that report makes clear that the deficit of the skillcentres is largely due to the Government's own employment training scheme? Is it not right that they were breaking even before? Will he also confirm that the costs charged by skillcentres are comparable with those of private sector training providers for craft training and are cheaper for supervisory training? Is not the move to more employer-related training already happening? In those circumstances, what other than simple prejudice leads him to believe that the skillcentres cannot prosper in the public sector but must be put into the private sector?

Is not the essential point that after privatisation the future of the skillcentres as a national network and a national resource, whether they grow or whether they close, will depend not on their value to the community at large but simply on their commercial value to their new owners? With our record on training, described by the Secretary of State's predecessor as mind boggling, does not he accept that we have a massive gap to make up with our competitors? With a deficit and a crisis in relation to every main component of new technology, as well as traditional skills, why do his Government, uniquely in Europe, believe that market forces can succeed in the future where they have failed in the past? Should not he and his Government learn the lesson that today, with our admitted and huge training deficit, our national priority should be not to privatise training but to invest in it?

Mr. Howard The hon. Gentleman's hysterical reaction shows that he is determined to emulate the example of his predecessor the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He leaves entirely out of account the fact that the skillcentres are currently losing nearly £30 million a year. The hon. Gentleman referred to the employment training scheme. He should know about, and should take into account, the remarks of the Public Accounts Committee of the House on the value for money provided by the skillcentres to the employment training scheme. As for his general attitude, it has, in common with so much of what we hear from the Opposition Benches, the refrain, "Things are dreadful as they are; let us keep them exactly as they are."

Dealing with the questions that the hon. Gentleman put, I agree that it is important that secure training arrangements should be made at as many centres as possible. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the objectives that the Government have set themselves in considering the bids they have received, he will see that that features prominently among those objectives and is a key factor why we have accepted the management buy-out bid coming, as it does, from those with great experience of training and commitment and dedication to training.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the future of training in the centres might be imperilled by the prospects of the gains that could be made from selling the properties. The answer to that question lies in the clawback arrangements which are part of this transaction. They provide that if any centre is sold in the first three years the taxpayer will receive 100 per cent. of the development gains. If the sale is in the fourth year, the taxpayer will receive 75 per cent., 50 per cent. if it is in the fifth year and 25 per cent. if it takes place in any of the subsequent five years. That far-reaching clawback arrangement provides the taxpayer with secure assurances against the danger to which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Deloitte report contains a great deal of information that is commercial and, therefore, confidential. I am sure that he would not expect me to make such information public. We have achieved a deal which is excellent for the taxpayer and for those who want to continue to receive training from the skillcentres. The deal will, I hope, enable all those who are concerned in the management buy-out to prosper from it in the years ahead.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My right hon. and learned Friend should be aware that this opportunity for the staff who have been so closely involved in the centres to make a go of it in the private sector is greatly welcomed. Can he assure the House that the proposed training arrangements will be meshed in properly with the vocational qualifications net which is gradually being spread? Does my right hon. and learned Friend also recognise that, at a time when individuals are at last beginning to realise that responsibility for improving their own opportunities and promotion rests at least as much with them as with employers, this signal is extremely welcome?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. It will be very much in the interests of those who run the centres to mesh them in with other arrangements in the way that my hon. Friend has suggested. I have every expectation that what he has asked for will come to pass.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the previous Parliament, the Select Committee on Employment conducted an inquiry into skillcentres and the Training Agency, and that in the course of that inquiry Conservative Employment Ministers went on record and gave assurances that a national network of skillcentres would be maintained in the public sector and that it was in the national interest to keep such a benchmark of quality? That has now gone.

Is the Secretary of State also aware that the Select Committee said then that the financial arrangements that were being put in place would not work and would push the Skills Training Agency into the red, and that the Select Committee was right and the Government were wrong? Is he also aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was right to draw attention to employment training? The skillcentres gave high quality training to the construction industry and others for about £140 or £150 a week. The employment training organisation wanted to pay £17·50 a week and the sums did not add up.

Is the Secretary of State also aware that one of the attractions to buyers is the land and buildings, which they

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

will obtain so cheaply? If the STA had been able to sell off its surplus land and buildings, it could have made the books balance by a crazy accountancy device, but it was not allowed to do so. Is not this a saga of broken promises and an extremely bad management which will lead to a diminution of training assets and abilities?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's points. I made it clear in my answer to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that the clawback arrangements on the sale of property would provide that the development gains would be returned to the Government in the proportions that I identified, which destroys any substance that there might otherwise have been in that point. The hon. Gentleman is the Chairman of a distinguished Committee of the House, the Select Committee on Employment, and he will no doubt want to give full weight to the observations made by other Committees of the House, including the Public Accounts Committee. The changes in the financing arrangements, to which the hon. Gentleman takes exception, were included in the observations of that Committee.

Nothing in the announcement detracts from or affects the Government's guarantee to provide employment training for those who are eligible for it. It will be perfectly possible for those who are eligible, including those in areas where it is necessary for the reasons that I have given to close some of the centres, to obtain employment training.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. and learned Friend will probably agree that skillcentres have not always looked to job training for the future. What assurances has he had from Astra Training Services Limited that the skillcentres that it buys will provide training for the future rather than jobs for the past? It will take over a skillcentre in my constituency.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It will be in the interests of those who will run the centres in the private sector to make sure that they provide the sort of training that is needed. That is the way in which we can be assured that the training that we want to see take place is provided. The management buy-out teams that have been the successful bidders have great experience in training and are dedicated and committed to continuing to provide training. In the private sector, free of the bureaucratic constraints under which they have laboured until now, they will be able to respond in an effective fashion to the demands of the private sector.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): As Irvine skillcentre in my constituency will be the subject of a management buy-out and will not close, I welcome the statement today on behalf of my constituents. Could the Secretary of State give us more details on future negotiations between the trade unions and the new management on conditions and pension rights?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his response. He recognises the good sense of the proposals that I have just announced. Consultations on conditions will be held with the trade unions. The staff are being informed of the proposals simultaneously with my announcement. I have obtained an independent assessment of the pension arrangements that Astra proposes. I have been told by the Government Actuary's department that they are comparable with the pensions arrangements that would have applied if the staff had remained civil servants. The details will be disclosed to the staff in the consultations which will take place in the next few weeks.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The employees and trainees at the skillcentre in the Mile Cross area of my constituency will have been interested to hear my right hon. and learned Friend's statement. Will he confirm that this good news removes any immediate threat of closure from the skillcentre and will enable it to work with greater flexibility to address the serious skills shortages that remain in the Norwich area?

Mr. Howard: The skillcentre to which my hon. Friend refers, together with others, has been bought as a going concern on the basis that training will continue to be provided there. That is a tremendous opportunity for those who presently receive training, those who want to receive training in the future, the management buy-out team and the staff of the business. They will know that if they provide the kind of training that is needed in the world into which we are moving—where, as we heard earlier, there will be an increasing emphasis on the need for training—their future will be secure.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): But is not it second best for the staff involved? Would not it have been preferable to keep them in the public sector, particularly in view of the excellent work that they have undertaken, which the Secretary of State recognised? Does he agree that there is a question mark over the level of quality? What provision will he make to ensure that the standard of training is retained, particularly as the organisation is now dedicated to profit whereas previously it was completely dedicated to training?

Mr. Howard: I think that it is very much a first best, and not a second best as the hon. Gentleman suggested. I hope that in due course even the hon. Gentleman will see the advantages to his constituents of the measures that I have just announced.

On quality, I trust that the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the arrangements that we are putting into place under the training and enterprise councils. They will recognise and accredit training providers for the purpose of the providers playing their part in the programmes that will be carried out under the auspices of the training and enterprise councils. If the centres are to play their full part in those programmes, it will therefore be very much in their interests to provide the kind of quality training that will lead to accreditation under the training and enterprise councils. The hon. Gentleman need have no fears on that score.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): As an hon. Member with a skillcentre in his constituency, may I warmly welcome the privatisation of the centres, which will be more flexible, efficient and responsive to the needs of industry? To that end and because it is important that their links with the training and enterprise councils and the local employer networks, especially in relation to training in small firms, are as close as possible, what measures do the Government propose to ensure that that is so?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for my statement. It will clearly be in the direct interest of everyone concerned that the close co-operation

that he seeks should take place. That will be very much in the interests of those who manage the centre in his constituency and of the training and enterprise councils. In that respect, those interests will exactly coincide, which is the best assurance that my hon. Friend could receive.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am not opposed to the sale of the Skills Training Agency and regard a management buy-out as the most welcome form of sale. However, given that we are to lose one third of the present network and that there will not be any new resources, will the Secretary of State be much more explicit about his assurances? Will he assure us that the quality and standard will be as high in the future as it is now? Will he ensure that there will be the wide range of skills training in the future that there is now, both in subject and in geographical area? Will there be the same regional assessment of skills needs as now? Will he ensure that trainers will be trained as they are now, and, above all, given that our skills training is so woefully inadequate in Britain, will he ensure that we shall improve both our commitment and the resources from both the public and private sectors in the future which we have not sought to do in the recent past?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's words of welcome, although they were somewhat qualified by his later remarks. I hope that he will forgive me if I correct his arithmetic. It is not the case that one third of the centres are not being sold; over three quarters of the centres are being sold as part of the proposal——

Mr. Hughes: One third will be lost.

Mr. Howard: No, fewer than one quarter will be lost. The best possible assurance of quality that anybody could have lies in the clear incentives that will be provided for the highest possible standards to be delivered through the centres. I have every expectation that, in each of the respects mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, quality will be improved. The quality standards will be much higher than in the past because those who are running the centres in the future will be the people with experience, commitment and dedication who will have every incentive to provide the best possible quality of training. That is the best assurance that anybody could seek.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed by industrialists and commercial people throughout the country? However, may ask him a wider question? Is he talking to the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the school-leaving age in this country and the need to re-examine it in the light of 1992 so that we can be competitive with the Germans and the French, who are not so hidebound and do not have such a late leaving age?

Mr. Howard: I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is carefully considering all the matters that are relevant to an improvement of the education standards of the children in our schools when they leave school. I am sure that he will want to take my hon. Friend's remarks into account.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Secretary of State made much of the financial loss incurred by skillcentres. Is he aware that the skillcentre in Sheffield, in my constituency, which he proposes to sell off has shown a considerable financial surplus in each of the past four years? What is motivating him? Has he any evidence that one single employer or trade union in Sheffield has sought this change? Can he given any assurance about the future costs and numbers of training places in Sheffield, and say whether they will be available to the unemployed?

Mr. Howard: As to whether the agencies are operating at a profit or loss, the hon. Gentleman ignores the figures that I gave which show that in the last year for which full figures are available—1988-89—the agency made a loss of £20 million and for the current year the loss is expected to be £30 million. As for training in Sheffield, I repeat what I said earlier: nothing in my statement detracts from or qualifies the Government's guarantees on employment training or youth training. I have every confidence that more than enough training for those who need it will be available in the Sheffield area.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best and most exciting part of his welcome statement is that this is a management buyout? The management, currently civil servants, has realised that, free from the burden of state ownership and stimulated by private ownership and the opportunity to run its own business, it can turn around a £30 million loss. Does not that demonstrate quite clearly that public ownership can never work as well as private ownership?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is for reasons of pure dogma that the Opposition fail to recognise the opportunities that are available to people when they are given control of their own enterprise in the way that this management buyout makes possible. My hon. Friend has entirely recognised the advantages of the proposals.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Secretary of State should not hide behind the Public Accounts Committee; we were not responsible for the decision. Is not it ironic and perverse that on the very day that I seek and, to some extent, secure assurances from Ministers in the Department of Employment on the future of training arrangements in west Cumbria in relation to the thousands of people who will be made redundant with the rundown of contracts at Sellafield, the Secretary of State should come to the Dispatch Box and close the skillcentre in Maryport? When this news hits the streets of Maryport and west Cumbria tonight, my constituents will say that Ministers are hypocrites and nothing else.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents will look at the facts and behind the rhetoric of which he has just been guilty. Nothing that I have said detracts from the assurances given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State earlier, which I wholeheartedly endorse. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the skillcentre in Maryport, which is currently losing considerable sums of money, does not have a single employment training placement. It is not contributing to training needs in Cumbria. That contribution can be made in other ways, through other providers of training, which will continue to provide all the training necessary to deal with the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the new system that he has outlined will ensure that people are trained for work

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

that is actually available rather than for jobs which are not there, as has sometimes happened in the past? On the basis of that principle, will he rethink the closure of the Perivale centre in my constituency? That centre is at the heart of a highly industrialised area, where there is a strong demand for training and where employers are prepared to pay for training. Will he ensure, in any event, that the excellent staff at the Perivale centre do not miss out? Will he see that they are offered the alternative jobs that they deserve?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with the first part of my hon. Friend's comments. The whole thrust of our training policy is to make sure that the training that is provided is relevant to the needs of today and of tomorrow. We have to ensure that people get the training that they need. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the skillcentre in Perivale has been empty and disused for some time, and its lease will run out in March. I therefore cannot give him the assurance for which he has asked. However, we shall make every effort to redeploy the staff.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): Does the Minister agree that the Wigan skillcentre has a very high reputation as an efficient and effective unit? It is well admired in the north-west region. Indeed, on a recent visit the Prime Minister complimented it. The Minister's statement today will do nothing to improve the efficiency of that centre, no matter to what part of the private sector it goes. Great distress and dismay is being caused. The staff themselves see this as an irresponsible move which will result in a lack of the authority that is needed to deal with the situation.

Mr. Howard: I am happy to endorse the hon. Gentleman's comments about the excellence of the Wigan skillcentre. I hope that he will do his best to assure the staff that these proposals, if looked at constructively, will be seen to be giving them a tremendous opportunity for the future—enabling them to build on the excellence of the centre, and ensuring that it can provide training of even higher quality.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify what he said about regional offices? I am not quite sure that it was heard in all parts of the House. His announcement—particularly the part about retention of land and development gain—will be greatly welcomed in the Bristol skillcentre. That announcement not only clarifies the position for the immediate future, but indicates the intention for at least three years, and probably a lot longer. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is necessary to make it clear to management in all industries that there is a need to train all people, regardless of their age and their skills, and whatever the system?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with everything that my hon. Friend has said. I am grateful to him for his observations. The regional centres do not fit in with the management structure that Astra has proposed, and they will therefore be closed. My hon. Friend will be aware that the regional centre in his area is located in the skillcentre itself. As I said earlier, every effort will be made to redeploy the staff.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members will be aware that, after this, there is to be an important debate on public expenditure, as well as a ten-minute Bill. I will allow questions to continue until 4.15 pm so that as many Members as possible may be called. I ask hon. Members to be brief.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Does the Secretary of State accept that, as an inevitable consequence of his decision, small rural skillcentres will feel extremely vulnerable? Does he accept that training needs in rural communities are vastly different from those in urban areas? Does he agree that, in order to meet those needs, we need a comprehensive and coherent plan to ensure that the economy, which in many parts of the United Kingdom is very fragile indeed, is given an opportunity to grow from within? Does he accept the view of many people who are involved in training in rural areas that, because of the fragility of the economy there, we must have public support for training? Will he assure people living and working in rural areas that, under this proposal, the Government's commitment to training in those areas remains undiminished?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he asked in the latter part of his question. It is true that there are particular training needs in rural areas. One of the great advantages of the training and enterprise councils is that they will be locally based and will therefore be able to adjust the training that is made available under their auspices to the needs of the area. That cannot but help to ensure that the needs of rural areas are properly reflected. The hon. Gentleman must know of the tremendous amount of public support that will go into training. Very nearly £3 billion will be made available to the training and enterprise councils in their first year of operation.

Those who work in the skillcentre in the hon. Gentleman's constituency should not feel vulnerable. The very fact that they are included in the management buy-out bid shows the considerable confidence that the management team has in the viability of that skillcentre.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Secretary of State give a specific guarantee that services and jobs at the Coventry skillcentre will be retained after the disgraceful privatisation that he has announced today? Since his statement contained no assurances on the quality of future training—I rule out the Mickey Mouse employment training and youth training schemes—have not we lost today public accountability for training standards in Britain? If the senior managers will be so good under privatisation, why have they cocked things up in the past three or four years so that a quarter of the skillcentres are having to be closed? The whole thing stinks.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's remarks about employment training and YTS will be regarded as nothing less than an insult to those millions of people who have benefited from those schemes during the few years that they have been in operation. The best assurances that any sensible person could want with regard to the Coventry skillcentre is that it will be run by those with experience of training, with commitment and dedication to training, operating under a regime that will provide every incentive for them to provide the best possible quality training in

response to the needs of the private sector. I do not expect the hon. Gentleman, imprisoned as he is in the dogma that is being abandoned even in eastern Europe in recent weeks, to see the good sense of the proposal, but I am confident that others will.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I am delighted that the Durham skillcentre will remain open, but I am not so delighted that it is being privatised. On a number of occasions I have had the pleasure to visit the skillcentre, which gives excellent training and I shall be disappointed if the measures announced today affect that. Will the Minister confirm that employees at the skillcentre will be involved in its management and that all jobs will be safeguarded? Will the Minister ensure that the rights of civil servants at the Durham skillcentre, some of whom have worked there for 30 years, will be protected?

Mr. Howard: Many of the rights will be protected by the regulations to which I referred in my statement, and the hon. Gentleman will be able to give his constituents assurances based on those regulations. In many respects, the arrangements will go further than those regulations provide. For instance, the regulations do not cover pensions, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have been interested in what I said about pensions earlier. It is the management buy-out team's intention to involve staff to the greatest possible extent. I mentioned in my statement the possibility of participation in the business. It is to those intentions and objectives that the hon. Gentleman should look for the assurances for which he asked, and I am confident that, in large measure, they will be available.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I want to press the Minister on two points that have been dealt with already. One is the question of quality assurance on which he has given an inadequate answer. The Minister talked of incentives. My first question is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the pressure on time, may we have one question?

Mr. Watson: What if the incentives prove inadequate? How does the Minister propose to measure or monitor quality assurance? If that does not measure up appropriately, what sanctions does he propose to operate? It is all very well talking about training needs, but what about quality assurance for those receiving the training?

Mr. Howard: If one reflects on the history of the matter, it is astonishing to suppose, as the hon. Gentleman does in his question, that the only way to obtain quality assurance is through public sector involvement, public sector instruction or public sector monitoring. We are much more likely to obtain improvements in quality by transferring the centres to the private sector where they will have every incentive to provide the higher quality standards that I want to see.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Presumably the management of the skillcentres will manage the new company—the management who oversaw a £30 million loss. I do not suppose that in the private sector it will have a magic wand with which to reduce those losses. Is the Minister confident that a national system of skillcentres will be retained and that such centres as the one in my own constituency will be protected to ensure at a national level the quality and provision of training?

Mr. Howard: I remind the hon. Gentleman of what I said in my statement about the investment that the management buy-out team intends to make—some £11 million in the first three years alone. I remind him that the company will be free of the constraints under which it has been operating in the public sector. I also remind him of the incentives which will be available to it to improve its standards in the private sector; we know that demands for training are bound to increase in the years ahead. In those circumstances, there is every reason to suppose that this will prove a considerable success and that the standards of training provided will increase.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a distinguished QC himself, could the Minister have a word with the Solicitor-General, who came very courteously to the debate on the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill and the very complex issues of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981? He will know better than most that the law of detriment is very complex. Could he discuss with the unions concerned, before laying the orders, exactly what the difficulties are, so that they do not have to employ expensive QCs as hapened in relation to the PSA and the Crown Suppliers?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that the consultation which is about to take place with the trade unions and the employees will be far ranging, and it may well embrace the complex question to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the Front-Bench spokesmen whom I have not been able to call. I hope that they will find some other opportunity to refer to this matter.

Points of Order

4.17 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will remember that during Question Time today there was an unusual amount of disorderly noise. In the course of one of the quieter moments during that noise, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made a grossly offensive remark about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must hear this, because I did not hear the remark that is alleged to have been made.

Mr. Onslow: It was clearly heard on the Conservative Benches, I suspect it may have been heard on the tapes, but I wonder whether you heard it, Mr. Speaker. If you did, it seems to me that it is a remark which you should invite the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said that I did not hear it, so I cannot call upon the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw it. I do not know what he said.

I hope that the House will reflect carefully on the disorderly way in which Prime Minister's Question Time proceeded today. The cut and thrust of debate is one thing, and the whole House subscribes to that, but noise and disruptions of the kind that we have heard today bring no credit upon us. Certainly personal abuse of any kind is not in the tradition of the Chamber.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): As a courtesy to the House, Mr. Speaker, may I notify you that the Opposition have decided to make a change in the business for the Opposition day tomorrow. We shall now start with a debate on Government policy on South Africa. That will proceed until 7 pm, and we shall then take the business already announced, which is a debate on rail fares and services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Quentin Davies—*[Interruption.]* Order. I hope that tomorrow's debate will proceed in better order.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I may be able to help you. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot go back to what was said at Question Time. I did not hear what was said; everyone else may have, but it did not come through my amplifier. Nor did I hear what the Prime Minister is alleged to have said earlier, which caused so much disruption in the Chamber.

I think that we should reflect on the fact that we are now seen on television. Scenes of the kind that we witnessed this afternoon, which will have been seen and heard by television viewers, bring no credit on us.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have received a most courteous letter from the Editor of *Hansard* pointing out that last night's *Hansard* reported, in column 117, that Mr. Colin Wallace had been acquitted in 1971. It should have read "convicted in 1981". The Minister of State for the Armed Forces has most courteously come to the Chamber to hear me make the correction.

The Ministry of Defence has considerable resources. It employs people to correct Ministers' speeches, unlike Back Benchers on both sides of the House. Such carelessness is symptomatic of this whole affair, and is entirely unacceptable to the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter in the best traditions of the House. I, too, have received a copy of the letter from the Editor of *Hansard*, in which the Editor—again, in the best traditions—takes responsibility for the error.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that the error was not picked up, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for his remarks. I am also grateful to the Editor of the *Official Report*. Perhaps I did not speak clearly enough.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Further to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), Mr. Speaker. I understand that the remark made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was heard on television; it was certainly heard on both sides of the House, although I accept that you may not have heard it. The right hon. Gentleman implied that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should have spent 27 years in prison. Although you did not hear the remark, Mr. Speaker, do you not agree that that is unparliamentary language and that the right hon. Gentleman should withdraw it?

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that I have no power to have such statements withdrawn. Let me say that I hope that we can proceed without personal abuse.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that it can be further to that point of order. In any case, I called the hon. Gentleman during Question Time.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your assistance and advice on a matter of grave importance in my constituency? More than 2,700 drums of contaminated waste have been dumped in my constituency, and a smaller quantity of the same consignment has been dumped in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). A number of my hon. Friends, some of whose constituencies are close to mine an in close proximity to the material—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This point of order is addressed to me. *[Interruption.]* This is exactly what I was talking about a few moments ago. If Members continue to barrack—for that is what they are doing—it is impossible to hear the point of order being raised with me. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Hardy: The waste has been with us a long time, but not for 27 years, which might be attractive to Conservative Members.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is not a point of order.

Mr. Hardy: It is a point of order, as I shall show. Conservative Members are not particularly interested in areas like ours, but I hope that they will listen to this serious point.

A number of my hon. Friends, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley, (Mr. Redmond) tabled an early-day motion in the House last week as a means of expressing the anger and frustration that is felt in our constituencies because this waste has been with us far too long. As a symbol of the frustration and anger that we have faced, having had to put up with this waste which should not be in our area——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I read the early-day motion on the Order Paper. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that this waste should be brought down here——

Mr. Hardy: No, I am not suggesting that.

Mr. Speaker: If it is suggested that this waste should be deposited in the House of Commons, I should take a poor view of it.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend's motion suggests that, as a symbol of our rage and frustration, and as evidence of the inadequacy and poverty of British regulations, one of the drums should be brought to the Palace of Westminster, and I merely wanted to ask you where I should put it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I have made my views plain on that. I hope that the hon. Member will do no such thing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet, and it has always been the tradition that when the Speaker is on his feet he is heard.

We have an important debate today on public expenditure, and a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in it. There is also a ten-minute Bill motion which will take time out of the debate. I cannot have a continuation of Question Time. What was said at Question Time was said. I think that it was the worst Prime Minister's Question Time that it has been my unhappy duty to preside over. I ask the House to reflect and to ensure that we do not have a repetition of it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you agree that the main problem during Prime Minister's Question Time was that five or six minutes of answers on two separate questions would have been better given as a statement in calm so that everyone could have asked questions? Given that I and many of my hon. Friends think that, will you accept a request from me to ask a private notice question demanding a statement from the Prime Minister on the Government's policy on sanctions against South Africa?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The time for private notice questions has passed. We are to have a debate on the subject tomorrow. I shall take one more question from the chairman of the 1922 committee. *[Interruption.]* Order. I decide who is called. *[Interruption.]* Behaviour of this kind from Front-Bench spokesmen is a terrible disgrace.

Mr. Onslow: Further to my original point of order and your response, Mr. Speaker. There is something very unsatisfactory about the situation in which the House finds itself. It seems that it is possible—I am not sure whether this is the first time that it has happened—for things to be said loudly in the Chamber by certain hon. Members, above and below the Gangway, which are heard clearly by Conservative Members, and can be heard outside the House but cannot be heard by you, Mr. Speaker. If the microphones are at fault, can you please tell the House what action you will be putting in hand to put the matter right? It cannot be satisfactory for order to be maintained on the basis that disorderly things are said and people get away with it.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has been here a long time and he should know that, when an hon. Member has been called by the Chair to speak or to put a question, remarks from a sedentary position are not a proceeding of Parliament and such remarks are not shown in *Hansard*. *[Interruption.]* Order. The right hon. Gentleman had better look up the rules. *[Interruption.]* I cannot be held responsible for such things. I do not know quite what the right hon. Gentleman is alleging, but I have a microphone in the wings of my chair and can hear very clearly the hon. Member who has been called to speak from his or her microphone. It is impossible under that system to hear what then goes on on the other side of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, I will not take any more points of order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I will sort it out for you.

Mr. Speaker: I do not need it to be sorted out by the hon. Gentleman. I think that we have had enough of this and should proceed to the ten-minute Bill motion.

Fuel and Energy Provision

4.33 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the provision of essential fuel and energy to each home; to guarantee appliances; to prevent the entry to premises without prior recorded legally authorised notice; to prevent the unauthorised removal of a fuel measuring device; to abolish standing charges; to establish local authority monitoring committees; to facilitate the effective insulation of the homes of those on low incomes; and for connected purposes.

The hardship, the risk to life from hypothermia experienced by the elderly, the sick, single-parent families, the unemployed and the disabled in 6 million homes affected by fuel poverty is exacerbated by the fuel industries' wanton use of the legal system and the courts.

By means of an early-day motion, I have already drawn to the attention of the House an example of this and its effect on my constitutent, Mr. Quigley, of 8 Loach drive, Coventry. Mr. Quigley, an elderly pensioner, was pursued by British Gas with the voracity of Shylock; British Gas arrayed the full legal system against this elderly pensioner. Solicitors and magistrates took control of Mr. Quigley's meagre pension. He had no say in the matter.

Without considering whether the imposition of the technically correct legal decision would place Mr. Quigley at risk from hypothermia, the magistrate arranged to have £352·66 deducted from Mr. Quigley's pension for the cost of the magistrate's adjudication and the value of the gas used by two other British Gas customers. After the wheels of justice had turned, Mr. Quigley's £141·83 bill became an alarming bill for £499·49.

It is a case which illustrates that magistrates, like justice, are blind: blind to the circumstances that affect the millions of people on whom they pass judgment. It is a blindness which prevails in this House and which many hours of debate have failed to change. The House is affected by what can only be described as a multi-sense impairment which exceeds even that of the brass monkeys. The House refuses to see the problem; the House refuses to hear about the problem; The House refuses to discuss the problem. The House refuses to feel the problem by taking up my suggestion and shutting off the heat in the Commons to enable every Member of Parliament to experience the killing cold that affects 6 million households. And the House refuses to use the other sense associated with the heart, the caring sense of compassion.

If we sat in this Chamber without heat for only a few hours we might sense the cold that immobility induces—the cold endured by my disabled constituent, Martin Jenkins, of 134, Longfield house, whose circumstances are the lot of many disabled people. Confined to a tenancy on the 10th floor of a high-rise block, he is no longer receiving any extra heating allowance. In winter he is continually under financial stress and his limited income is dissipated combating bad insulation and major heat loss through plywood walls and the extreme cold at that high level.

Martin's circumstances and those of Mr. Quigley, although painful, are not unique. There are Martins and Mr. Quigleys in every constituency and they are crying out for help. They, I am sure, welcome my suggestion that the heating should be switched off in the House of Commons, just as they would welcome the opportunity of experiencing the temperatures that we enjoy. We could do that by giving them more money or by allowing them to use heat without fear of disconnection. In the meantime, until the House adopt that course, we could convey the temperature that we enjoy by showing it on the television screens every time Parliament is televised.

Unfortunately, my representation or the House's consideration of my Fuel and Energy Provision Bill will be of no benefit to Mr. John Bowling, whose death I heard reported on my car radio as I drove to the Commons. As far as I am aware, his death was acknowledged as the first death from hypothermia this winter. On 30 November, council caretakers found Mr. Bowling on the floor dead when they broke into his flat. The inquest reported that he had died of hypothermia—time of death, unknown. The report of Mr. Bowling's circumstances and his anonymity should wring even the hardest heart. The comments of Sergeant Canning of Luton police carried a tragic message. None of the residents could say anything about Mr. Bowling. They had not seen him for some time. They could not remember when they last saw him. They could remember him only as the man who lived at No. 131.

That is not a fitting epitaph for John Bowling. The House should cry for him and should do its best to ensure that there are no more such deaths. The tragic end of John Bowling should be the beginning of a campaign by the House against hypothermia which puts the lives of our elderly constituents at risk every winter.

My Fuel and Energy Provision Bill, which is a small step towards that objective, needs the support of the House and that is why I am writing to every Conservative Member, asking for support. On previous occasions my Bill failed to get a Second Reading because only one Member objected. The reasoning behind that deliberate block is difficult to understand. What can be described only as a national disaster is being ignored by the House. Surely there can be no issue more important than saving the lives of elderly citizens.

My letter to each Member and my campaign messages are headed by the budgerigar, a bird particularly sensitive to the cold. That bird played a significant part in saving the life of an elderly lady. I hope that it will move the Government to take measures to save thousands of lives.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Hughes, Mr. Dave Nellist, Mr. Frank Cook, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Pat Wall, Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Bob Cryer, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Harry Barnes and Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Watch those Gradgrinds on the Tory Benches.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Sedentary remarks do not help us at all.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION

Mr. John Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to require the provision of essential fuel and energy to each home; to guarantee appliances; to prevent the entry to premises without prior recorded legally authorised notice; to prevent the unauthorised removal of a fuel measuring device; to abolish standing charges; to establish local authority monitoring committees; to facilitate the effective insulation of the homes of those on low incomes; and for

connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 71.]

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Conservative Members were silent when you asked whether any hon. Member opposed the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes). As it is quite clear that they intend to block it so prevent it from being given a Second Reading——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are purely hypothetical matters. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) has been given leave to bring in his Bill.

Points of Order

4.40 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When I attempted to raise a point of order after Prime Minister's Question Time, you, Mr. Speaker, said that you would allow points of order to be taken later. My point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. But I hope if is not on a matter with which we have dealt.

Mr. Marlow: I hastily reassure you that it is not.

Neither you, Mr. Speaker, nor I are responsible for what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister says—more is the pity, because I should be very honoured if I were. I am concerned about how the Leader of the Opposition receives advice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me, nor should it be too much of a concern for the hon. Gentleman. Surely we deal in this place with policies rather than the personalities of hon. Members. What advice is given to the Leader of the Opposition is not a matter for me.

Mr. Marlow: I am concerned about the reputation of the Leader of the Opposition. I understand that inadvertently——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am concerned about the reputation of the House. I think that we will leave it at that.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Hoyle: No. You, Mr. Speaker, should know better than that. I am seeking your guidance. I thought that I distinctly heard you say a little earlier that you were calling a right hon. Member because he was chairman of the 1922 committee. Does that departure mean that in future you will be calling the chair of the parliamentary Labour party, the chair of the Tribune group or the chair of the Campaign committee? Is that a new departure?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is such a chairman.

Mr. Hoyle: I know that.

Mr. Speaker: At Question Time, he gets some precedence because of the position that he occupies in the parliamentary Labour party. But perhaps even Speakers should not allow things to be said from a sedentary position.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You gave the impression a few minutes ago—certainly to me, and I think to others—that *Hansard* does not report comments that are made from a sedentary position. I had always understood that, occasionally, *Hansard* does so. You may care to reflect on what you said, in case there is confusion in the future either in the House or in the mind of the Editor of *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: I am delighted to clear this up. *Hansard* does not record remarks made from a sedentary position unless they are referred to subsequently in the House. That has been the long-standing tradition. Too many remarks

[Mr. Speaker]

are made from a sedentary position. *Hansard* would not read well if that tradition were not followed. Remarks that are referred to subsequently in a debate are, of course, referred to in *Hansard*.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: We have an important debate ahead of us, and I believe that the hon. Gentleman would like to speak in it.

Mr. Banks: No, Sir, not unless you give me a guarantee that I shall catch your eye.

This is a desperately serious point of order. What you just said about sedentary comments not being recorded unless they are referred to subsequently in the House puts me in an embarrassing position. I have just received a note from the *Official Report*, which says:

"Supply sedentary intervention to which Mr. Speaker replied."

I thought that you were in a sedentary position when you replied, so how can we have two——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I referred to it, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's remark from a sedentary position will appear in *Hansard*. I regret that I did that. Let us get on to the public expenditure debate, and I must say to the House——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am not taking any more points of order. I am sure that it would be helpful, but I am not taking it.

Public Expenditure

[Relevant documents: First Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee of Session 1989-90 on the 1989 Autumn Statement (House of Commons Paper No. 20) and First Special Report: Government Observations on the First Report (House of Commons Paper No. 209).]

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.44 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans for 1990-91 to 1992-93 (Cm. 1001-1009, 1011-1018, and 1021).

Three weeks ago, we debated the Autumn Statement and focused on overall economic prospects and policy. Since then, the public expenditure White Paper has been published. In a formal sense, it will be the last to be published, because 18 months ago the Government announced that they would replace the White Paper with individual departmental reports. That follows the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee and of the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I should like once again to pay tribute to his skill in chairing the Committee and to the contribution that it made to the development of the format of the White Paper.

The Committee included in its report on the Autumn Statement a number of useful recommendations on public expenditure. The Government responded yesterday, and the Committee made that response available to the House. Some of the Committee's suggestions are reflected in the White Paper, and we have undertaken to consider others further.

Tight control of public expenditure is, and always has been, a central element of the Government's economic strategy. Getting inflation down is an important priority, and a tight fiscal policy plays a crucial role in that. If spending is not firmly controlled, the burden of financing it will cripple and hold back an economy. Only when the burden of tax is set at moderate and reasonable levels will enterprise and growth flourish.

That has always been our approach. Twelve years ago, we said in the document, "The Right Approach":

"Our intention is to allow state spending and revenue a significantly smaller percentage slice of the nation's annual output and income each year. This is not a prescription for poorer social provision . . . In the longer term it is only by building a healthier, more productive economy that we shall afford the improvements in services that we need."

Those words have been well justified. In line with the objective that we set ourselves 12 years ago, we have reduced public spending as a percentage of gross domestic product. Public spending means total spending—central and local government spending, and that includes finance for nationalised industries and debt interest. Debt interest is, of course, expenditure which must be paid for like any other item. The Labour party tends to forget that.

The ratio of public spending to GDP reached nearly 50 per cent. in 1975-76, but is now below 40 per cent. Over the past seven years, it has fallen by a remarkable eight percentage points—a fall that is unparalleled since the war time economy was unwound.

In real terms, total public spending, including debt interest, is now broadly at the same level as five years ago, while the economy has grown by an average of 3¼ per cent. a year. One would have to look hard to find another five-year period in any country where public spending has been so successfully controlled and economic growth has been so high.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is a down side to that—that there has been insufficient investment in the social and economic infrastructure that the nation requires. That is evident from the collapse of transport and roads in London. How do the figures that the Minister has just given compare with the expenditure patterns of other European Community countries?

Mr. Lamont: I shall deal with those points. The subject about which the hon. Gentleman asked is precisely the theme of my speech, and I shall comment specifically on infrastructure, investment and comparisons with other countries.

I emphasise, in reply to the hon. Gentleman, that we have in the past five years succeeded in meeting two objectives simultaneously. There has been restraint in overall total public spending but there has also been higher spending in key areas where that has been necessary and justified.

How has that been achieved? The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who is not here, often in these debates contrasts the position of Treasury Ministers boasting about overall control and the position of individual departmental Ministers boasting about spending increases within their individual Departments. The answer to how that has been achieved is that it has been done not by chicanery or magic, or by mirrors. It has been done by three methods. First, we have reduced borrowing. The public sector borrowing requirement averaged nearly 7 per cent. of GDP between 1973-74 and 1978-79. Five years later it was at half that level and five years after that we were in the new and unprecedented situation of repaying debt.

That reduction in debt has brought with it lower debt interest payments. The cost of servicing debt is now 15 per cent. lower in real terms than it was five years ago. That yields savings of about £3 billion a year, to spend on priority areas. A virtuous circle is now at work and that is indeed in contrast to some other European countries, which are facing severe handicaps from uncontrolled and threatening deficits.

Compared with the rest of Europe, Britain has become a country of low taxation, low national debt and lighter regulation. That is a happy combination and it is no accident that, at the same time, we have moved from the bottom to the top of the growth league of major European countries.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I was interested in the Minister's remarks about other Government Departments. Looking at table 3·1 on page 1 of chapter 3, which applies to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether, under the heading "Support for the fishing industry," the figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 will enable the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to introduce a decommissioning scheme so as to reduce the size of the United Kingdom registered fishing fleet?

The Minister will be aware that the European Community has instructed Her Majesty's Government to reduce the size of the British fishing fleet by about 25 per cent. What recent discussions have taken place between his officials and those of other Government Departments on the introduction of a decommissioning scheme, which would reduce the fleet in a humane—*[Interruption.]*—and fair-minded way?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind hon. Members that interventions should be in the form of short comments rather than speeches.

Mr. Lamont: We have not taken any new initiatives or made any announcements on a decommissioning scheme, although there have been discussions on the subject. I shall ask my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to see whether, when he replies to the debate, he can give any further details.

I was saying that the first room for extra expenditure has been created by the reduction of debt interest. The second saving that we have achieved has occurred as a result of the dramatic turnround in the nationalised industries. As a result of improvement there and of privatisation, we are saving about £5 billion each year, a sum approaching the cost of the whole of the wage bill for nurses in England this year.

The third point is that the strength of the economy in recent years has produced substantial savings as the number of unemployed has fallen and the cost of unemployment likewise. Those savings on debt interest, the nationalised industries and on benefits to the unemployed add up to a substantial amount. Those savings have enabled us to pull off the trick which puzzles the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—of keeping overall spending tight but at the same time giving large increases to programmes such as health, transport and education.

The expenditure plans in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper are firmly in the same tradition of overall control, with substantial increases in the most important areas. Resources for health in this year's White Paper will be nearly £3 billion higher next year than this. By 1992-93, spending on national roads will be twice as high as last year. Spending by central Government and public corporations on fixed investment is to rise by £2 billion between this year and next.

There are a number of smaller but important increases, including over the next two years about £250 million to relieve homelessness, and an extra £75 million for the arts, which, pace Sir Roy Strong's remarks at the weekend, received a wide welcome.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Does the Minister agree that one of the most important areas should have been housing, remembering that the Conservatives have reduced the housing budget by £7 billion in the past 10 years—a cut of 67 per cent.? Does he regard that as a wise way to reduce homelessness in Britain?

Mr. Lamont: I do not believe, as the hon. Gentleman believes, that the answer to dealing with homelessness lies in building more council houses. The solution lies in other areas, including the revival of the private rented sector; and the absence of available accommodation in the south-east has added greatly to the housing problem.

[Mr. Lamont]

There is a tight outcome to this year's spending negotiations. The additions, substantial though they are, have been made only because they can be afforded within the overall strategy for public spending.

As has been noted, we have not automatically compensated Departments for inflation. Indeed, if a cash planning system is to be effective, it cannot be based on accommodating inflation. As a result of that tough approach, we have been able to keep the ratios of public spending to national income for 1990-91 and 1991-92 at exactly the same levels as in the previous plans—39 and 38·75 per cent. respectively. The downward trend of the ratio of public expenditure to GDP is continuing and is set to continue.

Many of the increases in this year's White Paper are in areas that should be welcomed by the Opposition. They are in some of the areas that they have highlighted. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), now that Socialism has been ditched everywhere in the world, wants to persuade us that Socialism—though he is careful never to use that word—consists only of more miles of motorway and more students at polytechnics. That is breathtakingly daring in its boldness of vision and in its radicalism.

This year the right hon. and learned Gentleman is getting plenty of miles of motorway and more students at polytechnics. We shall spend next year £1 billion more on national roads, a 30 per cent. increase in real terms. Investment by British Rail and London Transport will be £700 million higher, an increase in real terms of nearly 60 per cent. In the next three years, British Rail and London Transport will be investing about £6 billion.

There are a large number of important schemes now in the pipeline. One could mention many of them and read from a long list. But whatever else this is, it is not the neglect of infrastructure. For anyone with eyes to see, who observes the cranes at work in our cities and machines at work on our roads, it is clear that what is going on is an extensive modernisation of our infrastructure.

That modernisation could not have been afforded by the Labour party. Indeed, it would not have been necessary had Labour been in power, because the demands for better transport facilities, better roads and so on are a product of the growth and expansion of the economy in recent years.

That investment in transport is part of a huge programme of investment across the public sector. Overall, investment by central Government and public corporations in creating new capital assets for the nation will be about £2 billion higher next year than this, an increase of 7·5 per cent. in real terms.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Minister is right. In Hackney in my constituency, in the south of the borough where it borders on the City, we can see cranes and development work. The problem is that that building work is in the private sector, because the Government are not releasing resources for the public sector to invest in the Underground, house building and the building of hospitals.

Mr. Lamont: Unlike the hon. Lady, we see nothing wrong with booming private investment. We have close to record investment, public and private, as a proportion of GDP. We do not want, as the hon. Lady seems to, public investment crowding out private investment. Private and public investment are both needed.

Within the overall settlement, and taking into account the additional funding announced for the review body pay awards, there is also another huge increase of nearly £3 billion, or over 6 per cent. in real terms, in spending on the National Health Service. It will allow continuing improvements in health care and higher capital spending. We already have under way the largest ever programme of hospital building. In England, 500 major schemes, each costing over £1 million, are in various stages of design and construction. The new plans mean that gross capital spending in the Health Service in England next year will be no less than 55 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): May I thank my right hon. Friend for the fact that one of those schemes is phase 3 of the hospital building programme in Lancaster, for which we begged the Labour party in vain? We are delighted that it is going ahead.

Mr. Lamont: In the debate on the Autumn Statement—indeed, it was also reflected in one of the comments made from a sedentary position and no doubt not recorded in *Hansard*—various Opposition Members tried to minimise the scale of the increases. They tried to talk them all away because of demography, increases in the price of drugs and increases in the cost of medical equipment. No matter how much we spend, whether it is £500 million or £2 billion, as they were urging us to spend, they make out that every sum is in reality a cut. The position is different; today we are spending about 45 per cent. more in real terms on the Health Service than we did a decade ago.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Lamont: I have given way a lot and I should like to make more progress.

The White Paper plans also include substantial extra provision for the science budget, something dear to the heart of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. The increase comes on top of the increases announced after the 1988 survey. After a 15 per cent. increase between 1988-89 and 1989-90, a further 8 per cent. growth is provided for next year. As a result, the science budget will be 25 per cent. larger in real terms than it was a decade ago.

Investment in research compares well with that of our competitors. As a percentage of GDP, Government support for research and development is as high as in West Germany and higher than in Italy and Japan; and the Government's support for civil research and development surpasses that provided by the Government of the United States of America, again as a proportion of GDP.

The White Paper again contains further additional resources for education. Provision for spending on education and science by central Government will rise from £5·75 billion in 1989-90 to £6·59 billion in 1990-91, a cash increase of 14 per cent., or over 9 per cent in real terms. In addition, local authority spending on schools in England will benefit from education standard spending of £15 billion in 1990-91, which will be 9·5 per cent. more than the comparable figure for the previous year.

With those considerable extra resources, which mirror what happened in previous years, it is no surprise that record numbers of students are choosing to stay on and study beyond the age of 16, something that Opposition Members urge on us but seem to be unaware is happening already. In 1980-81, 29 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds chose to stay at school or colleges of further education; in 1987-88 nearly 35 per cent. did so.

There is also in this year's plan a large increase for higher education, to provide for 27,000 more students than forecast in the previous plans. During the period since 1979 we have made substantial progress in making higher education available to increasing numbers and also to an increasing proportion of the age group that wants it. By the end of the previous Labour Government, 12·3 per cent. of young people benefited from full-time higher education. This year the figure is 16 per cent. and it is projected to rise to 19 per cent. by 1992-93.

Those increases are substantial by any standards, but I do not seek to disguise the fact that there are some areas where we have felt it proper to make cuts because, if one is to control overall spending, one must find the resources for the priority areas. We have cut the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry. We recognise that investment is important, but the offer of increasing subsidies does not lead to worthwhile, high quality investment. We do not seek to encourage the right attitude in companies by bribing or bullying them to do the things that they should be doing in their own interest. Companies do those things if they are allowed to build up profits to finance investment. That is what we have done. Since 1981, profitability has increased by 300 per cent., a staggering increase about which we do not hear much from the Labour party. That is why we have had an investment boom and why it is right to make cuts.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman, but then I want to make progress.

Mr. Sheldon: In detailing the cuts, the right hon. Gentleman did not mention cuts in maintenance, which cause so much decay and dilapidation. The road maintenance programme has been bitten into. In the hospital programme, £1·8 billion of maintenance has not been undertaken. There may be new schemes, but the maintenance of our estate and our national heritage is in danger.

Mr. Lamont: There is substantially increased provision for maintenance of the fabric of buildings in some of the plans, particularly for higher education and hospitals. Local authorities also have some responsibility for road maintenance.

We have made reductions in the programme for training. Those reductions follow very much the reduction in unemployment. Our training programme has been geared towards the unemployed. As unemployment has fallen dramatically and substantially, it is right to make adjustments in training, given that there are fewer young people coming on to the labour market.

Opposition Members seem to think that nothing is happening in training unless money is spent by the public sector. There is tremendous investment in training by the private sector. Employers are spending about £20 billion a year on training. By any standards, that is a substantial investment. Indeed, the latest figures published by the Eurostat labour costs survey show that the share of labour costs spent on training is broadly the same here as in Germany.

Opposition Members love to paint a picture of this country with an ill-educated, ill-equipped, untrained labour force. If that were the position, we should not attract the largest proportion of any European country of Japanese and American investment. Opposition Members may think that our work force are the ill-educated serfs of Europe, but that is not the view of Toyota, Honda or Fujitsu when they invest here. They know that we have a skilled labour force able to handle the most sophisticated processes.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): If everything is going so well, why do we have the highest inflation rate in western Europe and the worst balance of payments deficit? Can the right hon. Gentleman answer that?

Mr. Lamont: We do not have the highest rate of inflation in western Europe. I am happy to debate the economy on any occasion and we have had many debates on that, but we are now trying to debate the public expenditure White Paper.

One important aspect of presentation in the format of the White Paper, on which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, who, as I said, is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service, and the Committee commented, is the new definition of planning total. The new definition distinguishes more clearly between central and local responsibilities. It includes central Government's support for local authorities; it excludes what local authorities spend from their own resources. That is a change that brings us into line with practice in many other countries. It is a change that the Select Committee welcomed shortly after we first announced our proposals in summer 1988. Above all, it is a change that recognises the way in which decisions are taken in the real world. It was a point on which we commented in our reply to the Select Committee.

There is much material in the White Paper about efficiency measures and measures to increase value for money. Value for money is neither a gimmick nor, as the Opposition allege, a euphemism for cuts in spending. It simply means getting the best possible value for the taxpayers' money put into a service. Unlike the Labour party, we are serious about efficiency and we are getting results from a series of initiatives over the past 10 years.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: Those savings and value-for-money improvements are either being ploughed back into the same service or redeployed to other initiatives. Taken together, the figures are substantial. The figures are for the National Health Service cost improvement scheme, the departmental efficiency scrutinies, better Government purchasing, market testing and contracting out and local authority efficiency savings. Together, they add up to £2 billion each year and they are the result of measures that we have introduced, the vast majority of which were opposed bitterly by the Labour party and which would not be available for the Labour party should it ever assume responsibility.

The Labour party likes to portray the Government's attitude as, "public spending bad, private spending good."

[Mr. Lamont]

That is not our attitude, but we believe that public spending should be limited to what is affordable. All public services, such as health, education and transport, are ultimately dependent on the strength and growth of the economy. We all know what happened to public spending when the Labour party was in office. Public spending was on the big dipper. We had zooming, unaffordable increases up to the sky followed by crashing cuts. But what would have happened if the Labour party's policies had continued throughout the 1980s? What would be the state and size of the resources put into the Health Service if the Labour party had remained in office throughout the 1980s?

Let us suppose that Labour's straitjacket of high taxation and high spending had been kept in place for the past 10 years and that Britain had remained bottom of the European growth league, just as we were when the Labour party was in office. What would have happened? The economy would have been a good deal smaller than it is today. If Labour spent the same share of that smaller economy as it did in 1979, it would probably be spending about £3 billion less today on the NHS. What would that mean for the Health Service? It would mean that we should probably be spending about 12 per cent. less than we are now. Twelve per cent. fewer nurses would mean 60,000 fewer nurses. Twelve per cent. fewer doctors would mean 10,000 fewer doctors. Twelve per cent. fewer in-patient treatments is almost 100,000 fewer patients being treated. That is the reality and that is what would be likely to happen if we followed Labour's policies of uncontrolled spending and high taxation. Labour's irresponsible attitude would ultimately have been self-defeating and would have resulted in less provision over the medium term.

In the Autumn Statement debate, I said that we welcomed the appointment of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and we are certainly looking forward to her first House of Commons speech devoted exclusively to public spending. We were looking to her for some answers—*[Interruption.]*—to the questions that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), when he was shadow Chief Secretary, refused to answer. It is not only the Labour party's policy towards local government finance, but its attitude to central Government finance, which is a mystery wrapped in enigma. I was a little disappointed when I read that the hon. Member for Derby, South had been appointed not to cost Labour's programme, but to stop members of the shadow Cabinet saying anything. She may find that difficult with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

The hon. Lady went on Sky television shortly after she was appointed and told us that the Labour party would not increase taxation. That might be believable if she were about to welcome the increases in the White Paper as reasonable, affordable and generous, but we know that she will not. We know that she will describe them as inadequate and mean. How is it that the hon. Lady is unable to answer the two basic questions: how much will the Labour party's programme cost, and what will be the consequential increase in taxes? If the hon. Lady will not tell us that, perhaps she will give us the answer to a far more modest question: when will the costing of the programme be made available to the public? I am not very optimistic about receiving an answer to that limited question.

The Leader of the Opposition appeared on "The World at One" on 4 October and told us that the costing of Labour's programme might have to wait. The audience waited. Would he say six weeks, six months or nine months? He then told us that it might have to wait until after the election. Is that the responsibility and accountability that Labour Members assume? It is not an attitude that they would accept from anyone else and Labour cannot go on indefinitely dodging the question because the British public demand to know. We have spelt out our spending priorities for the British people, which are based on the same principles as those which have brought a record improvement in living standards for the British people in the past decade. They are combined with affordable and realistic improvements in vital public services, and I commend them as such to the House.

5.17 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'regrets the Government's continued failure to recognise the threat to long term prosperity of inadequate levels of investment in manufacturing, in training and in infrastructure; deplores its refusal to play its own part in the manner of the governments of this country's major competitors in promotion of these objectives; and recognises that this refusal further jeopardises the United Kingdom's future in the Single European Market.'

This is the first public expenditure White Paper in the 1990s. It reflects the Government's judgment of the contribution that public spending should make to the nation's needs not only in this year of grace 1990 but, at least in outline, in the two succeeding years. Frankly, it is terrifying in its complacency—at least if it is viewed without the blue filter. After a decade of Tory rule and a decade of unprecedented wealth flowing from the North sea—£87 billion accruing to the nation's coffers under this Government, which was not available to any of their predecessors—we enter the 1990s with an equally unprecedented balance of payments deficit of potentially catastrophic proportions, with inflation higher by any measure than that faced by all our major competitors, with interest rates higher than those of our major competitors and with the most decrepit public services and the most run-down infrastructure of all our major competitors.

Although the Government no longer talk quite so much about an economic miracle, they still call this "success". The position in which we find ourselves would be alarming at any time. To find ourselves so placed two years away from the completion of the European single market is even more frightening. To find in all the circumstances that the Government have learnt nothing from the missed opportunities of the past 10 years is terrifying. We could not catch up with those whose Governments have prudently invested in their future if we started now to follow their example, but we are not starting now. According to the policies revealed by the White Paper, we are not starting at all. It is still, "Steady as she sinks".

I shall address three main points in the debate. First, I shall examine the Government's stewardship of the nation's assets. Their record is one of the pieces of evidence that enables us to judge their future commitments. I shall then look at those commitments, as revealed in the White

Paper. Thirdly, I shall consider whether what the White Paper reveals shows that we are squaring up to the challenges of 1992 and beyond.

I listened with keen interest to the brave and cogent speech of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury setting out as best he could how great everything has been, is and will be in future. The trouble is that it is the speech that we heard from that Bench last year, the year before and the year before that. The scene and the cast change, but the scriptwriter goes on and on.

To be completely fair, the script shows some textual amendments that are of key interest and significance to scholars. It seems only yesterday—and it was not all that long ago—that the then Chief Secretary, now gloriously translated to the Chancellorship, was telling us that firm control of public expenditure in itself brings interest rates down. We have all noticed that, haven't we? That was before interest rates rose to their present giddy heights.

There are no longer the same mystic incantations that were once a feature of all economic debates, calling on the gods of monetary policy to bless their faithful disciples. We no longer hear the reading of the runes and the targets for M3. Whatever happened to M3? Nor do we hear respectful references to M4—rising at 18 per cent. when last sighted. Even good old MO—the only one that the Government still target—is still outside its target limits.

As if to make up for those failings, what remains of the text is chanted with ever-increasing fervour—one might almost say desperation. The Chief Secretary tells us that the Government have been wise stewards of our economy. He says that public spending has been reduced as a proportion of our income, which he claims is a desirable thing in all circumstances. He tells us that due to the Government's firmness in cutting out waste and their determination to obtain value for our money it has still been possible to meet the nation's real spending needs. Bunkum! It is bunkum on a truly grandiose scale. Whatever else the Government may lack, they possess gall and bravado in astonishing proportions.

Let us take the question of waste and value for money. During the Government's tenure of office, amazingly for a Government who rejoice in the title of Conservative, they have mounted a vast sale of the nation's assets, which was well described by the late Lord Stockton as selling the family silver. I suspect that his Lordship did not contemplate even then the extent to which the proceeds —as with the windfall revenues from the North sea— would simply be blown away on buying victory at three successive general elections.

Whatever the merits or otherwise of what was a dogmatic decision to sell, the conduct, timing and manner of the sales owed everything to the Government's political convenience and nothing to the efficient management of assets or to obtaining value for what the Prime Minister likes to call our money.

The history of privatisation abounds with cases where the Government spent our money on advice about the mechanics of the sale which they then ignored. The inevitable result was overall losses to the taxpayer on a heroic scale. They include losses from debt write-offs, special offers to make sales more attractive, advertising and marketing costs and low asset valuations. Estimates of debt write-offs alone suggest a loss to the taxpayer of about £16 billion. That money was spent on fattening industries for privatisation. In the cases of gas, electricity and water, the losses were not just to the taxpayer but disproportionately to those who are too poor to pay tax. In those industries everyone had to pay increased prices jacked up by the Government to make the industries even more attractive to buy.

The loss to the taxpayer from artificially low sale prices and badly timed or imprudent marketing decisions is estimated by Price Waterhouse at a further £31 billion. The costs of advertising and underwriters' fees come in at a mere £1,400 million. That is a grand total of net and irretrievable losses to the taxpayer of our money of approaching £50 billion.

I have a better analogy for that rip-off than that of selling the family silver. It is as if a great house had been put into the custody of the nation. When, after a period of years, the trustees return, they find that the appointed stewards have sold off all the contents cheap on the spurious ground that it was a lot of trouble to look after them. The man who got the removal fees and the new owners are all delighted with their bargains, but that does not alter the fact that the original owners have been rooked by those trusted and paid to look after their interests. Nor have the proceeds been reinvested. The former stewards do not care if the roof falls in. They have stashed their cut. If they are sacked, they will be off to pastures new and possibly even more lucrative.

I recognise that the Prime Minister's line is that we have had a jolly good deal. We paid mugs to relieve us of a burden and what a good thing it was too. What exactly is the right hon. Lady saying? Is she saying that all those purchasers have been conned and that they bought a pig in a poke? When it comes to taking people to the cleaners, my money is on that simple soul Professor Smith any day, rather than any Minister in this Government.

Of course, it ain't so. Those in a position to buy are now sharing in British Telecom profits of nearly £700 million this year. Presumably, next year or whenever it comes to light, the shareholders in the electricity industry will benefit from the £1 billion or so profit that that industry paid to the Treasury this year.

With every day that passes, more examples of the Government's poor stewardship come to light. Recently, just one of Sealink's ferries was resold for more than the total price that the taxpayer received for the whole enterprise.

Those are not the only examples of waste and misappropriation. Spending on Government advertising has increased by about £50 million in the last five years. Government advertising included such notable examples as the media launch of the National Health Service White Paper. What a waste of our money that was. It also included adverts for the Government's employment training scheme. Particularly close to the 1987 general election—a mere coincidence of course—it was concentrated not in the parts of the country or sections of the media where the unemployed were most likely to see them but those where they might convince a doubting electorate that the Government were trying to do something about unemployment.

The Government spent £1 million of our money on unsuccessfully prosecuting the "Spycatcher" case. While the armed forces were condemned by the Public Accounts Committee for letting their stock of public housing fall into disrepair, the Prime Minister spent £1·2 million on doing up No. 10—although she will not tell us what she

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spent it on any more than she will tell us what it cost to put gates on Downing street. So much for the record and stewardship of the Tory party.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): If the Government's record on privatisation is so appalling, why do so many other countries not only follow our example but come here for advice on how to do it?

Hon. Members: How not to do it.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening. My point was the incompetence of the way in which the Government have marketed privatisation and the enormous losses to the taxpayer that have accrued. That point is not affected by the fact that people are coming here to consult. As my hon. Friends said, it is more than likely that they are coming to find out how not to do it.

That brings me to my second point. The Government's argument—and the Chief Secretary reiterated it again today—is that they have been able to spend not just sufficiently but generously on our public services.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Lady referred to Professor Roland Smith. I assume that she was referring to British Aerospace and Rover. She implied that Professor Smith had bought Rover for a knockdown price. To whom else would Rover have been sold and for what price would a Labour Government, if they ever came to power, have sold it?

Mrs. Beckett: I imagine that if British Aerospace had not been offered the deal that it apparently was offered by the Government—I do not wish to prejudge any consideration—one of the other people who were competing to buy it might have done so. There were several alternative buyers, of which, as I recall, Ford was one. Toyota was another.

Mr. Porter: No, there were not.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman says that there were not alternative offers, but Ford and Toyota say that there were. Frankly, I prefer to rely on their knowledge of their bids rather than that of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): As sedentary interventions are often not put on the record, it is worth pointing out that Professor Smith has not yet parted with a single penny for the Rover deal. I understand that he will not pay anything until 31 March. That may assist the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) in his financial analysis.

Mrs. Beckett: I shall go on to the second point that I want to raise. As I have said, the Government have argued that they have been able to spend generously on our public services, whether they are local authority-provided or within the National Health Service. That squares ill with the White Paper's indication of support for local authority spending, which is predicted to remain at an effective standstill. Where does that leave the needs of the nation's school children? Where does it leave all the grand statements about community care? It leaves them with the last part of the Chief Secretary's speech—in the realm of myth and fantasy with, no doubt the Government hope, local authorities of all political shades carrying the can.

The National Health Service is the area of the greatest Government boasts——

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I congratulate the hon. Lady on her debut as an Opposition Front-Bench Treasury spokesman. She is reading extremely well so far. At some point would she care to comment on the Labour party's expenditure plans, how much they will cost, and how they will be financed? Is *The Independent's* assessment that Labour's tax proposals will cost anyone earning between £18,000 and £30,000 another £4,000 per year correct? Is that how the Labour party intends to finance its plans?

Mrs. Beckett: I did not hear all the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I intend to say something later about our own approach to public spending. The article to which he referred—*[Interruption.]* I thank the hon. Gentleman, but I shall say this in my own way. The article to which he referred was extremely inaccurate and unworthy of comment. It was so far-fetched and so wrong that it is not worth my taking up all its details.

As the Minister repeated again today, the National Health Service has received what he described as £2,600 million "extra"—presumably on the grounds that if he keeps repeating the figure, those who say that the Government do not care will be confounded. However, anyone who looks at the figures will at least raise an eyebrow. We believe that the residual sums left for patient care may amount to only £500 million, because, although the Chief Secretary does not like it, we first have to take out the figures for inflation, and then the extra figure for inflation in the National Health Service. That is not new money, although the Government seem to imply that it is.

Then I deduct the "creative accounting" sum of £150 million or so for cost improvements, because that is not money at all. It is a wholly imaginary figure. It is unrelated to any factual information and represents what the Government have decided that health authorities could save this year by cutting out waste and inefficiency. It is not based on any survey, assessment or information. To my knowledge, the health authorities have been telling the Government for several years that they have reached the end of any such savings that they could ever have made without cutting patient care, unspecified and unplanned as those savings always were. However, although the figure is a complete fiction and is money that the health authorities never see, it still appears because it bumps up the spending total.

We then have the figure of about £300 million for implementing the Health Service White Paper. That is the money to provide for hospitals to opt-out and to introduce, at a wholly unrealistic speed, thousands of accountants, computers and billing procedures into our Health Service. Before anyone asks, I make it perfectly clear that we are not against proper, efficient accounting because there may well be an argument for saying that there was room for improvement in the record-keeping and cost-management in the Health Service. If I were asked whether I would bring in more doctors and nurses, more therapists and radiographers, more ambulance staff, or more accountants, I fear that, at least temporarily, my vote would go against the accountants.

I wonder how many people have looked at the scale and scope of the accountancy procedures that the Government have envisaged over time and for which those substantial sums are being provided. I refer, for example, to the listing of capital assets down to the last iron or electric kettle and to the details about how, when assessing depreciation, the lifts must be on a different time scale from the buildings themselves. That may be prudent, but is it really what we should be spending our money on?

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford) *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: If I may, I shall continue for a little longer.

I refer also to the procedures that are needed to cost and bill what the document calls "every episode" of patient care. The document explains that in the long term the Government want to be able to list, cost and to send out a bill for all patient care episodes, not only for in-patient admissions, but for out-patient visits and ultimately for community care. Every district nurse visit, every home help, and every out-patient clinic will be listed and billed. Although that is the long-term perspective of the White Paper on the Health Service reforms, it is the perspective and it will be very expensive.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In view of the things that the hon. Lady is suggesting that we should look at, has she herself looked at the sheer numbers of new doctors, dentists and nurses that we have brought into the National Health Service?

Mrs. Beckett: Yes, of course, but I am well aware of how often the Government have fiddled the figures by changing, for example, the way in which hours were counted——

Mr. Arbuthnot *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Beckett: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head because, as he is well aware, that money is not being spent on doctors and nurses or on any of the other staff who work in the Health Service; it is being spent on accounting procedures which seem to be so detailed that they cannot possibly be needed for anything other than a privatised Health Service.

The final insult is the £40 million that is allocated to help to subsidise the Prime Minister's private health insurance. It is more than has been given for the special waiting list initiative for the whole National Health Service. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has calculated that the outturn of the expenditure could be far higher if we examine the actual costs of private health care. Experience suggests that his warnings are justified. The Chancellor, at least, will remember—because he shared the responsibility for putting it on the statute book—the 2 per cent. bribe that was paid from the national insurance fund to persuade people to gamble their retirement income on personal pension plans. He may even remember that the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, his right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), costed the expenditure at a mere £60 million. In the first year of payment, covering a period of almost two years, £900 million or so was paid in place of the predicted £60 million. This year and for the next couple of years, unless the law is changed——

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major) *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Beckett: It is no good the Chancellor shaking his head—this material is from parliamentary answers. Unless the law is changed, about £500 million per year will be paid this year and for the next couple of years for the same purpose. What was that about prudent fiscal management and about avoiding extravagant and uncosted promises? Frankly, £60 million is too much for that purpose. If the scheme is to people's financial advantage, why should the state waste money giving them more? If it is not to their financial advantage, how dare the state use our money to persuade people to act against their own long-term interests?

What can we learn from the White Paper about this country's investment needs? I believe that it is now widely acknowledged—even to some degree inside the Government—that our training and education are woefully inadequate, compared with our competitors. The Chief Secretary was strong on that, saying that it was all nonsense, so it is a pity that that was exactly what his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment said a few days ago.

Central Government spending on education is to be cut between this coming year, 1990-91, and 1992-93 by £85 million in real terms, while spending on city technology colleges—individual prestige schools in certain areas—will reach £135 million over the same period. Despite the present fall in pupil numbers, the all-important pupil-teacher ratio has not fallen in the past three years and even the Government admit to a teacher shortage of 3,600, affecting the education of about 60,000 children. However, the teacher unions believe that the shortfall is more like 8,000 and that the education of 250,000 children is at risk. It is true that the Government have found some money for education, although the Chief Secretary did not refer to it. They are to spend £500 million more for student loans than the cost of uprating the existing grants would require.

Spending on training programmes this year is £190 million less than the Government originally planned and, by 1992, will have fallen even further. When pressed to explain that, the Government talk vaguely about the falling number of unemployed people. The Chief Secretary did it again today.

The White Paper shows that spending per head on youth training, employment training for the adult long-term unemployed, and training for the disabled and for those in work—in many ways the most neglected group of all—will fall. All that is happening at a time when the bottlenecks and inflationary pressures of skill shortages are once more evident. The Government are washing their hands of the country's training needs.

Research and development are part of the key to our future. Government spending on civil R and D has been cut in real terms by 2 per cent. since 1984-85, when we were already behind the spending of our competitors. It appears from the figures in the White Paper that spending is set to fall another 8 per cent. between 1992 and 1993. I listened with great interest to what the Chief Secretary said about that, and I shall look again at his justification for his figures. That does not alter the fact that there are fewer research studentships now than in 1986 and spending on the science budget is set to fall in real terms from next year onwards.

Support for industry has been cut once again, by 2·5 per cent. in real terms by 1992-93. Support for the regions is also being slashed by £75 million in cash terms over the

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same period. By 1992-93, the year of the single market, for which our colleagues and competitors in Europe are pulling out all the stops, assistance to the regions and general industrial support will have fallen by 37 per cent. from the not overgenerous levels of last year. To complete the picture of a Government displaying total indifference to the welfare of its wealth-creating sector, spending on export promotion services will be frozen for the next three years—a fall in real terms of 16 per cent.—while the Export Credits Guarantee Department budget is to be slashed by £100 million next year.

Most hon. Members are now familiar with the anxieties expressed by, among others, the Confederation of British Industry about the costs and inefficiency caused by our neglected transport system. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) described that precisely. The White Paper shows that every class of road in Britain is in a worse state of repair than it was 10 years ago.

The helpful little diagram from last year's White Paper with its categories of "better" above the line and "worse" below the line, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) used to such effect in last year's debate has—surprise, surprise—disappeared. *[Laughter.]* I thought that the civil servant who had drafted the White Paper had gone down the oubliette, but we shall see.

The lack of maintenance identified ties in, if not with the diagram, with the day-to-day experience of people who are, increasingly, bouncing from pothole to pothole as they drive along the nation's roads. That is apart from in the south-east where, for much of the time, there is no bouncing because the traffic is not moving at all. Only a Government who have taken complete leave of their senses would, in those circumstances, decide to abolish the subsidy to Network SouthEast. It has been said before, but bears saying again, that if there is one part of the country where the last thing people need is a financial incentive to travel by road, it is the south-east.

I can see only one possible explanation for such utter stupidity. The Government were forced, by the weight of public opinion, to say that they would meet the bill for the safety improvements recommended following the tragedy at Clapham. I do not doubt that they will. The savings from cutting the subsidy will be returned to meet the safety bill. That will give the Government lots of kudos at no extra cost. Public funds for British Rail are being cut again, so that the much-vaunted and more than welcome investment plans will be paid for by higher fares, land sales and British Rail borrowing. That is a neat financial trick, but a short-sighted policy.

This careful study of the White Paper reveals where, and in what context, the Government are cutting or reining back on their previous plans and commitments. Of greater importance than all those details, revealing though they are, is the question: why? Why do the Government ignore the pleas for greater investment in training, education, research and development and transport? Why do their plans show that they will still cut where they can conceal it, and give false reasons for those cuts? They did so with training, claiming that the cut was due to the fall in unemployment, when we all know that unemployment is soon likely to rise and, anyway, spending per head is falling.

There seem to be two possibilities. The first is that the Government, and they alone, still refuse to accept the proper role of public spending in oiling the wheels of the economy. The second, and even more disreputable, reason is that they are making that choice to which the Chief Secretary referred in his evidence to the Select Committee, when he said that a major reason for cutting public spending was not that it was inflationary or intrinsically undesirable, but to make room for income tax cuts. The Government are leaving themselves room for an income-tax cutting and, they hope, election-winning Budget in 1991.

The Government are making the choice that they have consistently made throughout their period in office. When it comes to a choice between the national interest, the future well-being and prosperity of our country and the electoral interest of the Conservative party, the country can whistle. The Confederation of British Industry can whistle for more investment in the infrastucture, schools can whistle for repairs or enough teachers, the employed and the unemployed alike can whistle for the training opportunities which are giving our competitors more and more of an edge over us. Where, even with the restraints on investment that such a policy imposes, choices remain, they will be dictated by the Prime Minister's dogma.

I shall lay down a number of extremely simple but pertinent parameters about public spending. First, the Opposition reject the simplistic view that there is always, and in every circumstance, merit in reducing public spending as a percentage of national income. For example, West Germany spends a higher proportion of its GDP on public spending than we do, and does so successfully. Secondly, on each occasion, the level of public spending should be judged according to a balanced assessment of the nation's current needs and what can prudently be afforded, bearing in mind the American saying that one sometimes has to spend a buck to make a buck and—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] There is nothing very exciting about that. We should also bear in mind that proper and prudent public investment may be not only non-inflationary, but counter-inflationary.

Many comments in the Select Committee report, as elsewhere, show that our long-term economic problems, for example balance of trade, cannot be resolved without investment—some of which must come from the public sector. We are determined to make only the most limited of firm spending commitments—those that we must and can afford. Beyond that, we shall set out the direction of public investment and the priorities and choices of a Labour Government, emphasing throughout that we will not spend more than the country is earning or can prudently afford. The real question for the country, as for the House, is about the way we use the fruits of growth as they become available, where they are diverted, what needs they seek to meet and what choices are made.

Our priorities are clear: immediate relief for those who have suffered most—the pensioners and families with children—and the fostering of much-needed investment in our future, not by Government alone, but by forming a partnership and giving a lead to those many groups in our society who see the gaps opening up and wring their hands in despair at the Government's indifference and inaction.

Mr. Tim Smith: On 22 January, in the debate on the Social Security Bill, I asked the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) about the cost of Labour's package for the disabled. She said that the Labour party would provide detailed costings of its entire programme before the next election. When can we expect that?

Mrs. Beckett: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was listening. What I said was clear and simple—what we are promising after the next election is—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Chief Secretary would let me finish. What we are promising is an increase for pensioners and an increase in child benefit. Everything else that is regarded as a desirable aim is also listed, quite clearly and specifically, as something that we hope to do as resources allow. There is an excellent document that I can recommend to the hon. Gentleman. It has quite a nice beige cover, costs only £2·50, and is available from the Labour party at 150 Walworth road. It is called "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change". The hon. Gentleman will find it interesting.

Mr. Norman Lamont: What is the point in the Labour party's listing things that it thinks are desirable but which it might not implement? Is it not the height of dishonesty to include in a document undertakings that there is no firm intention to carry out?

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure that I follow the Chief Secretary's argument. I thought that he, in his speech, and other Conservative Members, in their interventions, had demanded as comprehensive a list as possible of the things that a Labour Government might want to do in the next 30 years. Clearly, they do not want to know what we are promising to spend in the immediate future and thereafter. The Chief Secretary should make up his mind.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The hon. Lady is saying—and we have heard this before—that things in a Labour manifesto might not be implemented by a Labour Government. Surely things in the Labour party's programme ought to do things that the party intends to do—not things that it might do.

Mrs. Beckett: I will not take the hon. Gentleman's advice about what ought to be in a manifesto. I presume that in 1979 he fought the general election on a manifesto that contained nothing about increasing value added tax to 15 per cent.—almost doubling it. I can assure him now that the Labour party will not play a con trick of that kind on the British electorate.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): The hon. Lady is walking delicately round the subject of public expenditure and Labour's future expenditure plans. Is she aware that her party's transport spokesman has said that our public transport system is in need of public investment on a massive scale? Does that mean that transport is near the top of the list of priorities for a Labour Government, or is spending on a massive scale just par for the course?

Mrs. Beckett: Some public sector investment in transport is indeed one of our priorities.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Is it not one of the hon. Lady's priorities?

Mrs. Beckett: I am sorry that it is not one of the hon. Gentleman's priorities.

As we get near an election and see what room there is for manoeuvre, we may be able to make a better assessment of what the ranking order should be. There is no question about the overall priorities of an incoming Labour Government. As I have already said, there is an immediate commitment to the very poorest, who have suffered most under this Government and have had precious little sympathy from Conservative Members. There will be an indication of the direction in which we believe that investment can prudently flow.

Our message to the electorate is quite straightforward. One clear, cold look at the stewardship of the present Government points to the need for a new set of stewards. Here is our job application, our damage assessment: "Frankly, you have been robbed. We cannot return all your property; some of it has gone for good. We cannot overnight repair all the damage and undo all the neglect; some of the scars will always show. But we can make a start. Together we have already taken the first step. We know—all of us know—the scale of the problems and the needs. We can begin to rebuild. We can begin to repair. We can begin to reinvest. Give us the tools, and we will do the job."

5.53 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for having called me at such an early stage in the debate. I am sorry if my contribution is one that will prove to be excessively modest in relation to the position that I have been allotted.

In my view, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made an excellent start in the high office that he now holds. I am sure that he would be the first to admit that almost as important as having wise policies is conveying the impression that those policies are wise and that they are supported by a united Government. It was the impression of the ill-concealed differences between my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and the Prime Minister over economic policy—most notably over entry into the exchange rate mechanism—that had so damaging an effect on confidence and on sterling. It had a more damaging effect than any possible mistakes that the former Chancellor may be held, with hindsight, to have made. By and large, the present Chancellor, by keeping his mouth shut when it is not necessary to open it, has avoided any appearance of conflict between himself and the Prime Minister. This has undoubtedly calmed nerves.

The trouble is that there has to be rather more than the usual element of guesswork in assessing whether there has been any fundamental change in economic strategy. It is now accepted wisdom that pure monetarism was abandoned a good while ago, and that we are now in a twilight zone where the ostensible policy still relies almost entirely on interest rates but where, nonetheless, there is a growing feeling that the present Chancellor may be more ready to employ fiscal means than were any of his predecessors. But until the Chancellor delivers his Budget we will not know whether that is true.

I have never made any secret of my support for the judicious use of public expenditure to stimulate industrial investment, particularly in the regions. Of course, we in Wales have a Secretary of State who has been an outstandingly successful proponent of that idea. During the current financial year we have had about £3·7 billion of public expenditure—representing an increase of 9·8 per

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cent. over the previous year. This has undoubtedly helped in a major regeneration of industry, urban renewal and rural development throughout the Principality, and has resulted in a truly massive volume of inward investment. A quite disproportionate amount of investment, particularly from Japan, in the United Kingdom has come to Wales. The effects of my right hon. Friend's policy are very widely appreciated throughout the Principality. Magic worker though he is, it has taken the electors a little time to appreciate the merits of this policy. However, I assure him that they are widely appreciated throughout the Principality.

My right hon. Friend managed to secure an extremely generous allocation of Government support for local government expenditure throughout the Principality. Thereby it has been made possible for most local authorities in Wales to keep their community charge within bounds. It so happens that the county that I represent and part of my constituency have both, in their separate ways, been clobbered very heavily by the change in the formula used for assessing the Government contribution to the revenue support grant. The county of Clwyd is having to make a rate precept of no less than £223 per person, which is terrifyingly higher than is regarded as acceptable as an average throughout Wales. I do not think that much of this can be attributed to extravagance or mismanagement. A great deal of it is due to the reduction in the level of the revenue support grant coming through this new formula. Still worse, the district of Rhuddlan in my constituency, which has been exceptionally well managed, is having to increase its share of the poll tax from £35 to £53—a 50 per cent. increase—purely as a result of the new formula. That is clearly not within the province of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench, but it shows that, even where the general level of Government support for local government finance is adequate, there is still a margin of error. Therefore, a reasonable settlement for most local authorities almost inevitably involves considerable unfairness for a few.

I had intended to allude to the possible effect on local government finance of the severe flooding in my constituency yesterday when the sea wall broke. However, to my delight, I find that that is entirely the responsibility of British Rail because the wall runs within a few hundred feet of its railway line. I can rejoice in that, but ultimately that may not be for the benefit of public expenditure.

We can debate endlessly the right level of public expenditure. There is no doubt that tight control of public expenditure is vital and that the Government's record throughout has been immeasurably better than that of their Labour predecessors and infinitely better than is likely to come from any Labour successor if, God forbid, there ever should be one. But some public expenditure is necessary. However far we go with privatisation, there will always be things that people cannot buy out of the money that an increasingly indulgent tax collector leaves in our pockets. There are things that cannot be provided by the play of market forces.

For Socialists, if such creatures still exist after the recent upheavals in eastern Europe, the answer is simple: public expenditure can meet pretty well all of our needs, and those needs that cannot be met by public expenditure are somehow less serious, almost frivolous. When it comes to saying how that level of public expenditure will be financed out of wealth generated by the economy, the Labour party, and in particular the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), becomes extraordinarily unconvincing. Nothing that has been said by any Labour party spokesman gives any ground for believing that a Labour Government would ever take the firm decisions that are necessary to enable the process of wealth creation to go ahead.

But somewhere between the doctrinaire excesses of what sometimes appears to be the Government's attitude that all public expenditure is somehow wasteful, that public bodies are splashing around taxpayers' hard-earned money, and the Labour party's contention that there is a bottomless pocket from which public expenditure can finance just about everything there has to be a happy medium. I believe that the Chancellor is steering such a middle path, but when the Chief Secretary says, as he said this afternoon, that we do not want to see public investment crowding out private investment it leaves me a tiny bit queasy.

In my constituency—this is not a particularly good example—private investment is roaring ahead in the massive provision of retirement homes for elderly people, not resident in the area already, but to be attracted into the area by that massive provision of retirement homes. One of the most hideous buildings that I have ever seen now damages the front at Colwyn bay. It is a vast block of unwanted, unused old people's flats. Planning controls have proved an extraordinarily ineffective way of preventing some of those developments. It is all very well to say that market forces should prevent such a thing happening, but they do not. They happen through market forces. At the same time that that unwanted private development is roaring ahead, many of our schools are in a physically deplorable state. I am sure that more clear-cut examples could be found in other constituencies.

In conclusion, I repeat that we in Wales have benefited to an extraordinary extent from the skill with which two successive Secretaries of State for Wales—I say this in homage also to my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell, who preceded my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Wales—have achieved a skilful balance between the tight controls operated by the Government and a measure of interventionism which has brought great benefits to the Principality and to my constituency.

6.4 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It was a pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) enunciating the traditional Tory view which is at present dormant in the Conservative party.

I want particularly to refer to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). She made two points that were of great importance. First, she pointed out the particular problems that arise from the decrepit nature of so much of our industry and the various structures of our society. She also dealt with the prudent way in which she will act as the Chief Secretary in the next Labour Government. The prudence lies in the fact that she intends not to spend until the money has been earned. That is a lesson that all of us must welcome. We look forward to her carrying it out.

In particular, I want to mention our failure to maintain our inheritance. Our public buildings, roads, estates and hospitals were set up by previous generations and those

institutions grew with the passage of the years. We have seen a failure to maintain them properly, and the inability to prevent the decay of so many of our assets which previous generations have produced for us.

I want to deal first with the civil estate, the estate owned by the Government. It is the Civil Service buildings, Department of Social Security offices, the Government Departments, police stations and so on. We have 8,000 properties held on trust by the Government; 110 million sq ft of property, worth about £3 billion—a desk estimate—in 1982. It is probably worth much more now. Offices account for about two thirds of that and storage and specialised buildings, such as the courts of law, the remaining third. The need to maintain that valuable inheritance is obvious to us all.

It was obvious to the Public Accounts Committee, as was made clear in its thirtieth report of 1983-84 entitled "Building maintenance expenditure in the United Kingdom". On 21 May 1984 it took evidence from Mr. Gordon Manzie, as he then was, who had just been appointed chief executive of the Property Services Agency, and Mr. Geoffrey Chipperfield, who spoke on most of the matters because he had been in post much longer. The PSA did not seem able to distinguish between essential and desirable works. In question 3338 I said:

"there is some widespread inconsistency in distinguishing between the essential and the desirable work. There does not seem to be a clear distinction between what is essential and what is desirable . . . How do you decide which should have priority when you are unable to distinguish between essential and desirable work?"

Speaking on behalf of the PSA, defending the ability to maintain the structures that it holds on our behalf, Mr. Chipperfield said:

"We entirely accept the criticism of the report here that we have not instituted adequate guidelines from the centre in order to guide our regions and areas and districts on what things they should take into account when deciding on the categorisation of maintenance expenditure. At the moment we are working hard to produce such guidelines which we will be issuing to our offices in the course of the year."

That was 1984.

The Public Accounts Committee took evidence again in 1988 and that was set out in our third report of the 1988-89 Session. Our report deals with the six years of backlog of maintenance which is priority 1 and priority 2. Following our earlier report the PSA did distinguish between what was essential, where there was clear decay coming into buildings held on our behalf, and what was less essential. We took evidence on 15 June 1988 and questions 4865 to 4867 say:

"How long will it take you to clear this backlog?"

Sir Gordon Manzie replied:

"If we maintain the kind of level of spend that we have at the present time our aim is to clear the backlog by the middle of the '90s."

I went on to say:

"So you reckon you have somewhere between six and seven years of backlog."

Sir Gordon Manzie said:

"That is priority 1 and 2."

I said:

"That is a very large backlog."

Sir Gordon Manzie agreed.

The backlog has been allowed to grow. We question the Treasury as to the justification for not allowing the PSA to have more resources for maintenance work. The Treasury stated that it was for the PSA to decide its priorities from within its total budget. Nevertheless, it accepted that constraints on funding had been a factor which had prevented the PSA from doing some things which would have been desirable if more funds had been made available.

Now, four years later, we are not discussing optional matters; we are talking about an attempt to prevent further decay of the value of the estate. I refer to our third report, paragraph 30:

"Maintenance requirements for which the PSA are responsible are categorised into four priorities. Priority 1: Unavoidable services to meet statutory obligations, which cannot be deferred for health and safety reasons, or which if not undertaken will seriously affect the crime department's operations and function.

Priority 2: Essential services which cannot be deferred without risk or serious penalties in terms of dilapidations and/or increased costs."

We found that allocations were sufficient to cover only 80 per cent. of priority 1. That is really appalling. We are not talking about gilding any lilies; we are talking about matters which can lead to serious consequences for health or affect the operations of the Department itself.

Then there is priority 3—urgent services which it is desirable to undertake. Nothing was done about essential services that could not be deferred without risk or serious penalties; action was taken only in regard to 80 per cent. of that crucial priority, where legal action could have been taken against them. The PSA now tells us, four years later, that following recommendations made by our predecessors it has improved the procedures for identifying and recording maintenance requirements, which included inspection arrangements. Its forward maintenance registers were now up to date. We managed to get it to do that.

Despite the fact that the PSA had been spending approximately £80 million a year, the backlog on priorities 1 and 2 over these years had risen to £125 million. In addition, there was a backlog on priorities 3 and 4 of approximately £50 million. The position has become worse.

The terrible thing about this is, as anybody who is familiar with property knows, that it is not just a question of a stitch in time saves nine. The value of money lost through failure to take essential action is a serious matter.

That is precisely what is happening to the civil estate—the buildings which the Government own, and which they are allowing to decay. The assets that are held in trust for British people have been declining because of that.

Let us consider defence. I refer to the sixteenth report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled "Control and Management of the Defence Estate". The estate consists of approximately 500,000 acres, 3,000 sites, including barracks and houses for soldiers, and 137,000 married quarters. The replacement value of all this property was thought to be £50 billion. The market value would be very much less, especially if it is in remote parts of the country—about £7 billion. Paragraph 18 reads:

"We are concerned about the alarming increase in the maintenance backlog from £125 million for 1987 to an expected £269 million at 1 April 1989 and in particular the under-maintenance of many married quarters. We trust that the introduction of competition and choice in maintenance will enable the Ministry to secure the highest possible level of effective maintenance from the funds available and reduce the backlog."

We repeated the earlier recommendations that this should embrace maintenance and spend-to-save schemes and allow funds to secure the optimum return.

Paragraph 20 reads:

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

"The Estate has some 137,000 married quarters, of which about a third are overseas . . . but the vacancy level had continued to increase from 17 per cent. (13,876) in 1986 to 19 per cent. (15,228) in March 1988. The Ministry told us that the vacancy position had worsened."

It has far more vacant sites than any local authority has as a proportion of the stock. Before complaining about the local authorities' activities, the Ministry should see what it is doing itself.

In July 1988 the Ministry sought the advice of consultants, who reported that in July 1988 the service's performance in managing married quarters was poor. Anybody who knows anything about this aspect would accept the criticism of that report.

The Committee looked at this matter in its ninth report, during the Session 1986-87, and found not only that many properties were empty, but in the London area—an area where one would not expect to find difficulty in letting property—the Ministry of Defence had 2,000 vacant properties, although more than 1,900 single or unaccompanied service personnel were in receipt of lodging allowance. Any strategy for maintaining the value of that which we own ought to embrace maintenance and—as my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South pointed out—the principle of spending to save.

There is an argument for spending to save. Money can be borrowed for the purpose. It is a far better investment to stop the decay of properties. This is the best investment of all, because it is a year later, after the rain has got in and the property is decaying, that the really expensive bills are incurred.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Surely some of the storm damage would have been less if there had not been neglect? Would my hon. Friend respond to that? It would not be all that difficult to assess how much less the damage would have been.

Mr. Sheldon: I am sure that that is right. The storm damage affected particularly those properties that have been falling into neglect. This wanton neglect, about which little is done, is the falsest of all possible economies.

Another area of neglect is the roads and motorways, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South referred. This was mentioned in the nineteenth report for 1985-86. The Committee found that the cost of maintaining roads was not only leading to excessive delays about which we all know, but to unwarranted expenditure which needed to be incurred at a later date. Those who travel on our motorways will know that my journey to Manchester, for example, takes three hours when I leave here at night after a 10 o'clock vote and up to seven hours on Friday evenings.

Paragraph 19 of the report says:

"The liability for maintenance is increasing yearly as new road schemes are completed and added to the network, and older roads need major repair or resurfacing as heavy traffic takes its toll. While expenditure on maintenance might therefore have been expected to take up a larger share of its programme, it had in practice remained fairly constant at around 25 per cent. of total expenditure."

The report does not deal with road construction, which is a disgrace. Roman roads have lasted for years, even centuries, but after only a few years cones can be seen up and down the motorways.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Oh!

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Lady travels on the M6. If she has not seen cones appearing again and again in the same places, she has not been keeping her eyes open.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is true that I suffer as a result of the motorway, but I do not drive a Roman chariot; nor do I exceed the speed limit, as the right hon. Gentleman clearly does. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has already taken action to prevent ridiculously unnecessary coning, and he is eager for us all to let the regions know when it happens. The right hon. Gentleman is right: the cones are a disaster.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Lady is extraordinarily gullible. I shall forget what she said about my exceeding the speed limit, although I do not do so, and I feel that she ought to withdraw her remark. Four years ago I was given an assurance by the Minister for Roads and Traffic that the level of the cones would be improved. I have been told that again and again, but anyone who believes it had better think again.

Paragraph 20 of the nineteenth report states:

"To achieve value for money in road maintenance it is important to resurface at the optimum time, to prevent undue deterioration leading to premature reconstruction, which can be nearly three times more expensive."

Surely it is desirable to save nearly 300 per cent. by investing in preventive maintenance—or, rather, in maintenance to deal with damage that has already been caused.

The report refers to

"a backlog of 60 miles of motorway maintenance by the end of 1984-85"—

the position has become much worse since then—

"and possibly as many as 220 single carriageway equivalent miles."

Paragraph 23 states:

"We consider it most unsatisfactory that maintenance of roads has been starved of funds for many years. More funds are now to be made available",

we said optimistically.

"We consider it imperative that they should maintain roads in good repair and avoid the need for premature and extremely expensive reconstruction of either motorways or trunk roads due to lack of timely maintenance."

The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) should remember the vexed question of the M25. That was probably one of the most disgraceful examples, but it is outside my area.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheldon: No; I have already given the hon. Lady her chance.

The twenty-eighth report updates information about the backlog of maintenance of motorways and trunk roads. Let me quote from paragraphs 8 and 9:

"In July 1988 the Department estimated that as a result of their cut back in maintenance funds—

the Department actually cut the funding—

"they would be able to deal with less than half the equivalent miles of road which they had intended to renew. They told us that the result would be to increase the size of the backlog and therefore the amount of maintenance needed in later years. Further deterioration caused to roads by a lack of maintenance would also lead to extra costs later."

After four years, the position was still worsening. We hear the same promises year after year, and we see the same results—sometimes rather worse results. In that instance,

money was taken from the road renewal and maintenance schemes and was spent on one or two new roads, and the same has been done several times since then.

The potholes referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South are almost like those to be seen in an undeveloped country. There are some not far from here, and drivers must keep their eyes peeled to avoid them. It is a scandal. The PAC does not examine the underground and overground railways—they are outside our purview, more's the pity—but I am aware of the problems.

There is also the problem of dilapidation in the National Health Service, which is referred to in the fortieth report, dated 1987-88. The NHS owns about 50,000 acres, and 2,000 hospitals, the estimated value of which is about £13 billion, and we do not even know the condition of some of those hospitals. The report states:

"We are concerned that surveys of the condition of NHS property are not reliable or generally kept up to date. In view of the value of the estate . . . we are surprised that the use of space within buildings has not generally been assessed . . . Overall, we are not satisfied with the assurances".

The report identifies health and safety as a major problem and states:

"We therefore expect the three health departments to monitor compliance with standards rigorously through their review processes."

Paragraph 25 states:

"The maintenance expenditure required to bring NHS properties in England to a level regarded as the minimum acceptable standard had last been estimated at about £2 billion".

Paragraph 27 states:

"the proportion of the estate in adequate or better condition had increased to 68 per cent".

That means that 32 per cent. was in an unacceptable or inoperable condition.

We are talking about essential repairs, not minor ones. The worst of it was, however, that we did not know the full extent of the problem. Only 113 of the 191 area hospital boards replied to the questionnaire with which they were issued, and it is at least arguable that those that did not reply could present an even worse picture. Money is best used to prevent existing problems from getting worse. If a roof tile has gone, for instance, it is essential to replace it at an early stage; once the rot has set in, much more expenditure will be involved.

I have referred to the civil estate, the defence estate, the roads and the National Health Service; our first report, in Session 1988-89, dealt with the museums. The nation's historical, cultural and artistic heritage is of enormous value to us. We gained that heritage when we were a wealthy country. We shall never be as wealthy, in comparison with other countries, as we were in the last century and the century before that. Our heritage was acquired at enormous expense to us as a nation; its value is incalculable, and much is irreplaceable.

The Victoria and Albert museum has accepted that its care of the valuable books and manuscripts was a national disaster. We found that it was highly likely that a number of the most valuable collections had not been properly catalogued, and it is even possible that some pilferage has taken place. Much of that criticism could apply to other museums and art galleries elsewhere in the country.

In all those instances, the story is one of decay—do not let us cloak it in any other language. We are failing to maintain our fabric. I have not dealt with matters that the PAC does not consider, such as roads and streets in towns, and schools—although I know that in my constituency school roofs are leaking and walls are covered with fungus. Some of our utilities are also not being looked after. We are asking future taxpayers to pick up this generation's bill, and that cannot be right.

I know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer receives many calls for investment, and it is always difficult to know the rate of return on long-term investment, however advantageous it may appear. In this instance, however, we are talking about disinvestment, and the longer that we wait to tackle it seriously, the more the British people will suffer from the consequences of our inaction.

6.29 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I welcome the fall in Government debt interest which is reflected in the White Paper. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury refer to the large reduction in the national debt in the past three years, and the resultant saving of some £3 billion a year in debt interest.

The fall in interest is all the more remarkable when one considers the extraordinary rise in Government debt and debt interest in the 12 years up to 1986. Under the last Labour Government, between 1974 and 1979, the national debt doubled from £40 billion to £80 billion and from 1973-74 to 1979-80 the cost of servicing the national debt more than trebled.

The figures in the White Paper reflect the fact that it took the present Government more than a parliament to reverse the trend of Government borrowing and to start upon modest repayment. The table on page 25, in chapter 21 of the White Paper, which is adjusted for inflation, shows how the increase in expenditure on Government debt interest started to crowd out and choke other forms of public expenditure.

By 1985-86 debt interest had grown to equal the size of the education budget, and to be almost on a par with the defence budget. Debt interest constituted a sum equal to five sixths of the expenditure on health services and social services and to some 40 per cent. of the expenditure on social security. The figures, which are adjusted for inflation, show a decline of £4 billion in the figures since 1985-86, from £20·6 billion a year to £16·6 billion, and that is a change which I welcome.

Looking back over the course of British history, and studying the pattern of Government borrowing and debt servicing, it is clear that the period of history which immediately preceded the change was an exceptional period in the peace time performance of a British Government. I welcome the fact that that period now appears to have changed. I hope that the pattern of repayments will continue with a substantial repayment of the debt in the coming Budget. I hope that, when Ministers consider the Autumn Statement and the policy for the coming year, they will take a prudent fiscal stance.

I remind the Minister of what is said in the first report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee concerning the effect of sales of Government and local authority assets. The Committee warns:

"privatisation proceeds and other asset sale receipts give an exaggerated impression of how tight the fiscal position is. Privatisation receipts contributed £4·2 billion and local authority capital receipts provided another £5·3 billion to the budget surplus."

The Committee remarks:

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

"although the fact that the government's finances are in surplus is a sign of fiscal tightness, it does not necessarily mean that it is tight enough, when related to the private sector deficit and the balance of payments deficit."

Therefore, when we consider the present situation, and the favourable reversal that the Government have achieved, there is a strong case this year for maintaining a substantial repayment of debt to bring down the level of interest payments for the future. I believe that such a policy is prudent, sensible and constructive for sensible decisions about public expenditure, which will permit sensible growth of public expenditure where that is needed. It is also fairer to future generations not to saddle them with an increasing burden of debt.

It is time—as we are considering the White Paper—to look back over a period of 15 years of British history, and perhaps a few years before that, and to say that we welcome the fact that a period of heavy Government borrowing is coming to, or has come to, an end. We welcome the fact that lower debt interest payments by central Government are likely and may make more room for increases in various Government expenditure programmes. I hope that that approach is not necessarily partisan to the Conservative Benches, but is a policy of prudence which can commend itself to many other hon. Members.

We have learnt from bitter experience the effects of ever-increasing public debt. It creates overcrowding in the budget and ridiculously high interest payments.

6.36 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The background to any debate on public expenditure is inevitably the general economic circumstances that the country has to face. It is not possible to debate public expenditure divorced from that. We know that considerable economic difficulties lie at the Chancellor's door at present. One of those difficulties is the considerable trade deficit—a record deficit—which a Government that came into office talking about turning round our competitiveness should not have to consider. They can hardly be pleased to have to do so.

There is also the background of the problems that the Government have encountered with inflation—problems that are not entirely caused by outside forces. They can be laid, in no inconsiderable part, at the Government's door.

Whatever the reason, it means that when we consider the figures given in the documents, and by the Minister, in regard to planned increases in expenditure, we can anticipate that inflation over the coming year is likely to bite severely into the kind of increases in expenditure of which Ministers like to boast. I do not believe that economic forecasts that interest rates and inflation will fall, which the Government are currently basing their plans on, are credible. The Government's plans also assume that inflation for the coming financial year will be 6·5 per cent., and that inflation will be down to 3 per cent. by September 1991. That is wholly unrealistic in the circumstances that the Government face.

If we consider the impact that inflation has on expenditure plans, we find that they will be rapidly eaten away by any realistic estimate of what inflation is likely to be. If inflation is higher than the estimated figures, we may hope that Ministers will respond by increasing planned public expenditure. Yet the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made it quite clear that he did not believe that budgeting for inflation was an adequate way of proceeding. What he meant was that, irrespective of inflation, these are the kinds of expenditure targets that the Government intend to implement. I do not believe—and I do not think that in their heart of hearts most hon. Members believe it either—that those inflation targets can be met, so we can assume that the real expenditure increases of which the Government boast will not be met either.

Part of the answer to all this, in my view, is that the Government must abandon the dogmatic approach to reducing public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product. In an economic downturn, it is extremely difficult to meet such targets. Indeed, the Government appear in part to have acknowledged this, because this year, excluding the proceeds from privatisation, they are allowing for a slight increase in the percentage of GDP going into public expenditure. It is right, in my view, for spending to increase in that way at present. Indeed, I believe that it needs to increase further, but, if they are going to allow for that—and I will come later to some of the areas in which I believe that is necessary—a tight budget in other ways is needed, given the inflation problems about which I have already talked.

The Government need to do a number of things in terms of their overall economic strategy to make possible the kind of expenditure increases that I advocate. One is that in their economic policy making they need to give far greater certainty than they have as yet to the markets. The Government attempt to do that through interest-rate strategy. They say that they will do what is necessary with interest rates to create ground rules and certainty of that kind. But I believe not only that that is an inadequate tool but that it is not using the range of tools that are and should be available to Ministers.

I believe that the kind of economic restraint and certainty that could be provided through much more rapid progress towards joining the exchange rate mechanism is one way of tackling that. A second way, in our current economic circumstances, would be to make it quite clear that further cuts in income tax are at present ruled out.

If we were to adopt that kind of strategy and, particularly, to join the ERM, we would have to make compensating fiscal changes. I believe that we can do that by tackling some of the clear anomalies within the tax system, including the higher rate relief on mortgage interest rates and abolition of the ceiling on national insurance contributions, both of which unfairly help the rich.

Once we have done that, we can start to look at how the long-term impact of Government expenditure targets and restraints is affecting the economy and the kind of changes we can make on the supply side—changes that should be in the documents that we are debating today.

One of the difficulties in debating this matter is caused by the changes which the Government have included in their papers separating central and local government expenditure, for political reasons which the House finds easy to understand—although, given poll-tax capping, I doubt that the idea that the poll tax should introduce greater accountability to local government is really effective, as I believe the Government have ultimately acknowledged. Nevertheless, we can understand why Ministers might want to do it.

The problem is that, looking at the papers, it is impossible to get an accurate idea of what the Government think will happen in terms of expenditure on many important areas of the infrastructure and public services, because this becomes obscured by the complication of the local government system of assessing what expenditure should be, what the Government think it should be and what it actually will be.

Even so, if we consider some of those areas we can expose some of the weaknesses in the Government's plans. I start with education. Whether we put people first, or perhaps believe that in order to help people the priority must be to put the economy, business and incentives first, education is fundamental to this country's future. It gives an unrepeatable opportunity to young people. By and large, they cannot go back in later years to make up for shortfalls now. So it is one of the crucial areas for any politician, who must look at the quality of what is provided.

Last week's report of Her Majesty's schools inspectorate has met political flak in the Chamber. Different interpretations of it have been spun across the Floor and it has been the subject of political argument. But there is no doubt that, whatever the proportions may be, it tells of staff shortages, buildings in a poor state of repair and inadequate provision of books and equipment. Those problems, as I know very well from the situation in my part of the country, relate especially to primary schools; and education for the youngest people is something that education scientists would say is crucial to the prospects of young people as they grow up.

The education expenditure paper shows that the increase in cash terms in central Government funding is from £5,748 million to £6,590 million, while local authorities are expected to spend £15 billion this year. This is inadequate for the task of tackling the problems. Teachers' salaries will not rise sufficiently to deal with the problems of low morale and, especially, teacher shortages. It cannot be acceptable, whatever one's political view, to continue to have historians teaching physics and English teachers trying to teach maths for lack of qualified staff.

The local authority associations, not all of them by any means Opposition dominated, say that the education spending assessments for local authorities will leave a shortfall of some £800 million—a shortfall that is reflected at present in the estimates of what will be required in poll tax. If it were not so reflected, a cut of some 3·5 per cent. in spending on education would be required. This is reflected also in the debates in council chambers, including the debate today in Cornwall county council, about how to balance the need to keep the poll tax as low as possible so that people can afford it with the need to push it as high as possible to meet the spending requirements of the education system.

The December Adjournment debate that I was privileged to initiate allowed me to point out the special needs in my own area. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) talked about similar problems in his area. Cornwall's schools need some £100 million to be spent on them to bring them up to the minimum standards laid down by the Education Act 1981. The allowance for capital expenditure from the Government is less than £10 million a year. We are moving backwards in Cornwall in terms of the state of repair of our schools. There are still 50 schools with outside toilets and 50 schools without the necessary school halls, and we have schools that in many other respects fall short of the minimum required.

I asked the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science what we should do about it. Would the Department allow us to spend the extra money, our money, needed to bring our schools up to standard? Her reply was not that the Government would allow us the money but that they were reviewing the standards. All hon. Members should be aware that when Ministers debate the specifics they are not talking about meeting the needs of the children and providing the things that parents are demanding for their children; they are talking about cutting, changing and reviewing the standards they have themselves laid down. That is the reality behind the expenditure proposals. No matter what Ministers say, tossing about percentages and talking about cash in real terms, the reality is that in many cases our schools are going backwards in terms of facilities.

There have been cuts in training and the privatisation of training provision was announced today. Again, public expenditure falls short of the real needs that are often presented to us in our surgeries and when we visit businesses, particularly small businesses. Such businesses suffer most from high interest rates as they are unable to negotiate the best discounts and are always on the edge of their borrowing limits. At the same time, they are being hit by the uniform business rate and revaluation, which hammer particularly small, local high street traders. They cannot distribute the costs around a large plc or make up for loss of profit in the high street by higher profit in manufacturing. The Minister has the ability to tackle those problems.

Small businesses suffer most from the lack of Government training initiatives. Of course, bigger businesses can and should be encouraged to take on some of the burden. One of the most distressing things to happen in the past 10 years has been the disappearance of many apprenticeship programmes which have been replaced by Government-funded and less-adequate YTS programmes. Cuts in Government expenditure hit smaller businesses which are in no position to train people or to do anything to tackle the skills shortages. Surely it should be a priority for Conservative Members who claim an interest in the needs of businesses to tackle the skills gap that is being addressed far more adequately in our nearest competitor nations in Europe and elsewhere.

I do not agree with the Minister that public investment crowds out the private sector. The lack of a basic infrastructure and a skilled work force crowds out private sector investment because businesses do not have the public sector background against which they can make that investment work.

We are told that spending on the National Health Service will increase by £2·4 billion, or 3·4 per cent. in real terms. Yet the White Paper assumes that Health Service pay and prices will increase by only 5 per cent. It is predicted that if inflation runs at 7 per cent. in the next financial year and wages in the Health Service reflect that, as I suspect they will, the health authorities could have a £37 million shortfall. That brings us back to the old argument between the reality of cuts and Government claims about increased expenditure. Of course both are true, but that will not solve the problems of overcrowded hospitals and morale in the Health Service.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

We also lack the price information on inflation in the Health Service that would allow us to make a judgment about what is happening. We do not have information about demographic and other changes that are affecting our Health Service. It would not be difficult or expensive to tackle some of the problems that our constituents face. There are still long waiting lists for operations, despite the Government having announced programme after programme. I do not need to elaborate because hon. Members on both sides of the House are only too well aware of the problems that their constituents face in getting operations and medical care within a reasonable time. All too often Ministers know the cost of something but not its value.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give one example before giving way to the Minister.

I do not apologise for using the opportunity to raise a local example. Cornwall's first air ambulance, in my constituency, is not funded by the health authority or by the Government; it is funded entirely by public subscription. It costs about £30,000 a month and an enormous effort has been put into paying for it. We were proud of the fact that it was the first air ambulance. People came from other parts of the country to look at it. Some of those people were from the *Daily Express*. They went back to London and announced in the *Daily Express* that they were launching the first air ambulance in the country. That was a surprise to us as we thought we had already done that and they had had a look at it. They had splash coverage in the *Daily Express*, but what really got our goat was that through a series of parliamentary questions we discovered that the Government were not only supporting it but were putting £50,000 a month—more than the total cost of Cornwall's air ambulance—into the *Daily Express* programme.

No matter how much we asked and how hard we tried to find out why that difference should occur, the reeking suspicion remains that Ministers do not treat public services as a priority; they do not recognise the value of what the public have done in Cornwall, but consider only the politics and the publicity content. Therefore, the *Daily Express* came out far ahead of the people of Cornwall.

Mr. Lilley: When I tried to intervene earlier, the hon. Gentleman had just said that Ministers know the cost of everything. Unfortunately, that is not so; we do not know the cost of the Labour programme or of the Liberal programme, although we know the value of both. Does the hon. Gentleman propose to cost the pledges that he has implicitly made today and his party has made repeatedly or, as with the Labour party, is there a line of small print saying, "You will never get it ever"?

Mr. Taylor: I am sympathetic to the Minister's criticisms of the Labour party, but he knows that in previous elections the Liberal Democrats undertook some difficult work in costing our programmes and we shall do precisely that in future. The Minister should accept that that is harder to do in opposition than in government, but nevertheless we intend to produce answers in subsequent elections, as we did in the last election.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Returning to local support and local initiatives to help people who need treatment and assistance from the Health Service, will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind that local organisations have to raise funds to maintain local hospices? In my constituency people are working hard to raise funds and have approached the Department of Health for assistance, suggesting that perhaps the Secretary of State for Health should match pound for pound the voluntary subscriptions to help fund the hospice service, but we are miles from achieving that principle. The assistance that local organisations receive from the Government is miserable. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the hospice service?

Mr. Taylor: I support what the hon. Gentleman has said about hospices. They work on the same principle as the parent-teacher associations, which put in enormous efforts. What bites them is not that they have had to put in such great efforts but when the money they raise gradually stops being a top-up and becomes part of the essential service. That really hurts people.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: No. I have been speaking for some time and wish to conclude my speech.

Despite the Government's talk about percentages, real terms and the rest, the reality is more than apparent. More often than not it is reflected when hon. Members talk about individual cases. The White Paper represents missed opportunities. We need a change of tack, and that is motivating many people throughout the country to believe that the Government are coming to the end of their natural life.

6.59 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I always find that these debates take place in a somewhat unreal atmosphere. Opposition Members furiously conceal Government expenditure in order to produce some imagined sleight because they would like more money spent elsewhere. Increasingly, they furiously conceal their future public expenditure plans, either because they have none or, more likely, because they dare not reveal them. Quite naturally, they conceal their past record, rather like the offender who believes that time has lapsed on his conviction under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and that it is rather naughty to mention it.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who is my neighbour in Norman Shaw, on making a good speech. It was beautifully enunciated, but weak on policy. Should Glenda Jackson become an hon. Member, she will find that no one speaks from the Dispatch Box with clearer diction and more properly than the hon. Member for Derby, South.

The hon. Member for Derby, South used the analogy of a house when considering the Government's economic policy. Had she used the analogy of a house during the period of the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979, she would have given the picture of a house falling down, with severe subsidence, a "For sale" notice on the front, a foreign buyer giving the caretaker a list of demands to carry out and subversives busy underneath continuing to undermine its foundations. If she had produced the analogy of a Labour house in the future, she would have given not the picture of a house but, like foreign holiday

brochures of a few years ago, an artist's impression. The British public, like the tourist of a few years ago, would find only a chap saying, "Sorry, we are too busy. Come back when the house is built." To add to the air of unreality, Conservative Members have sometimes concealed public expenditure for quite different reasons, but we no longer do so.

There is something touchingly biblical about the Government's modesty—of the left hand not knowing what the right is doing—but that can be alarmingly counterproductive. Although all too often it is not recognised by the general public, our public expenditure record is very good. The prospects that were all outlined by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury make the opportunities better still.

No one seriously believes in the blank cheque argument any more, except perhaps the hon. Member for Derby, South and her hon. Friends. Priorities, rightly, must be preferred, and the Government's honest determination to put those facts before the people is to be commended.

Our perceived attitude to the public sector has cost us dear in the mind of many people. I think that we should be unequivocal. Some services are well provided by the public sector, and will continue to be so. Those who work in public service are to be commended for the difficult jobs that they often must do and, in many cases, for the excellence with which they do them. It is a genuine outrage to suggest that Conservative Members believe differently.

The Government's overall stance is correct. They are right to prioritise, which is why I welcome the further emphasis that has been placed on the National Health Service, with spending rising from this year to next by £2·4 billion, or 5·5 per cent. in real terms.

However, mere recitation of those figures becomes tedious and unreal to constituents, so let me briefly mention what the Government's record over the past few years has meant in tangible and practical form to my constituency and health authority. Consultant medical staffing has increased by about 35 per cent. over the past five or six years. Money has been earmarked to support those doctors, and the new posts will lead to reduced waiting lists and to the introduction of services that previously were not available in Bury. Nursing staff has increased from 875 in 1979 to over 1,100 now. Capital spending since 1979 has run at about £19 million. That is not just a figure, because it has produced at Fairfield general hospital a new children's ward, a new children's out-patient department, a new ante-natal clinic, a new catering department, a new sterilising department and a new ear, nose and throat out-patient department.

Developments from April 1989 onwards show a new ENT theatre costing almost £500,000, a major upgrading of an orthopaedic theatre and the provision of additional wards for the elderly at Bury general hospital. Those are not just figures; they are tangible services that are now available in my health authority. That is what public expenditure on the Health Service has meant in Bury.

Curiously, over the past 12 months a new group has formed in my constituency, called the Bury Health Services defence campaign. I am at a loss to work out quite from whom it is defending the National Health Service. It cannot be from me or from Ministers, who have provided more nurses, doctors, buildings and services over the past decade. I believe that it is working to defend us from a severe attack of a Labour Government, because a previous attack was serious indeed. They cut nurses' salary, capital expenditure and total spending on the Health Service in my constituency by 2 per cent. between 1974 and 1979, compared with the growth of 19 per cent. over the past decade under this Government.

I therefore look forward with confidence to future expenditure on Health Service provision in Bury, secure in the knowledge that the Government properly dispense care through efficiency and competence, whereas care under Labour Governments, mouthed uselessly all too often, is not provided and is threatened by mismanagement and over-heavy union control.

I am in a position to reveal a great truth to the House. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made passing reference to traffic problems and to cones on our motorways. There is much mystery about from where those cones come. Do they multiply among themselves in the dead of night? Do they appear, like Santa Claus and Labour party policies, from fairyland? No, I can reveal that the world's best cones are made in my constituency by a firm called Swintex, under the guidance of a chap called Harry Houghton. They are the best cones in the world. They are beautifully made and have improved substantially over recent years. They are more fluorescent and more stable, and, if properly used in traffic management control, they can make a significant contribution to road safety. The next time that hon. Members pass those traffic cones, they should curse them not; they should think only that they are yet another good product from Bury and rejoice in the safety that they bring to the roads as necessary road repairs are carried out.

I welcome the projected increase in overseas development aid from £1,430 million in 1990 to £1,750 million by 1993. The aid budget is planned to increase by about 22 per cent. in cash terms and, we hope, by about 9 per cent. in relation to domestic inflation. I make a particular plea to Ministers for an increase in the share of that aid for southern Africa, particularly for South Africa.

It is not sufficiently widely known how much Britain has achieved for black South Africans over the past few years. South Africa is much more a mixture of first and third world than people realise. Rural poverty is extensive, and apart from the obvious inequalities between blacks and whites, which must be addressed by the future South Africa, much work will ultimately need to be done in rural areas to improve health, education and economic standards. Anyone who has visited rural Africa will have been touched by the scenes at the sides of roads in the early morning or in the afternoon of children from poor homes managing to struggle to appear in some form of school uniform. Such is the value of education that great effort is made.

I have visited South Africa twice in recent years on a Christian basis and have seen some of the work that the Government have done for the black community of South Africa and for Mozambiquan refugees in the area of South Africa known as Kangwane, under the fine leadership of chief Minister Enos Mobusa.

Many people in South Africa believe that the changes currently taking place there have much to do with internal changes of attitude as a result of years of patient work for peace and reconciliation by Christians and others across all races. Put in that context, the equally patient work undertaken by Britain, either directly or via voluntary agencies, deserves some credit. Together with our uncompromising message of hostility to apartheid, which

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

has been personally delivered by our excellent ambassador, Sir Robin Renwick, who is highly regarded in all South African circles, that work has been helpful in changing attitudes for the best.

What sort of work do we do among black South Africans that is so valuable? Between 1987 and 1992 this country will have provided over £30 million in support of the black people of South Africa. We provide help and assistance for students, the seed corn of the future of South Africa.

This year we are providing for 90 undergraduate awards in Great Britain, 60 undergraduate awards in South Africa and 250 postgraduate awards in Britain. In total, including those who continue their studies from earlier years, Britain will be financing about 1,000 black South African students from 1991.

Rural schools and squatter camps have also been assisted. There is a project in Johannesburg called Women for Peace, a non-racial organisation with branches across South Africa. It aims to break down barriers between races. The Women for Peace building in Alexandria, the black township nearest the centre of Johannesburg, was opened in 1988. Britain contributed 30,000 rand, the majority of the construction costs and a number of sewing machines. The building is used for typing and sewing lessons, craft lessons for the handicapped, and supplementary lessons for school pupils, and is available for general community use. The building has proved so successful that Women for Peace is in the process of extending it. That is an example of what Britain is doing in South Africa through public money.

The further development of South Africa is the key to the future of the continent. It could be an engine of change for the countries around it, with immense benefits accruing to all. That is why it is important for our programme for black South Africans to be continued and intensified.

I have given two examples, one at home and one abroad, of the good that can come from public expenditure. There are other examples of the good that has been done under Conservative rule in Britain. Public expenditure must not become so large as to distort the economy. We have had examples of that in the past and, frighteningly, we have had a foretaste of what might happen in the future. The Labour party cannot get away with what it has said about its public expenditure policy. We will not accept a blank cheque. But if public expenditure is not to grow and distort, neither should judicious public expenditure wither on the vine. We have much of which to be proud in our public expenditure policy. We should proclaim that loudly, correct what is wrong and protect this country from the financial disaster that would befall us all if the Labour party was ever to take office.

7.12 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Earlier in the debate the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer)—who is not now in his place, and I make no criticism of that—referred extensively to the economy of Wales, to the Secretary of State for Wales and to his own constituency. He waxed lyrical about the economic situation in Wales, and it might be wise if, at the outset of my remarks, I were to put the record straight.

Income per head in real terms in Wales has fallen over the past 10 years. It is lower now than it was in 1979. It is also lower in Northern Ireland. The other regions of Britain have just about maintained their income per capita. The gap between Wales and Northern Ireland is now narrower than it was in 1979. We have low incomes, high unemployment, much part-time employment, a run-down social infrastructure and run-down social services. That puts the record straight.

The Chief Secretary, as always, did his best this afternoon. He tried to pretend at the outset that he did not like public expenditure, but went on to say that it was a good thing. We are again debating an expenditure White Paper produced by a Government who do not really believe in public expenditure. In the last 10 years the Conservatives have hacked, cut, sliced and nagged away at public expenditure with the exception of expenditure on the armed forces and the police.

When the Conservatives came to power, they were imbued with the ideological belief that public expenditure was bad, and they took the same view of the trade unions, the dreaded public sector borrowing requirement and high taxation. They claimed that public expenditure was at the root of all our problems, especially inflation and economic decline.

Mr. Tim Smith: The right hon. Gentleman cannot be allowed to get away with the suggestion that we have cut public expenditure. The Autumn Statement shows that in 1978-79, real-terms expenditure was £164·8 billion. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman was at that time a Minister at the Treasury. Next year, the year that we are debating, it will be £191·7 billion, so it has increased substantially in real terms.

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he will believe anything. He should talk to hospital management board members and others.

Mr. Tim Smith: Has public expenditure not increased?

Mr. Davies: Yes, a great deal has been going into unemployment and social security payments, due to the problems that the Government have caused. But on matters that are crucial to our infrastructure, such as education, training, research and development and trade and industry, there have been cuts in public expenditure.

When the Chief Secretary discussed research and development, he said that we spent a higher percentage than Germany and Japan. But that is so only because the right hon. Gentleman included the figures for military research and development. He went on to say that we spent more than the Americans on civil research and development. Of course we do, because they spend more than us on military research and development. The fact remains that all areas vital to our economic infrastructure have suffered cuts time and again under Conservative rule.

A Government who did not have such ideological hang ups about public expenditure would have used the marvellous opportunities of the 1980s—low international inflation and massive surpluses, approaching £85 billion, from oil revenues—judiciously and prudently to build up our economic infrastructure to enable us to compete in the more difficult years of the 1990s and the turn of the century. Instead, spending on almost every item—education, training, support for industry and civil research and development—has been cut over the years.

Education expenditure has fallen from 5·5 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1978-79 to 4·8 per cent. in 1988-89. Only 35 per cent. of people in Britain between the ages of 16 and 18 stay on in full-time education and full-time training. The figure for France is 66 per cent. In other words, during 10 years of Conservative rule, with the most favourable economic climate that any Government have had since the war, that is all that our Government have been able to achieve.

Consider the figures for trainees qualifying in craft, engineering and technical subjects in Britain compared with France. Last year, 27,000 youngsters qualified in Britain, whereas 80,000 qualified in France, three times as many. How on earth is Britain to compete with the French and the Germans—even with the Italians—in the 1990s when the amount we spend on training is so meagre?

Instead of planning for the future and using correctly the £85 billion or £87 billion of oil revenues, the Conservatives threw the lot into an unfettered marketplace and allowed the money to be redistributed in that way, instead of using it to improve the economy. One need not be a financial wizard to appreciate what the market did with those billions of oil surpluses. They went, as always in the British economy, to those areas of the marketplace that have dominated the economy since the war and have caused so many of our problems. They did not go into manufacturing. Indeed, manufacturing investment has been slow in growing since 1979. Service sector investment has grown in the past 10 years while about one third of our industry has been destroyed.

In the first instance, the money went into residential and commercial property. The Prime Minister preaches financial rectitude. She has encouraged enormous borrowing to enable people to acquire residential property. At the height of the boom it was possible to borrow three and a half times one's income from banks and many building societies to buy a house or flat. It was also possible to borrow 100 per cent. of the valuation. That did not happen 10 or 20 years ago. In France, Germany and other European countries Governments would never have behaved with such profligacy as the British Government have behaved in encouraging such borrowing.

The shadow Chief Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), mentioned M4, one of the monetary indicators which I do not think the Government have adopted. They have adopted all other monetary indicators and then abandoned them. M4 includes building society activity. Over the last 10 years, M4 has increased by at least 15 per cent. every year. The increase has been far greater than any other productive potential or power of the economy. As a result of the boom, asset values, house prices and the value of residential property increased, and people started to borrow on the basis of their value. They borrowed and they bought more goods which had to come from abroad because British industry, having been decimated by the Government to a considerable extent, could not produce the goods. The supply side was not there to produce the goods that people wanted because they had the money to buy them.

Then money poured into commercial property. Insurance companies and pension funds are still collecting people's contractual savings. It must be said that over the last 10 years people in employment have had a substantial increase in their real incomes and wages. The Government cannot take credit for that. I accept that some of the increase resulted from increased productivity in manufacturing industry, but most did not. In fact, most of the economy is now a service economy which does not know the meaning of productivity and which is not subjected to the same competition as manufacturing industry.

The increased earnings and increased contractual savings went into the pension funds and insurance companies. With their incestuous and sometimes unhealthy relationship with developers and with the bureaucrats in some of the larger town halls, they poured money into the shopping malls, marinas, B and Qs and Great Mills. Money poured into places that were selling goods from abroad. After 10 years of the Tory Government, the economy could not produce the goods that people could buy with the money they borrowed or earned.

I think that it was Napoleon who said that the English were a nation of shopkeepers. They are. Perhaps the Welsh are, too. At least in Napoleon's time the English and perhaps the British had the wit, the art and the skill to produce the goods that they sold in their shops. We are still a nation of shopkeepers but unfortunately we cannot produce the goods that our people want. We have to go abroad for them; hence the massive balance of payments deficit.

The other area to which the money went—surprise, surprise—was the good old City of London. Ten years ago the City of London was the most open financial economy, if that is the right description, in the world. Any bank could come in; anyone could set up in the City. It was far freer than Frankfurt. The Germans do not seem to need a large stock exchange, yet they have a massive balance of payments surplus; they can keep inflation down and they have high public expenditure. Compared to the City of London, Frankfurt is a small stock market. So is Paris, and the French have done much better than we have.

Ten years ago we had an open financial market but the Government have opened it up even more; they have made it even freer and competition is even more unfettered. They did it in many ways. They removed the reserve asset ratios established by the banks. There was freer borrowing from banks, with no problems from the old Bank of England asset ratios. Then the Government relaxed, and released almost immediately, exchange controls; the former Chancellor did that when he was Financial Secretary. Of course, exchange controls had to go in the end because of the rules of the treaty of Rome. But why did the Government do it suddenly? Why did they not do it gradually, as the French did? The French lifted one control after the other. They kept an eye on the economy to make sure that when they lifted controls they did not damage the real economy. The Germans did the same, as did other countries. Why did we overnight completely abandon exchange control? We did it, causing a boom and the inflation from which we are suffering.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If the right hon. Gentleman has read the autobiography of his boss, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, he will recall that in that book the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) described how he considered abolishing exchange controls and explained clearly why he thought it necessary. That was when the right hon. Gentleman was a Treasury Minister.

Mr. Davies: I concede that exchange controls had to be abolished. I also appreciate that the treaty of Rome made us abolish exchange controls, whether we agreed or disagreed with them. But exchange controls did not have to go overnight.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The right hon. Member for Leeds, East wanted them to.

Mr. Davies: Whatever my boss wanted, my view is that they did not have to go overnight. We could have followed the experience of the French and the Germans and relaxed them gradually, but that was another instance of opening up the financial community completely.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: If my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had abolished exchange controls overnight, I can tell everyone in the House that he would have had a resignation on his hands.

Mr. Davies: The reserve asset ratios had gone; exchange control had gone. Then we had the big bang which broke down many of the traditional barriers, financial and ethical, in the City. Again, nobody cared. Those barriers had to go. Over the last few years we have had takeover after takeover, merger after merger. Nobody cared about the company. The only question was, who owned it? No economic analysis was made of the consequences of the takeover.

The irony is that, despite all this, the Chancellor is not getting much money out of foreign investment. Money went abroad. The Central Statistical Office is scrabbling around trying to find £100 million to help reduce the massive balance of payments deficit. I have not looked up the figures, but I would not be surprised if the amount of money remitted to Britain in income and dividends is not that much greater than the amount remitted when we had exchange controls. I may be wrong. Despite all that has happened, the money remitted is going down every month. Perhaps that is an indication of the confidence that the financial community has in the Government.

The flow of money into property, wages and earnings, and the City has created the position with which we are faced. A prudent Government—the word "prudent" is used all the time by Chief Secretaries—would have used some of the £85 million to build our economic infrastructure, and to improve training, education, and civil research and development so that we could compete with the French and the Germans in 1992.

A future Government will pay a heavy price for this Government's profligacy. The Government like to talk about financial rectitude. Future Governments and the public will pay a heavy price. Of one thing we can be certain: the Tory party will pay a heavy price at the next election.

7.27 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am accustomed to hearing some fairly neanderthal speeches from Scottish Labour Members, but some parts of the speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made them sound like models of progressive realism. We heard a great deal of Welsh rhetoric about cuts. When it comes down to it, my understanding of the right hon. Gentleman's definition of a cut is when a spending programme is reduced as a percentage of gross domestic product. I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that gross domestic product has gone up from £173·4 billion in 1978-79 to £517 billion in the current year. That is why the Government could increase expenditure in real terms on key programmes.

It is a pity that none of the Opposition Members who have spoken recognised the force of the arguments of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), who pointed to the crucial importance of public sector debt repayment and the fact that that enables the Government to increase expenditure on priority areas without risk to their overall policy.

Like other hon. Members, I congratulate the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on making her first speech in her present Front-Bench position. I do not criticise her for not giving way to me earlier as she had very fairly given way to a number of my hon. Friends. I now have the opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) whether he will answer the simple question that I would have asked his hon. Friend. Apart from defence, is there any expenditure programme that the next Labour Government would reduce? [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on Nick!"] I shall be happy for the hon. Gentleman to answer.

The Opposition have three approaches to public expenditure. First, there is the approach of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). In *The Guardian* on 2 October he said:

> "We have to say now what we are going to spend and where the money is going to come from."

That is a proper and honest approach. Secondly, there is the approach that might be described as the "nudge, nudge, wink, wink to the pressure groups" approach. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said that transport needed

> "public money on a grand scale".

Every Opposition Member who speaks on the Health Service says that expenditure must be increased on whichever aspect of the Health Service is being discussed. The education spokesmen say that student grants must be increased and social services spokesmen say to the pressure groups that social services expenditure must be increased.

The third approach might be described as the "Monklands amendment". The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) goes around quoting as a pillar of fiscal rectitude——

Mr. Norman Lamont: My hon. Friend is making an interesting speech. Does he agree that the answer to what he said was given by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) when she told us that a future Labour Government would be committed only to two things—an increase in pensions and an increase in child benefit? Everything else might happen or might not happen, but would none the less be listed. Is not that a thoroughly dishonest approach?

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend goes to the heart of the matter. The speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South will be read carefully by my hon. Friends and will, no doubt, often be quoted objectively in future.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East goes round like the famous Dutch boy with his finger in the dike. As the floods of promises and pledges increase, he rushes round saying, "Remember lads, say 'as resources allow'. Don't put any figures on it." He is not succeeding in that approach and he will not do so.

I shall give two examples relating to education in different parts of the country. A document called "London Pride", published by the Labour party in January 1990, said:

"Labour will make repair and modernisation of school buildings a top priority."

How many top priorities are there? In Scotland, the approach has been rather different. Last week, the Labour party there announced its plans for Scotland to journalists. One of them asked mildly how much they would cost. He was told:

"We have had 10 years of not affording education and look what it has cost us."

That approach to public expenditure reminds me of a Scottish friend who, when he came to London, discovered a doubles bar with a happy hour. After about his fifth cheap double, my friend was generally admonished by others there about the merit of continued expenditure. He said, "Have another. Think of the money I'm saving." Such is the approach to much of public expenditure which is adopted by Opposition Members.

Mr. Burt: Does my hon. Friend agree that a fourth principle has been enunciated this evening? It was mentioned clearly by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and was not contradicted by his Front Bench. He said that the spending policies of the next Labour Government would be revealed the day after the election. There was no contradiction from his Front Bench. Is not that a further extraordinary example of how to lay policy honestly before the British electorate?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) is right. All that that pledge to the British electorate means is that if there were, by any mischance, to be a Labour Government, they would issue a public expenditure White Paper at some point.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli and my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) spoke about Wales. They would not expect me to talk about Wales, but it is interesting to examine identifiable general Government public expenditure per head in different parts of the United Kingdom. For 1988-89, the figure for England was £2,161. For Wales, the figure was higher at £2,489. The figure for Scotland was £2,805. It is interesting that no Scottish Labour Members are here now, although I do not criticise them for that.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): They are spending all the money.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend says that he believes that they are out there spending all the money. It is impossible to argue that Scotland is somehow disadvantaged in public expenditure.

I want to refer to local authority expenditure and to table 21.4.11. Will my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East say a word about the implications for those figures of the implementation of the local government finance policies currently being advocated by the Labour party? If one removes the index linking of non-domestic rate income—which is a Labour party pledge—inevitably, that constraint on local authority expenditure is removed. My hon. Friend may, on this occasion or in the future, want to talk about the implications for public expenditure of the roof tax, which is clearly proposed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and his colleagues and far less clearly proposed by hon. Members south of the border. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will do the entire United Kingdom a service tonight and confirm that the Labour party generally agrees wholly with the concept of a roof tax as spelt out by its Scottish spokesman and that it will apply in precisely the same way north and south of the border. If the hon. Gentleman wants me to give way to him, I shall be happy to do so. Does the hon. Gentleman want to get the wording right for his winding-up speech?

The introduction of such a tax, among its many other disadvantages, would have major implications for public expenditure. The tax base would be so much smaller than either the base of community chargepayers or the old base of ratepayers. The burden would fall on a small, selected part of the electorate. There is a recipe for massive increases in local authority expenditure when local authorities can go ahead with such increases without any real political cost. Those may be questions for the future, but I hope that we shall be given some answers tonight by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East.

7.38 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): In our previous economic debate, I began my remarks by quoting the line from "Jaws":

"Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water"

in respect of Ministers. I feel like quoting the same line tonight, given that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has now moved on to greener pastures. His place has been taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) who showed real merit and steel in her opening speech. Conservative Members may yet grow to wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East was back in his place as shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, given the performance of his successor today.

Before I speak about the public expenditure plans, I should say that I am grateful to the Government for the changes that they have made to the layout and format of the Government expenditure plans in the White Paper. I was sorry that the Chief Secretary did not pay tribute to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee along with his warm tribute to the Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee. The documents have advanced so far that they are almost comprehensible to an ordinary human being. That is quite some progress, given the way that the documents looked some years ago. I thank the Chief Secretary in particular for his efforts in moving the papers on a wee bit.

I hope that hon. Members will begin to look at these documents seriously. Each Select Committee has an opportunity to examine them, in conjunction, one hopes, with annual reports from Departments, and to give some teeth to the parliamentary financial accountability of the public expenditure plans that the Government lay before the House. It would be no bad thing if each Select Committee reviewed the relevant documents and brought before the House a report on Government expenditure.

All that was by way of an aside. It worries me that Conservative Members do not know which tag to adopt when defending Government expenditure plans. Sometimes they say that we must control public expenditure. That is a totem to show how fiercely they are prepared to guard the financial integrity of the

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Government. At other times they talk about how much more the Government are spending. There is always an irreconcilable contradiction in Conservative Members' remarks. They cannot reconcile the desire to promote the image of the Government as a high-spending authority at national level with the idea that the Government have a tight fiscal policy, as the Chief Secretary would have it called. That is called having your cake and eating it. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) will refer to that when he sums up, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South did in her opening remarks.

There is a basic fallacy and misunderstanding in the remarks of Front-Bench Conservative Members, too. They equate on a one-to-one ratio the financial health of public sector spending with that of the economy as a whole. That is to mistake Great Britain Ltd.—the enterprise of the Government, who have balanced their books—for the health of the economy as a whole, which is in a deplorable state.

The stewardship of the Government does not merely involve Government expenditure. It sounds fine to say that we are repaying a certain amount of our debt, but the responsibility and the role of Government in the financial sphere is not only to manage their finances properly. The essential priority is to use that finance to ensure that the wider economy works properly. To express joy merely because one part of the economy is under control—as the Government would have us believe—is not enough.

We see the poor condition of the wider economy in the various indicators of economic success. Our trade deficit is the highest percentage of GDP in any industrialised country in the West. Inflation is running at an average of 7·7 per cent. over the year. We have the highest inflation of the Group of Seven countries. Interest rates are going through the roof and one in 10 people who have a mortgage are falling behind with their repayments. Every hon. Member knows that industry is screaming out because it cannot obtain the finance that is essential for long-term investment. That is the measure of the Government's economic success. The Government may take pride—perhaps misplaced pride—in the state of the minor section of the finance for which they are executively responsible, but the fact that they are repaying the public debt is not enough.

The Government have had tremendous advantages. It is commendable to repay the public sector debt, but, with North sea oil revenues over a 10-year period of some £87 billion and the massive consumer boom—with money sloshing around throughout the economy—the Government do not have a great deal to show for 10 years of tremendous advantages. Yet at the end of that period they talk so glibly and gladly about the one area in which the Government seem to have balanced their books.

To make my point, I can do no better than to quote as a point of reference for the missed opportunities the following extract:

"without higher investment—in skills, innovation and the infrastructure as well as new production capacity—we stand little chance of overcoming either our balance of payments deficit or inflationary pressures without a recession.

But I regret to report that we enter the new decade with an unfavourable economic background against which companies will be formulating their investment plans".

That quotation is not from the shadow Chancellor or Financial Secretary but the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry, that renowned Socialist Labour supporter, John Banham.

In this month's *CBI News* both Conservative and Opposition Members will read that the CBI will soon hold its annual dinner. It is on Thursday 17 May, in case Conservative Members have not put it in their diaries. It is to be

"a relaxed and cheerful gathering of members and their guests to enjoy a convivial evening of good food and conversation."

It will be of interest to both Conservative and Opposition Members that the guest speaker will be none other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I hope that he will have on his left John Banham, who may even read him that quotation from his article in *CBI News*. On the Chancellor's right perhaps he will have Sir Trevor Holdsworth, the outgoing president of the CBI. He, too, has made several pungent comments on how the Government are failing to meet the needs of commercial and industrial development. He could do no better when the Government talk of their large public sector surplus than to quote from the CBI report to members. Under the heading "Economic Priorities for 1990" it urges that:

"The large public sector surplus be used for increases in public spending on the transport infrastructure and for cuts in business taxes:".

I hope that at that dinner the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be sandwiched between those two chairmen and that that sandwich will be the most savoury item on the menu. I hope that the Chancellor will listen, if not to the Opposition or rational economic argument, at least to the views of people who in the past were supportive of his party.

Public expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen. That is clear from the documentation. That fall in public expenditure in real terms is evident in the lack of investment in industry and transport. The fall in expenditure simply represents cuts—good old-fashioned cuts. For example, there has been a massive reduction in the rate support grant to local authorities. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) said that his local authority was suffering. It is no reduction in the tax burden or in requests for moneys from individuals if the Government say, "We are not giving you more or even the same rate support grant. That money will have to be found from other sources." Ultimately, the individual, the family, the taxpayer and the poll tax payer has to meet the bill.

It is a sleight of hand to imagine that local government expenditure can somehow magically be reduced merely because central Government reduce their contribution to local government. We all know—all hon Members know this from constituency experience—the pressure under which local government has been put by that sleight of hand. It does not reduce public expenditure; it simply makes the national books look a little healthier.

There are also cuts right across the range of housing provision. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will refer later to council housing and to the allowances for home improvements and the reductions in the money for housing associations. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), has eloquently outlined the cuts in maintenance. All those things come back to roost. If I can put it in

Granthamite terms, if people do not put a lick of paint on their window sills or elsewhere on their house, they will soon have to buy new windows, guttering or whatever. The same Granthamite arguments apply to the national estate, to Government buildings, to roads, sewers and railways. The Government cannot cut maintenance by £1·8 billion on hospital maintenance, for example, as we heard recently in the Public Accounts Committee, without the ghost coming back to haunt us in a big way. Yet again it will be a Labour Government who will have to pick up the bill in the future.

Cuts in training and a reduced public sector obviously influence the way in which Government debts at national level are viewed. If the Goverment sell off the family silver, there is less of a public sector. Again, as we heard in the Public Accounts Committee, we have had a parade of privatisations, brought about by sweeteners, and by money spent on marketing, advertising and all sorts of devices, including bribes in one sense or another, extremely low sale prices or dowries. Whatever the term used, the Government have been selling Britain's assets short. That has been the way in which the major public assets—the family silver—have been disposed of, but it is a one-off and can never happen again. Once again, massive amounts of money have gone into subsidising the Government's obsession with balancing the Government's national books instead of being used to develop the wider economy, which is what I and many of my colleagues feel is the Government's real economic responsibility. According to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South, there has been a grand total of £50 billion-worth of wasted expenditure in that respect.

Another thing that the Chancellor could have a chat about with Sir Trevor Holdsworth and John Banham at their lunch—that is assuming that the Chancellor is still in post—[HON. MEMBERS: "Dinner."] Well, it could be a long conversation that runs from lunch to dinner. I note the obvious experience of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), which appears to be far more profound than that of any other hon. Member.

I refer now to a concept that lost "fashionability" about 10 years ago but which is nonetheless paraded by Ministers occasionally—it is called "crowding out". Let us look again at that famous Labour party journal, *CBI News*. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) tried to draw the Prime Minister's attention to the front page of *CBI News* at Prime Minister's Question Time last week because it showed a tremendous drop in the investment intentions of CBI members. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister had a problem with her myopia and could not see the diagram. No doubt it can be sent to her if she has not yet got her own copy. It looks very much as though the intentions of CBI members to invest in plant and machinery over the next 12 months are themselves being crowded out. The concept has now lost all credibility.

The only crowding out that is taking place is in areas such as research and development. Once again, that is an area in which Sir Trevor Holdsworth has great expertise, especially in respect of the defence percentage of research and development. I believe that we have the highest percentage of R and D on defence—as opposed to civil R and D—of any country in western Europe, which will be made worse by the Government's expenditure plans in which we can see that the civil element in R and D is to be reduced by a further 2 per cent.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is it part of Labour party policy to reduce corporation tax and to allow companies to retain more of their own profits so that they can invest in research and development and in training?

Mr. Allen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not being able to speak on behalf of the party, but I shall, of course, give him my personal opinion. I believe that corporation taxes should be reviewed. They are too high and could be reduced. That is a possibility, along with an examination of depreciation allowances, all of which could be paid for in time by an increase in growth when the Government's own expenditure acts as the pump-priming mechanism for a growing industry. I do not know whether that is the view of my Front Bench.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Allen: Well, I should be happy to talk to my right hon. and hon. Friends about it. We should not forget which party is in government, but it is unfortunate that the Government are not taking any notice of the CBI's request for that sort of review and examination. I believe that it bears examination and I very much hope that when the time is right we can look at bringing this country's corporation tax levels more into line with the levels on the continent.

The continent does not have the theory of crowding out. If we consider the expenditure of the Governments of France, West Germany and elsewhere, especially on transport and on infrastructure developments, we see that they take no notice of the ancient Bacon and Eltis nostrum of crowding out. That is old hat. They realise that where there is a good transport infrastructure and investment, there are benefits for the private sector and the public sector equally and for those who work in them.

To me, that is common sense and it is common sense to the French, the Italians, the West Germans and to everyone else in Europe. However, once again our isolationist Prime Minister has failed to catch up, which has meant that we are falling further and further behind. That is why our trade deficit is getting higher and higher and why our imports are increasing. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) so eloquently said, we may be a nation of shopkeepers, but the stuff that we are now selling in our shops comes from Japan and Europe and less and less of it is being made in this country.

As hon. Members are looking for suggestions for future policies under a new Government, I put forward my suggestion on the exchange rate mechanism. While all parties appear to have a host of pre-conditions for joining the ERM, my only pre-condition would be that in a new climate, with a new Government, it would be quite easy to negotiate the condition early on that our levels of public expenditure investment in industry and commerce should match those of our continental competitors. That could be achieved and there would be the will to achieve it under a Labour Government which, sadly, there is not under this Government.

If we look through the public expenditure documentation we do not see the rhetoric that we have heard tonight from Government Back Benchers who seem confused about whether the Government are holding down public expenditure or are the greatest thing since sliced bread for a host of sectors in which there is public expenditure. We see cuts in real terms in the provision for industry, the

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regions, research and development, housing, education and training. There is a desperate need for expenditure on education and training, but spending has been cut back by £85 million this year, despite the fact that the city technology colleges, a pet project, have a provision of £135 million. Ironically, some of the few increases in the public expenditure White Paper are to pay the extra high interest rate repayments generated by the Government's incompetence in other sectors. They have to set aside greater provision to pay back interest rate charges than they did a year ago.

I am not in a position to give Labour's priorities. I am certainly one of those referred to earlier as the Monklands, East tendency who believe in the philosophy, "We shall let you know in good time." I know that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are more liberal and want to talk about matters more freely. If there is a kitty of £190 billion there is immense scope for reordering public expenditure provision on the lines of the social priorities that we would seek.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South has already outlined what she would like in terms of pensions and child benefit. There is great scope for reorienting current programmes, even without growth. Once growth provides additional expenditure for other programmes, be assured that Conservative Members will be the second to know the sectors of greatest expansion and the matters of first priority.

I have one final worry about what we shall face as a party coming into government. It has always been our lot to inherit what has been left after the locust years of a Tory regime, be it the years after 1964 or the boom and bust of Barber in 1974. No doubt, when the Thatcher era ends, be it in 1991 or 1992, we shall inherit that position again. Massive investment will be necessary throughout industry, commerce, the transport infrastructure, sewers, water and electricity industries, right across the board to education and training. It will take a new Labour Government to make that investment. The Government have steadfastly refused to put aside the amount of money made available through North sea oil and the credit boom of the 1980s. Once again it will fall on the Labour Government to dig the country out of the hole in which the locusts have placed us. I regret that that should be so. I particularly regret that it takes a number of years before the fruits of investment are seen.

I remember having a conversation with a senior member of British Rail management who said that the organisation could not use money if it was given it on a plate within a matter of months or even one or two years. Gearing up was necessary to ensure that plans were ready and schemes were put into operation. It may well fall to a Labour Government to put those schemes into operation. I hope that the electorate will have patience with an incoming Labour Government and realise that it will be a long time before those investments bear fruit. Be that as it may, it will be the duty of the next Labour Government to undertake that task.

8.4 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak.

Like the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I followed the speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) with considerable interest, particularly towards the end when she said that the Opposition knew the scale of the problems and the scale of the needs. Unfortunately, that did not enable her to state the scale of the costs. Finally, she said in grand Churchillian crescendo, "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." Some of us feel that Labour nearly finished the job in 1979, but not in the way that the hon. Lady meant.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury on the presentation of the estimates. I was particularly pleased that there will be a 9 per cent. increase in Overseas Development Administration spending in the next few years. Surely it is right that, as our economy becomes strong and the country wealthier, we should spend more on Third-world countries.

Increasing spending is one thing, but actually getting it to the sharp end—the patient or pupil—can be quite another. Over the past few weeks, it struck me that one or two of the schools that are opting out are absolutely delighted with Government funding because they have suddenly found that the local education authorities were keeping up to 40 per cent. of the money. If that is so, there is no doubt that they are much better off. If that happens between local education authorities and schools, I wonder whether it also happens between regional and district health authorities. I wonder how much the regions are keeping back from the district health authorities. It would interest some of us to know.

I intend to speak about small businesses. The growth of the economy over the past few years has enabled increased public expenditure and, over the decade, a reduced proportion of GDP to be used. It is that ratio that is vital because Government income depends on the health of, and growth in, the economy. In particular, we must continue with a business environment in which small businesses can thrive. We have done a great deal towards that during the past decade, but there is one aspect where we can do a little more.

It is wonderful that such a large proportion of people have taken the plunge over the past decade, risked all and started their own businesses. The vast majority of people with energy would sooner put up with a few blips in capitalism than have the dull, drab certainties of Socialism. Labour could never even afford to acknowledge the value of small businesses or their contribution to the economy because that is absolutely incompatible with state planning. If some people prove that they can manage without such benefits, it may be catching.

The nadir of state planning for many of us with longer memories was the Meriden motor cycle co-operative. That was on the shortlist without doubt. But for me the nadir of state planning was the sale of the 24 ships to Poland. That business was conducted to prop up the shipbuilding industry—or did we think that we needed zlotys at the time? The effect was that in a short time the sale undermined the Merchant Navy.

In 1979, British industry and small businesses were hopelessly uncompetitive, overmanned and dictated to by

the trade unions. That was not entirely surprising because, at that time, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said:

"It is inconceivable that we could transform this society without a major extension of public ownership and control."

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North was not saying anything very different. By 1988, the same right hon. Member for Islwyn said:

"faced with a market economy . . . we have got to run it better than the Tories."

I do not know what to make of a right hon. Gentleman who makes such a sharp U-turn, except that it is possible that he does not believe in very much.

Of course, in 1979 it was obvious that new large-scale, labour-intensive undertakings were not forthcoming to replace those that were closing, and, even if they had been, it was unlikely at that time that they would have chosen to set up in this country. So we had to rely on new small industries and businesses. At that time it was absolutely essential to release the energies of business men, and we did so. It cannot be stated too often that in 1978 the number of business closures exceeded the number of start-ups by 100 every week, whereas now the number of start-ups exceeds the number of stops by 1,200 every week. No wonder the number of people in self-employment has risen from under 2 million to over 3 million in the course of just over a decade. That is an increase of about 60 per cent.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that, although, during the past decade, literally hundreds of thousands of men lost their jobs in the old-fashioned heavy industries, there are now more people in employment than ever before?

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and it is only capitalism that could have brought that change at a reasonable social cost. That contrasts with the results of the planned Socialist economies of eastern Europe that we have seen over the past few months.

I hope, in due course, to draw the attention of my hon. Friend and other hon. Members to the situation in my constituency, which is a striking example of the change that has taken place. Not only was there an increase in self-employment, but the right climate for small businesses was created by the promotion of investment, enterprise and, indeed, competition. We have reduced the levels of inflation and of taxation, although inflation is still far too high, at least by the standards of a Conservative Government. I am sure that we shall all put up with the short-term pain of high interest rates for a while, to cure inflation once and for all. Not least, the Government have reformed employment law and are continuing to do so. In fact, a member of the Committee on the Employment Bill told me that he and his colleagues started off thinking that reform of the closed shop would be a very contentious issue. Now some Labour members of the Committee are actually supporting the proposed change.

I have said that my constituency of Stroud is a perfect example of this business transition. My constituency was early into the first industrial revolution, essentially with textiles—the mills in the valleys and the sheep on the hills—but also with engineering, which usually needed to be located by streams or rivers. For many decades, the valley industries prospered, particularly in what is known as the Golden valley. Many firms ended up with 200 to 1,000 employees, and one engineering firm at Dursley employed 4,000 people. On top of the hills, overlooking the valleys, there were the large and imposing employers' houses, and woe betide any mill foreman who sounded the "leave work" hooter a minute early. The local economy there shadowed the national economy. The engineering and textile industries are still important—in the case of textiles, billiard cloths, tunics and suit materials in particular—but not as important as they used to be.

Indeed, both locally and nationally, most labour-intensive firms had to shed labour to stay competitive, both nationally and internationally. The firm that employed 4,000 people now employs 1,200, and high rates demands have not been helpful. But, with 1,200 employees, it is more competitive and has a better product range than for many years. Fortunately, unlike parts of the north or, perhaps, Corby, Stroud did not have lay-offs all in one go. They were gradual. Then the transition occurred—hundreds of new small businesses springing up, often on the sites of former textile mills and outbuildings. Business parks with planning permission for five, 10 or 20 units were soon fully let, and sometimes had a waiting list. Of course, some of those businesses will grow, and some will perish, but the capitalist cycle will go on.

In one of the valleys there is a modern factory employing 400 to 500 people, producing all sorts of high-tech materials for the North sea oil industry. A very prosperous factory it is. Adjoining it is a five-storey, Cotswold stone, mullion-windowed mill with all its windows broken. In my eyes the transition has been from one to the other. Only capitalism could have brought about that transition at an acceptable social cost. The constituency of Stroud, and for that matter the nation as a whole, owes its prosperity solely to capitalism, and not in any way to Socialism.

I am grateful for all that the Government have done over the past decade to improve the situation of small firms. I want, however, to end with a small criticism. We have promised to reduce bureaucracy, to reduce red tape. Indeed, we have done so, but not to a great enough extent. We must reduce the burden on small businesses, of their unpaid tax-gathering functions. I want to quote from "Your Guide to Government Help for Small Firms". Under the heading, "Cutting Red Tape", it says:

"Most Government departments now have Deregulation Units whose job is to cut red tape wherever possible, see whether existing laws can be simplified and assess proposed new laws for their impact on business, especially costs."

I believe that if some civil servants were to spend time with the average small business, they would find a fairly consistent and common complaint. It would be about the red tape that those businesses still have to suffer, in the payment of wages and the collection of taxes.

It happens that my background is in small business, so I hope that I understand that one has to be a man or woman of many parts. One arrives on Monday morning somewhat ahead of the staff, to make widgets or whatever. Before long, one gets production going, but suddenly the first customer comes along and one has to sell something. The business has to be kept going. One is dealing with the sale when a lorry arrives and has to be unloaded. Otherwise production would stop. No sooner has one started doing that than a machine break down, and one has to become chief engineer. In small businesses, any time that is taken away from the essential processes of buying, selling or manufacturing is, relatively speaking, wasted. Yet we expect the owners of small businesses to be unpaid

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tax gatherers. They have to collect national insurance and VAT. That process takes up a lot of time for a person running a small business that employs up to 10 people. Above all—hideously complicated for small business—is the system of pay-as-you-earn. Here I am not criticising. I realise that much has been done to simplify the tax system. We now have one higher rate of tax, rather than four or five, as previously. However, we can do more, and I think that we should.

I should like to suggest a further move from taxes on income to taxes on expenditure, which would benefit most the small business man. It would do more for him than all the other advice put together. When I became parliamentary candidate for the constituency of Stroud about four years ago, the main problem in that area was unemployment. It is most certainly not the area's main problem now. I am pleased that the United Kingdom has an unemployment rate of 5 per cent. to 6 per cent., compared to a rate of about 9 per cent. in the rest of Europe. That is an immense achievement. For several years we have created more new jobs than the rest of Europe put together. If we encourage small firms, particularly by further simplification of the tax-gathering system, they will give more money, through taxes, to the Government, and we shall be able to continue to spend more on the Health Service and on education. We have a record of which we should be proud.

8.18 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Like perhaps other hon. Members, I scanned the Government's new public expenditure plans to see what the Department of Employment was proposing to spend on training. Everybody now surely knows how abysmally we lag behind our competitors in vocational training. Unfortunately, we have the worst trained work force in the industrialised world, falling behind not only Europe and north America, but now also many Asian countries.

Only last month yet another paper, this time from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, reported that in the West German kitchen furniture industry nine tenths of all German employees had vocational qualifications based on a three-year, externally examined apprenticeship-type course. In Britain only one tenth came anywhere near to being in that category. Is it any wonder that the German industry has a huge productivity advantage and dominates the high value added sector of the market? In clothing manufacture, the institute found that 80 per cent. of German machinists had completed the relevant two or three-year examined course, whereas in British plants it did not come across one machinist with such a qualification. So the comparison goes on for industry after industry.

Recently, the previous Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), described a study by the Department into training as mind boggling—mind bogglingly bad, not mind bogglingly good. As countries can buy in state-of-the-art technology, it is by the skills of their work forces that they compete. Training our people is the vital strategic investment.

This matter has been analysed to death. Everybody knows the facts. The question is: what are we going to do? After 10 years of a Conservative Government we are falling further behind. We are getting into a sort of low skills equilibrium with poor management and badly trained workers producing low-quality, low value added goods, and the orders for sophisticated goods are going overseas. As a result, our trade deficit now threatens to overwhelm us.

But what do we get from Ministers at the Department of Employment? We get lots of speeches and empty, windy rhetoric, lots of continuous chatter and lip service about training. But where is the action? Where are the resources? We have to turn to chapter 6 of the Government's expenditure plans. What are they going to do? They are going to make cuts. Are they going to put their money where their mouths are? No, they will do the opposite.

In the Government's expenditure plans 1990-91 to 1992-93, the training programmes are grouped under the heading "Skill and competence for work", and the figures are given in table 6.3, "Expenditure on training". If we take an index figure of 100 for the estimated outturn for this year, 1989-90, in real terms 1987-88 was 122. Two years ago we were spending 22 per cent. more. In 1992-93 it is planned to be only 73. The cash for training has been falling and it is planned to fall further. In real terms, expenditure this year is almost one fifth lower than it was two years ago, and in three years' time it is planned to be only three quarters of what it is now.

Since last year's White Paper the cash for 1990-91 and for 1991-92 has been cut in real terms by 18 per cent. and 21 per cent. That is the measure of the cuts in planned expenditure on training which the Treasury has obtained from Ministers in the autumn public spending round—a major victory for the Treasury, but a defeat for the nation's training needs.

Nor can it be claimed that the fall in numbers justifies the fall in expenditure. During the next three years, funds for YTS are to be cut in real terms by nearly a half, but the numbers are planned to fall by only one quarter. Real expenditure per trainee will fall by one third. It is right that employers should contribute more, but it is wrong for the Government to spend less and thereby send the wrong signals.

It looks as though the Treasury is saying that while there was mass youth unemployment it was willing to spend money as a cosmetic, to massage the unemployment figures, but now that there is to be a demographic change, the pretence of training can go hang while the Treasury saves money. We now have fewer young people, so more will go into jobs, but we must see that they are trained. The Government should look carefully at the plans being recommended by the CBI and the TUC to give substantial training credits to every young person.

Now let us look at the other major programme—employment training. The Government made a big splash about that when it was launched, but we do not seem to hear so much about it now. A fall in numbers cannot be argued here. The employment training programme is not hitting its numbers target, and, even if it did, it would reach only a fraction of what the Training Agency calls the client group. Despite that, there have been two cuts so far of £200 million in that programme and the cash stays the same this year while its real value is planned to fall by about one tenth. That is the opposite of what we should be doing.

Employment training, which has the germ of a good idea, is badly flawed. It is grossly underfunded and because

of that it is often inadequate and unattractive. As a result, it reaches ony two thirds of the Government's published target for which it allocated the money. In those terms, it is not a success. The participants who were expected partly to work receive just £10 above the level of benefit. That is not very much of an incentive. Many are financially worse off.

The training agents receive £38 in London and £31·50 outside London to work out a personalised action plan for each participant, and £15 for each placement with a training manager. Those are shoestring budgets. Training managers receive £15 for each person who starts training and £18 a week basic grant for each person in training. In some cases there can be supplementary grants averaging perhaps another £20. That makes perhaps £38 a week to pay for training. What quality training can be obtained for that? What private training organisation would offer training for such derisory sums? The CBI refused to become involved in the scheme on those derisory figures. Hardly any large firms have lent themselves to the scheme and the construction industry refused to be involved with the scheme. It has a different and much better one where the courses cost between £150 and £180 a week.

Because of the underfunded, unsatisfactory, inadequate and unattractive nature of the programme most people drop out. When the Select Committee on Employment went to Dundee in March last year to inspect the programme we found that 33 per cent. of those referred by the employment service dropped out before reaching the training agent. We found that a further 47 per cent. dropped out before reaching the training manager, leaving only 20 per cent. who stayed with the training manager for at least one week.

Mr. Roger Dawe of the Training Agency gave evidence to the Select Committee in December 1989 when he said that, nationally, 45 per cent. drop out before reaching the training agent and then there is a further drop out before reaching the training manager. So it seems that there is a drop-out rate of about 80 per cent. Of the 20 per cent. or so who enter training, 70 per cent. leave before completing their original action plan and 42 per cent. of those who complete their training do not get jobs at the end. The House might well conclude that the employment training programme is completely shambolic. No one can pretend that it matches up to Britain's training needs or that it matches the efforts of our competitors. So unattractive is the programme and such is the number of the drop outs, it does not even spend the money that has been allocated to it. There are continual underspends. There was an underspend this year, last year and the year before that.

The last time I spoke on employment training I said it was half a loaf; now I do not think it is even that. These cheapskate schemes fail the unemployed and betray the needs of the country. Rather than making these cuts, the Government should make the essential investment that is needed in training. If they do not, it will be for a new Government to do so.

8.30 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I have had a rather chequered evening. I had a meeting in the House with some of the officers of Hampshire county council at which one of the items that we discussed was, of course, the community charge. Hampshire county council is about to submit a budget for ratification of £770,510,000. That is an increase in one year of £140 million. In cash terms, it is 22 per cent. and in real terms 12 per cent. It would seem that local government expenditure is beginning to roar ahead. According to the people I have been talking to this evening, there seems to be no way of dampening it down. If these are the sort of figures that we will be confronted with, obviously the Government must examine some of the services for which local government has to pay.

I have said for some years that the police, the fire brigade and perhaps even education should be the responsibility of central Government. I am not sure that all local authorities are as ham-fisted as some, but nevertheless they do not seem to be able to keep a check on their expenditure. I am particularly concerned because only this evening the figure for Portsmouth was announced at £308. I have a nasty feeling that the Southampton community charge may be in that region. This was not the intent of the community charge; the purpose was to keep down local government expenditure. It does not seem in this first year to be able to do it. I am only saying this for the benefit of the Treasury Bench because it may be necessary in future to review some parts of local government expenditure and perhaps add a tranche to the community charge.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that there are in other parts of the country many people who think his constituency jolly lucky? My constituents in Derbyshire are facing community charges likely to be well over £400 and at least £100 more than neighbouring county councils with similar geography and social needs patterns.

Mr. Hill: I am sure that that is true. There is always someone who can leap-frog a little higher, but the position of my constituents is my first priority, and Derbyshire is not on the same plane.

One good happening of the last few months has been the abolition of the dock labour scheme. The Department of Transport says that over 40 per cent. of dock workers were made redundant. I point out to everyone, including the Transport and General Workers Union, that the cost to the Government of the abolition of the scheme was £90 million, and the cost to the port employers was some £60 million. Already there are signs of rejuvenation in the port of Southampton, which may even challenge Felixstowe. I congratulate not only the Department of Transport but the Treasury on making the money available.

Law and order is, naturally, the mainstay of Conservative policy. We are indeed the party of law and order. The Opposition would take a different view, but real spending—this may quieten some Opposition Members—on law and order will rise to £422 million in 1990-91. Spending to keep the bobby on the beat is said to have increased by 70 per cent. since 1978-79. As a result of these increases, for which we are all grateful, whether we are Socialist, Liberal or Conservative, there are 14,500 more police, and over 8,500 more civilians working in the police service, which naturally releases trained policemen for duty in the street. These figures are to be commended. Once in a while it would be nice if the Opposition were to compliment the Treasury team on making the money available.

We have heard a lot about housing. In fact, a long time ago I was chairman of the housing committee. It was always a battle to meet one's targets. There was always an

[Mr. Hill]

incredibly long waiting list. I remember Enoch Powell saying in a housing debate that he likened it to two stalls in the market selling tomatoes; on one stall they were 3p a pound and on the other they were 6p a pound. We do not need any imagination to know which stall will have the longest queue.

Under the Government, as a result of pressure from the Treasury, rents are becoming more realistic. Over the years they have helped owner-occupation. Whatever one says about Europe, we have the highest percentage—68 per cent.—of home owners in the whole of Europe. No one else can touch us. We have built 1·4 million public sector houses since 1979. This is a tremendous achievement.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My hon. Friend will also be aware that because of the changes in the local government legislation last year Labour-controlled councils have now got their housing account ring-fixed so no longer can they, through the use of the public purse, supported by rate support grants, subsidise housing tenants who should be paying a market rate, with all due respect to the Treasury and the rest of the ratepayers.

Mr. Hill: I should like now to speak about transportation. The great problem is that, no matter how much money we put up front, as the expression goes, we will always have the long delay caused by public consultation. This has happened in southern Hampshire. We have now got the M27 finished, but the M3 is still not finished.

I agree completely that in the development of a motorway adequate compensation must be offered to those who are threatened by plans for the motorway. This is an old Mussolini idea. The autostradas would not have been built had it not been for the fact that he provided for the most generous compensation. But unfortunately here we are only just beginning to get round to dealing with the problem of Socialism perhaps devaluing people's property that they had fought for and paid for and is then offered to them on a take-it or-leave it basis by the Inland Revenue valuation officer or, indeed, in conjunction with the valuation officer of the local council. I am extremely pleased that that item has been approved.

I am astounded at the amount that can be devoted to central Government expenditure. This must be a very prosperous country. The business man must be paying his taxes, and VAT must be an extremely good revenue provider. In 1992-93, £234 billion is to be spent in cash terms.

The Opposition, of course, want to return to power, and they imagine that once they have done so it will be easy enough to pull the levers one after another to achieve the desired results. They think that everything will run like clockwork. But, as they know, they have not the necessary expertise on their Front Bench, and they have not enough entrepreneurs at their disposal to show them the way when they go wrong. They denigrate the CBI and the Institute of Directors; they will clearly drive every entrepreneur out of the country and then say, "We cannot understand it: we have not the money to pay for all our grandiose schemes."

Once in a while Labour policy comes out, usually in remarks shouted across the Chamber. Earlier we heard that corporation tax would be reviewed—probably abolished altogether, indeed: after all, what does a promise matter when it does not have to be honoured until after the election? The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) nods. "Goulditis" has got everywhere. The symbolism of Labour policy is, "Do not ask us to explain the percentages or the ideas; just take it on faith, and we will show you after we get in."

I realise that many hon. Members wish to speak. I have found the debate very useful—it has enabled me to bring up my little constituency points—but I think that before long we shall have to take another look at the community charge and the arrangements with local government.

8.42 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Introducing the debate, the Chief Secretary was at pains to argue both that the Government were operating a policy of tight spending controls on public expenditure, and that public expenditure was increasing. He gave some examples of savings and spending in what he considered the most important areas, but used his figures selectively, presenting a contradictory image of public spending at once rising and falling.

Significantly, the Chief Secretary forgot, or rather neglected, to mention what the White Paper makes clear—that a massive £7 billion has been taken out of the housing budget in the past 10 years. Both public and private housing has suffered from the removal of grant, assistance from housing associations, improvement areas and so forth. Investment in Britain's entire housing fabric—not just council house building—has been undercut. There is no real reason for the Government's action apart from their blind opposition to council housing, illustrated in the Chief Secretary's response to an intervention from me.

Britain's housing has borne the brunt of the cuts, as the White Paper demonstrates. Between 1979 and 1989-90, it has been slashed by 67 per cent.—£7 billion. Nevertheless, the Chief Secretary had the nerve to refer to Government measures to tackle the scandalous increase in homelessness. The money that they are providing is a pittance compared with what they have taken out of the budget for building and improving housing which is desperately needed for homeless people.

Paragraph 11 of the chapter of the White Paper on the environment tells us that even the £250 million that the Government claim to be spending on emergency measures to tackle homelessness over the next two years includes the cash payments that will be used to bribe remaining tenants into owner-occupation. While paragraph 2 claims:

"The Government's overhall aim in its housing policy is that a decent home should be within reach of every family,"

the allocations in the housing budgets fall somewhat short of that.

The housing cut reveals the Janus-face of Conservative public expenditure philosophy: it faces both ways at the same time, immobilising development in provision. The Government are trying to cover up a lack of investment in housing and other forms of infrastructure, and the consequent poverty of development. That is the price that must be paid for the squandering of our oil revenue and public assets, the bulk of which ended up in the pockets of the wealthiest 5 per cent. in the form of Budget tax cuts.

It is plain to everyone but the Government that, ideologically blind as they are, they have based their policies on the crude antithetical view that private is good and public must be bad. They have attempted to deride

and undermine the public sector to such an extent that everyone is now paying the price of that dichotomy. I do not believe that opposing public provision is a new philosophy; I do not even believe that it is a great Conservative insight thought up in the past 10 years. In fact, it was tried in the United States.

I seem to remember the passing of the great Proposition 99 in California under Governor Reagan, who suggested that there should be no public fire service, but that everyone should arrange fire cover through private insurers. The public fire service was duly abolished. When two houses were burnt to the ground in Beverley Hills, the owners thought that they could easily replace them by claiming on their insurance. They were shocked to learn that the insurance companies would not pay out because there was no sufficient fire cover at the time. It was not long before California reinstituted its public fire service.

It seems stupid to embark on such circular processes —abolishing public provision, discovering that it is needed and reintroducing it. The way in which the private sector has been set against the public sector is a consequence of the Government's total commitment to—their blind faith in—the idea of a free-market economy. Despite the frequent use of the phrase, in practice markets are not really free. The Chief Secretary has often referred to the need for a level playing field, and Conservative Members demand fair trade. There are many other contradictions. Water is sold off at well below its market value, and British Aerospace is offered sweeteners. It is clear that the market does not operate freely; it is fixed, and there is intervention.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government are actually opposing the ideas of early Conservative Governments and local authorities? In the past, Conservative authorities created the water services for huge cities, built the parks and got the first housing schemes off the ground. If I were a Conservative, I would be rather proud of those early Conservative authorities.

The present Government, however, are a crowd of nutcases. They even turn against their own basic philosophy. I find that incredible until I look at the Government Front Bench and at the right hon. Lady who usually sits there. Then I am not so surprised; they are all mad.

Mr. Battle: I cannot comment on the state of mental health of Conservative Members. However, in my own city it was not Labour councils which built housing, took away back-to-back houses or instituted a common sewerage and drainage system. Those things were done because if there had remained only private provision for them the whole of the city would have been polluted. There was a need for public provision, and that was recognised and implemented. It seems that for the past 10 years the Government have decided that the market is all and that there should be no planning whatsoever. But the tide is turning. Conservative Members have learnt to recognise that there is a need for intervention to protect the environment.

I was once surprised to meet a small demonstration outside the House. A gentleman had a placard saying, "Justice in Berkshire". I asked him why he stood there with that placard, and he said, "Well, it's like this, there is a builder about to build." He owned a property, a house with a large garden, with poplars at the end of it, but the market said that the land at the end of his garden could be sold for a price. He said that he wanted the Government to give the local authority the power to stop the building to protect his view. It seems that all are coming round to the view that there should be intervention in planning. There is a move away from the market towards public planning co-ordination. The free-market model is being left behind as a theoretical myth, and it is universally being seen as such.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman's thesis is that there is no role for the public sector, as far as the Government are concerned. He will notice that at present 37¾ per cent. of gross domestic product is spent on public sector provision. That is a much larger percentage of GDP than the 43 per cent. spent by the last Labour Government in 1978-79. What we recognise, and what he fails to realise, is that many things have been done by the public sector in the past that can be done better by the private sector. However, the public sector still has a major role to play, hence the 37 per cent. of GDP, otherwise it would probably have been much lower.

Mr. Battle: I would be interested to find out the number of times that Conservative Members have used the word "public" as a derogatory term in the House. What is interesting and welcome is the shift towards the view that the public sector has a role. But most people's experience of housing, infrastructure, roads and hospitals shows them that there is still a desperate need for public investment in those facilities.

The reality of a policy that claims to idolise the free-market model has been high interest rates, high inflation, a huge trade deficit, the rundown of the manufacturing industrial base in constituencies such as mine, and millions of people in Britain paying the price for the Government's economic experiment.

The public expenditure White Paper reveals that the cost of mortgage interest to the Exchequer—never mind to those people who have to pay higher mortgages—has increased from £5·5 billion to £7 billion between 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Expenditure on the Export Credits Guarantee Department was £347 million and, as it says in the White Paper, in chapter 4, paragraph 106, it was due to

"the increase in short term sterling interest rates."

In other words, high interest rates and high inflation are the stark question marks over the failure of the free-market economic system. It is worth hon. Members remembering that Monday in October 1987, when the stock markets around the world lost a quarter of their value in less than 48 hours, and the foreign exchange rates became highly unstable. The effect of the recent rumour that President Gorbachev was to resign also underlines the volatility of the market and brings into question the validity of the expression the "efficient market hypothesis" according to which current prices reflect all publicly available information.

We are entitled to ask what has been Government policy in the face of the extreme volatility of the market. In 1981 the Government said that they were leaving the exchange rate to the free working of the markets. By early 1987 it was clear that the Treasury was responding to the weakness of the foreign exchange rates by altering domestic interest rates. In practice, domestic monetary

[Mr. Battle]

policy had been abandoned to external considerations, and the operation of an unannounced exchange rate target.

In 1988 there was yet another change of tack. Concern about overheating in the economy meant that interest rates were once again directed towards meeting domestic objectives. There is another glaring contradiction at the heart of Government economic policy—the long-running tension between the internal and external calls on monetary policy—which still remains to be resolved.

Today in *The Times* the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson)—the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—spells out:

"since I ceased being Chancellor no new measures have been taken."

That means that the stalemate that we discussed throughout the whole of last year still remains. I suspect that the current Chancellor is waiting with his head down for something to turn up, or for the dark clouds to blow over. The former Chancellor puts it in a nutshell when he says that in practice the Government have abandoned all their former policy objectives. He said:

"In politics, the unexpected always happens and you just have to see how events unfold."

The Government's economic policy is characterised by sitting out the market, and that is in line with their short-term investment strategies. That short-termism characterises the stock market and money markets. All we now get is short-term, day-to-day management and the abandonment of longer term objectives. In practice future investment is sold short.

The Government's policies are absolutely clear to those people who are paying the price in higher mortgage rates or who are forced into part-time, temporary, low-paid jobs. As the former Chancellor said in his article this morning:

"The capitalist system is seen as something rather grubby. If you say nobility is associated with low pay, then it is a very easy transition to say . . . that those who do what they are doing for the money are ignoble."

I suspect that it is usually the other way round. Those people on low pay are usually denigrated, marginalised and expected to survive, without proper protection or adequate supplementary benefits under this Government. Some 9 million people are in low-paid jobs. The wages councils have been abolished and the unemployed are forced to take jobs regardless of how low the wage is. The result is that in some sectors wage rates are falling, particularly in part-time, temporary work. And the guru ghosts of the new right, such as Professor Roger Scruton, are now advocating that the Government reintroduce the Victorian value of child labour. He wrote recently:

"Many a 14-year-old, set to work as a builder's apprentice, an electrician's mate or a stable hand will learn far more than he could ever at school . . . If the pay were sufficiently low—and children are willing to work for quite paltry sums—there would be no lack of employers ready to offer it."

It is significant that there was no reference in that article to the great Victorian campaigns against the exploitation of children or the appalling health and safety conditions in which people had to work. I wonder how many Government Members would consent to that and put their own children out to work in such circumstances.

The point lays bare the model of the free market as being intrinsically and inevitably exploitive. It generates, in practice, a two-tier economic model and on the lower tier people are low-paid, unprotected part-time workers.

Government economic policies as they now stand certainly seem to us to be theoretically threadbare. The Government seem to be drifting aimlessly and waiting without any clear sense of direction or comprehensive and consistent strategy. Even a former Member of the House, the Right Hon. Enoch Powell, referred to earlier, in an article in British Rail's InterCity journal, spelt out that it is the Government who have caused inflation, not credit cards or wages. And all the key objectives set by the Conservatives some 12 years ago remain unachieved.

In an article published in the *Salisbury Review* last September, entitled "One cheer for Mrs. Thatcher's economic achievement", E. J. Mishan writes:

"The Conservative Government's economic achievement is impressive enough when judged by its own declared priorities; somewhat less impressive when judged by reference to familiar economic criteria; least impressive when viewed in a broader social context which encompasses the quality of life."

I submit that the practical daily experience of millions in Britain under this Government's economic policies is that the real quality of their lives, private and public, has been eroded as a result of those policies. So, while the Chief Secretary invites us, as he did when moving the motion on this public expenditure White Paper, to support it, I urge the House not to give its approval. In the interest of those who experience Britain under these policies and feel that the quality of their lives has been eroded as a result, I urge hon. Members to vote against it.

9 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Although the immediate prospects of the United Kingdom economy are not, in my view, encouraging, I think that there is every reason to be optimistic about the prospects for Britain in the 1990s. There are three specific factors which I want to draw to the attention of the House and which I believe constitute substantial evidence to support my proposition.

The first—and it was referred to in an article in *The Independent* on 31 January headed "Workshop of the world again"—is the very good prospects indeed for British exports. It is pointed out that in the fourth quarter of last year exports were 23 per cent. up in value on the same period in 1988 and, Hamish McRae said:

"That is an absolutely astonishing performance".

He went on:

"The good news about exports is that it shows that, despite the fact that we have vacated large areas of the manufacture of internationally traded goods, we are still able to increase vastly what we sell abroad."

I believe that there is every reason to be optimistic about our export performance, and Hamish McRae suggested that, whereas the 1980s were the decade of oil and services, the 1990s will be a decade of manufacture.

The CBI has been much quoted, and I think it was probably the same copy of the *CBI News* as was quoted by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that contained an article by its director of economic affairs, Dr. Sentance, in which he said about exports:

"In 1988 and 1989 export growth averaged 7 per cent. a year—double the average growth from 1971-1987."

He went on:

"non-oil exports have been growing more rapidly than imports—in the three months to November, they were 14 per cent. up in volume terms on a year ago."

He added:

"With oil production recovering, as long as the world economy remains fairly buoyant, and continues to help export growth, there could be a very significant improvement in the current account deficit during 1990."

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): It is still substantial.

Mr. Tim Smith: The deficit is still a very substantial one; the right hon. and learned Gentleman is absolutely right. But I believe that we now have the right conditions for a substantial improvement. This is the difficult part; the easy part, in a sense, is damping down imports. The difficult part has always been improving Britain's export performance. I believe that we are now seeing a major improvement in Britain's export performance.

The second factor—and this addresses one of the points made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)—is the way in which the quality of investment has improved during the 1980s. One of the reasons, perhaps the main reason, for this is that such a high proportion is now investment made by the private sector. Indeed, in an article in *The Times*, Tim Congdon estimated that in a couple of years' time private sector investment would account for 90 per cent. of total investment in the United Kingdom; so we can say once again that we are a genuinely capitalist economy. I am sure that Opposition Members think that we are concerned about that because of some blind ideological reason, but there is a much better reason: private sector investment is much more likely to be well directed. We have only to look at eastern Europe and the recent history of European economies to see the truth of that observation. The state is not very good at making investments, and much investment has been wasted in eastern European economies. Under the last Labour Government the National Enterprise Board demonstrated that private sector investment is of much better quality. That bodes well for the 1990s.

The third factor that has been much discussed in today's debate is public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product. Again, there is a good reason why it is important to reduce that. At least some Labour Members seem incapable of taking that on board, but it is possible to increase public spending in real terms and at the same time to reduce it as a proportion of GDP. That is exactly what has happened in the past 10 years and the figures speak for themselves.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman referred to the National Enterprise Board under the last Labour Government. Is he not aware that the real problem was that the National Enterprise Board constantly had to save capitalist private enterprise firms from collapsing? That was not its original role. We had to save British Leyland and many other private enterprise companies from collapsing. Rolls-Royce was brought under public ownership by a Conservative Government. That was not the role envisaged for the National Enterprise Board. Some of us were critical of the fact that it was not carrying out its proper role. It should have been creating new public enterprise companies to compete in the market. The hon. Gentleman should realise that we had collapse after collapse. Shipbuilding and many other industries would have collapsed totally if public enterprise had not stepped in and taken them over.

Mr. Smith: That illustrates my point very well. The National Enterprise Board devoted a great deal of time to saving companies, many of which almost certainly should not have been saved because the investment would have been better directed to new enterprises. It is not the job of the state to pick winners. Private investors make better investment decisions and produce a better-quality investment. The hon. Gentleman has proved my point beyond any doubt.

We have had much discussion about what the next Labour Government will do about public spending. One way of assessing what the next Labour Government will do is to look at the performance of the last Labour Government. In their first year of office the last Labour Government increased public spending from £150 billion to £169 billion, and in the next five years they gradually cut it back so that at the end of that period the figure was £164 billion. That was the performance of the last Labour Government; a huge increase in the first year followed by a series of cuts in every successive year. That is exactly what will happen next year if we have the misfortune to have a Labour Government. We shall have a huge unsustainable increase in public spending in the first year and after that we shall have the IMF at our door exactly as we did last time.

It is important to reduce public spending as a proportion of GDP because if we leave a larger proportion of resources for the private sector to invest that will produce a better rate of economic growth. There was a very good article in *The Spectator* the other day, headed,

"We're doing better than Europe"

by Tim Congdon in which he shows how the reduction of Government spending is placing Britain in "a virtuous circle" of prosperity. He turned the argument about a twin-track Europe on its head. He concluded that as a result of the Government's achievement in reducing public spending as a proportion of GDP,

"if Mrs. Thatcher's policies continue, the 1990s will see a two-speed Europe. A lowly taxed, lightly regulated and debt-free Britain will outpace the highly taxed, heavily regulated and debt-burdened nations of the inner core."

I think that he is right. For those three reasons, the economic prospects of the United Kingdom economy are good.

The acid test of that is not what I say but what investors do. Overseas investors are moving into this country at a rate that we have not experienced for many years. They are putting their money where their mouth is. I am talking about not only the Japanese but the Americans and Germans.

We can have endless debates on how much we should spend. Spending money is easy, and Labour Governments have been good at it, but the difficulty is creating the wealth in the first place, and Conservative Governments are very good at that.

9.9 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In what I promise will be a brief intervention, I wish to make a somewhat unfashionable plea for the continuation of certain financial subsidies to two maritime industries—shipbuilding and fishing.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

What is the Government's position on the continuation of the European Community shipbuilding intervention fund? We are reaching the end of the period of the sixth directive, and I should like to know where the Government stand on the continuation of that important subsidy.

The aim of the shipbuilding intervention fund is to narrow the gap between the price that a European Community shipyard can offer a would-be customer and the cost of a ship built in south-east Asia.

If we are to retain our shipbuilding industry, it is essential that the European Community retains the shipbuilding intervention fund. The next directive should increase the subsidy. The industry will require that essential form of assistance if we are to retain anything of what was once, especially in the north-east of England and Scotland, a magnificent industry. All that is left is a remnant of it, but it is still an important employer of highly skilled labour in areas of the United Kingdom that have high unemployment.

My constituency is a classic example of that. Unemployment in Greenock and Port Glasgow is twice the national average, yet it would reduce substantially if the Government allowed Scott Lithgow designated status vis-a-vis the intervention fund. I hope that I receive an answer to that from the Minister.

Parts of the catching sector of the United Kingdom fishing industry are in a terrible state. I am seeking from the Government and the European Community a maritime counterpart of the agricultural set-aside scheme. Paragraph 67 of Cm. Paper 1003 shows that the set-aside scheme will cost £22 million in 1990-91, £33 million in 1991-92 and £44 million in the following financial year, making a total of about £99 million. The Government—and I asked the Chief Secretary to the Treasury a question about this earlier—should be introducing a decommissioning scheme, which would allow our fleet to be restructured fairly and humanely.

Paragraph 80 on page 23 of Cm. 1003 entitled "Structure of the fishing fleet" is misleading in what it says about the European Community's instruction to reduce the size of the fleet. In reality, the United Kingdom registered fleet will have to be reduced by about 23 per cent. between now and the end of 1991. I estimate that that reduction, as a result of the European Community's multiple annual guidance programme, will involve the loss to the fleet of between 500 and 800 vessels. What is to happen to those vessels, their owners and crews?

Many of the vessels in Scotland are owned on a share basis, under which the fishermen who crew them are not simply company employees; they are parts of small businesses. If the EEC and the Government can, rightly, assist farmers, particularly the more disadvantaged farmers, why can they not assist fishermen? Many middle-aged fishermen would happily tie up their elderly vessels and come ashore for good if there was in existence a decent decommissioning scheme of the kind introduced some years ago by the Danish Government.

The need to introduce such a scheme for our fishermen has been dodged by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and ducked by the Scottish Office. It is nothing short of a scandal. Because of the savage reductions in quotas, particularly of North sea haddock—quotas are necessary if we are to conserve the stocks of valuable fish—many of our fishermen will be ruined.

I know of one fisherman whose vessel has been taken over by the Sea Fish Authority, as a result of which he and his family have had to leave the home in the north-east of Scotland in which they have lived for many years. Had a reasonable decommissioning scheme been in operation, he might have retained his home.

The calamitous situation facing fishermen in the north-east of Scotland applies equally to fishermen in the south-west and north-east of England and elsewhere. I hope that there will be discussions between Treasury Ministers and their counterparts at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office with the aim of introducing a decommissioning scheme that is as fair-minded as some of the schemes of compensation offered to hill and other farmers in less-favoured areas.

Such a scheme would assist fishermen and vessels, for not only are there elderly vessels but some of our fishermen are reaching an age when they are too old to be fishing in bad weather. Fishing is a young man's occupation. Many fishermen would happily come ashore if they received financial assistance from Brussels and the Government. The British Government owe it to our fishermen to introduce such a scheme in the near future.

9.19 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I wish to speak to appendix F of Cm. 1021 and draw the attention of the House to the reliefs and allowances against the six main Inland Revenue taxes. Those six taxes raise a total of £76·3 billion against which there are no fewer than 88 reliefs and allowances, which cost the Revenue £80·3 billion. I instance particularly capital gains tax, where the yield is £2·1 billion but the reliefs against it are no less than £7·8 billion.

What conclusions are we to draw? Apart from the conclusion that we still have too many taxes, that those taxes are too complicated and that too many of the nation's best brains are engaged on tax matters at a time when industry is crying out for professional people in accountancy and legal services, not to mention the problems the Revenue itself has in recruitment, my real concern is about the complicated network of reliefs through which the Government effectively bribe taxpayers with their own money—because taxpayers' money is effectively the only money that the Government have—to do the politicians' bidding. There is nothing new in that; it has been going on for centuries. The question is whether that is consistent with consumer choice and the free market economy of Tory philosophy.

If politicians decree that there will be mortgage interest relief, which costs £7 billion, and that there will be exemption from capital gains tax for those investing in property, which costs £7 billion, we must not be surprised at the result. Money will inevitably be sucked out of savings into bricks and mortar. The proof of that is in the eating. We see inflated property values and a massive increase in personal borrowing.

Money spent is indisputably more inflationary than money saved. There is a widely held view that savings are too low. In fact, they are at a record low level. My real fear is that we will not resist the temptation on 20 March to

introduce yet another relief for savers. That would be wrong on every count. It would deal with the effect, not with the cause. It would further complicate the tax system and repeat many of the mistakes of the past. The answer for the future must surely be not more reliefs but fewer reliefs on fewer and lower taxes to bring about a position where to buy a house, to invest in stocks and shares, to purchase a pension or simply to put one's earnings into old-fashioned savings is an equal bet.

No one can doubt the beneficial effect of savings upon any economy and particularly upon inflation. To my right hon. Friend the Chancellor I simply say, now is the time for courage. We must not abandon the winning formula. My right hon. Friend should continue the drive for fewer, lower and less complicated taxes, particularly for those on lower incomes. Above all, he should encourage individual citizens to back their own judgment by progressively dismantling the multiplicity of reliefs and allowances that distort individual choice.

9.23 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on his critique of the Government's private medical insurance tax relief. I am sure that when he had an opportunity he at least contemplated voting against the Government.

The debate has been good. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer opened the debate on the Autumn Statement, he said:

"This is probably the last occasion that the House will have to debate the economy before the Budget, which I can now inform the House will be on Tuesday 20 March."

As Treasury forecasts go, his remarks were at least broadly in line with other Treasury forecasts. I am sure that he did not intend to tell the House that the details of the Government's expenditure plans had no bearing on the management of the rest of the economy, but that was the impression that he gave. Clearly he did not mean to say that because he went on to say:

"Proper control of public spending—tight control—remains central to the Government's economic strategy."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 749.]

In winding up the debate, the Chief Secretary made a similar point. He said:

"It is because our finances are in order that we have been able to do three things simultaneously"—[Hon. Members: "Oh!"]—

comma—

"control spending, reduce taxes, and give much needed funds to priority sectors."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 831-32.]

This debate is an opportunity to test whether the Government have controlled spending, reduced taxes and given much-needed funds to priority sectors. When the Chief Secretary says that he will give much-needed funds to priority sectors, it is an implicit criticism of the previous Chief Secretary, who deprived those priority sectors of the funds that the present Chief Secretary says are "much needed".

Let us examine the Government's claim to have reduced taxation as a total share of gross domestic product. As the Opposition have often said, the tax burden —direct and indirect—has risen from 34·25 per cent. in 1978-79 to 37·5 per cent. in 1989-90. Perhaps the Chief Secretary was referring to direct taxation alone, but, if so, it is still the case that, under the present Government, a family—with two children—earning 50 per cent. of the average national income is paying more tax and national insurance now than it did in 1978-79. It must now be evident that the Conservative party's tax cutting has been highly selective. It has been designed to restore or redistribute wealth to where the Conservatives believe that it belongs—with the wealthy.

The Conservative Government are not truthfully committed to an anti-poverty strategy. They are supported by people who believe that it is an anti-poverty strategy to round up their poorer constituents and take them to Scotland's poll tax warrant sales to look for bargains. The Government do not realise just how unacceptable the social divisiveness of their tax and public expenditure policies are to most decent people.

The personal conduct of one or two former members of the Government does not help very much. Matters are not made easier for an ambulance worker whose annual pay rise is being resisted by the Government when he realises that the amount that he is claiming for the entire year is the equivalent of the wages of the previous Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer for three and a half hours. Such a situation does not make for social unity. I accept, of course, that I may be understating the position as I have allowed the former Chancellor only half an hour for lunch.

The Government's second claim is that they are giving much-needed assistance to priority areas. The Government claimed as priorities the Health Service and transport, and homelessness and museums were also mentioned. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), in an excellent speech, made it absolutely clear that the total sum that may be available for patient care is only £500 million, in spite of all the Government's claims to be giving substantially more money, and she set out why that was the case. It is possible to say that that meets the description of providing extra resources, but one can hardly say that it is targeting much-needed resources to priority areas. Surely the public's grievance about the funding of the NHS is that patient care is not being funded adequately—not that reviews are not being funded adequately.

The same is true of transport, another target of much-needed resources. The Government funding for British Rail—one assumes that that is still part of the transport infrastructure—is being cut by £22 million next year and by £124 million by 1992-93. Much-needed resources will have to come from asset sales, borrowing or fare increases.

In 1986, Britain invested 0·09 per cent. of our GDP in the national railway infrastructure, compared to Germany's 0·36 per cent. No doubt the Government will claim, as they did in the previous debate on the economy, that the Germans envy that. If the Germans could cut investment in their railways to the level that the British Conservative party has done, no doubt they would feel happier than they do now.

Our roads are so congested that the Confederation of British Industry estimates that in the south-east alone the cost to British industry is some £15 billion per year. Every class of road in Britain is in a worse state now than it was 10 years ago.

I pay tribute to the Public Accounts Committee, even if the Chief Secretary found it difficult to do so, and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). My right hon. Friend pointed out that the long-term cost to the Exchequer of the way in which the Department of Transport has handled the split between

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

road maintenance and new roads is considerable. The contribution that the PAC has made to the debate is considerable. I, at least, pay tribute to it.

Some cynics say that the road network was bound to be given extra resources because it was in such a dire condition. Other cynics say that the reason why it was given extra resources was that the previous Chief Secretary to the Treasury thought that he might be moved to the Department of Transport. When he found out that that was not the case, it was too late to claw the money back. I do not accept that. I have known that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer was destined for greater things ever since we served together in the Committee stage of the Rates Bill in 1984. As Government Whip he sought to curtail the length of my speeches with offers of bars of chocolate. That gritty pragmatism, in his own surfing metaphor, led him to ride the waves, peaks and troughs of economic decision-making. The only problem with that image is that there is no such colour for the Chancellor's shorts as dayglo grey.

I have discussed the Government's priorities. It is only right to consider what is not a priority. Education is not a priority. An editorial in *The Independent* said on the topic of public expenditure plans for education:

"In real terms, that means cutting expenditure on education for the next three years. That is incredible. The Government's attitude to education seems dictated by atavistic prejudices of the business culture—prejudices which have directly contributed to the country's long-term economic performance. There is a contempt for teachers, seen as an unproductive class of persons, corrupted by socialism."

That is *The Independent's* view of the Government's approach.

I know that the Conservatives take education seriously. That is why they have their children educated at private schools. For the Government to allow expenditure on education, as a percentage of GDP, to fall from 5·5 per cent. in 1987-89 to 4·8 per cent. in 1988-89 is a national outrage, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said. It serves only to accentuate the already widening economic and social divisions in our country.

The same is true of higher education. It takes a peculiar form of narrow sectarian meanness and utter incompetence to devise a scheme for student loans that will cost the Treasury more money this year than paying out the grant increases. The Government's student loans scheme does not make any sort of financial sense until the next century, if at all. The only thing that it will achieve is to dissuade working class youngsters from going into higher education.

If that was the only example of the Government's lack of control over sensible public spending, one would let it go as an aberration. But it is not an aberration. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South referred to the total cost of advertising, underwriting and debt write-offs associated with the privatisation programme and to the £1·5 billion bill for installing National Health Service computers. That money was spent, not on improving patient care, but on tracing various mathematical calculations through the NHS.

The deadweight cost of introducing the poll tax is £443 million, with recurring costs of £235 million. In anybody's language, that is just a waste of money. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne will be aware of the scandal surrounding the sale of the royal ordnance factories and the subsequent sale of the Rover group, which cost the taxpayer about £100 million. We await the eventual report on that. Even more outrageously, the undervaluing of assets in privatisation sales is accompanied by about £16 billion of debt write-offs.

A fortnight ago we debated the Government's plans for tax relief on private medical insurance schemes for pensioners. About 90 per cent. of the £40 million that the scheme is supposed to cost is deadweight costs. In other words, that is money that the taxpayer is giving to people who already have such schemes and who do not need persuading into them.

When we challenge the Government on their management of the economy, they come back to us with two things. First, we get cod versions of Labour history from people who think that "The Ragged Trousered Philatelist" is about an impoverished stamp collector. Secondly, we have new and imaginative facts from the Chief Secretary. My hon. Friends know the sort of thing—that we have a trade surplus with the Cook islands and more telephones per household than Algeria. The Chief Secretary's most recent list includes boasting about a 40 per cent. increase in business investment in the past three years. If the same fact is put the other way round, it means that business investment as a share of national output is at an all-time high. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) pointed out, that presentation of the Government's case looks a bit grim in view of what is said in *CBI News* and the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* which have set out a more pessimistic view of the future.

Company profitability and VAT registrations are all relevant facts in their own way, but if one is boasting about one's skill in managing the economy, I should have thought that one would stoop to mention things like the balance of payments, inflation or interest rates. When Sir Winston Churchill said,

"Never . . . was so much owed by so many to so few",

he was not talking about mortgage interest repayments, although if he were serving on the Government's Front Bench now he could have been.

The previous Chancellor wanted inflation to be his judge and jury. Two things can be said in defence of the previous Chancellor—and because the Chief Secretary did not come to the aid of his former boss, I shall. The first thing is that, although he may well have said that inflation would be his judge and jury, he never said he would hang around for the sentencing. The second thing that can be said in his defence is that with interest rates being so high and with inflation not yet under control, it is only right that a Chancellor who always commended prudence should make sensible provision for himself in an uncertain world. What can be wrong with that? Understandably, his successor has told the House:

"There should be no doubt in anyone's mind. We will bring the economy back on track, as a preparation for prosperity in a decade of promise."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 758.]

What happened to the last decade? What does the Chancellor mean by "back on track"? Back on track from where?

In keeping with his stealthy devaluation, the new Chancellor replaces the bombastic complacency of his predecessor with a quiet, dull grey, low cunning that is all his own and, although it is bad news for Britain—

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): It is a compliment to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Brown: Yes, it is a compliment. Let there be no misunderstanding about it. I am very fond of the Chancellor. However, although it is bad news for Britain, I predict that as we enter the Chancellor's "decade of promise", low cunning and shabby pragmatism will be characteristic of the Government's approach in the early years of that decade in the run-up to the next general election.

9.39 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on the knighthood that he was awarded on the Order Paper at the beginning of this week. The speech that he gave today shows that that was clearly well merited because it surpassed in its wit even the speeches of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Unfortunately, he has also learnt from the right hon. and learned Gentleman how to make a speech that is entirely devoid of substantive content. I congratulate the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Becket) on her first outing—like me—as a Front Bencher speaking in a public expenditure White Paper debate. Her speech was admirable, particularly in its content. It was meaty and I intend to get my teeth into it later.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will want to join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on his success in the public expenditure round, which culminated in the White Paper. By chance I stumbled across the Lamont clan motto which, I discovered, translates, "Neither spurn nor spare". The Chief Secretary has certainly neither spurned the chance to spend more on priority services nor spared waste, inefficiency and bids that exceed the country's ability to pay.

The speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South suggested that, as shadow Chief Secretary, she has adopted as her motto, "Neither cost nor control". She gave no hint of having costed her colleagues' proposals, let alone having brought them under control.

The White Paper represents an achievement in three respects. First, public spending as a proportion of gross domestic product is back at the lowest level it has been since the mid-1960s and is one of the lowest in Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said in a powerful speech, that gives us a great competitive advantage as we enter the Europe of the single market.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend has kept spending, as a percentage of GDP, within the plans laid down by his predecessor last year. Thirdly, despite that, he has been able to increase resources allocated to priority sectors. There is now nearly £3 billion more for the NHS, one of the biggest increases ever. There is an extra £1·8 billion for transport over the next two years. Capital investment by central Government and public corporations is set to rise by 7·5 per cent. in real terms.

Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), are genuinely baffled by how we repeatedly succeed in finding more money for priority areas, while still keeping within our overall planning targets. The answer is straightforward enough. First, we have a growing economy. Secondly—linked with that—we have falling unemployment and declining losses in the remaining nationalised industries. Thirdly, we have sound public finances resulting in the repayment of debt.

The repayment of the surplus this year, last year and the year before accounts for a reduction in the interest burden of about £3 billion a year for ever. The extra £3 billion that we have been able to make available to the NHS can be said to come from that source. Certainly it would not have been available to a Labour Chancellor because Labour is in the business of piling up debt, not unloading it.

The great majority of Opposition speakers mentioned transport and the infrastructure. However, there is a sharp contrast between the rhetoric that we heard today from the Opposition and the actions of the Labour party when it was in government. I looked up what the last Labour Government public expenditure White Paper had to say on the subject. We all know that in the previous years they had cut public expenditure on transport by 40 per cent., but were they then planning for the ever-expanding needs that hon. Members now take for granted? The White Paper is succinct. It says:

"A broadly constant level of expenditure, below that of earlier years, is planned for roads and transport."

It is equally bleak for the infrastructure as a whole. It says:

"The share of capital expenditure in public expenditure as a whole is now lower than in the early 1970s . . . The amount of investment needed in roads and water is now less than in the early 1970s."

It is a different tune now. By contrast, this Government have reversed the cuts that the Labour Government introduced and are planning a massive but balanced increase in spending on transport over the next three years. On national roads, in England alone, we shall be spending £5·7 billion, in addition to territorial budgets. On rail and other forms of mass transport we are planning to spend no less than £5·9 billion.

The other subject that came up repeatedly in the speeches of the Opposition Members, as one would expect, was the National Health Service. A year ago the Leader of the Opposition declared that the National Health Service needed another £1 billion a year to solve its problems. My right hon. Friend the then Chief Secretary managed to secure about £2 billion in extra resources, so this year the Leader of the Opposition declared that the service needed £3 billion more than was planned. Once again he has been capped, and the additional funding for the pay review awards, plus the £2·5 billion already announced, means that the National Health Service will have nearly £3 billion of extra resources in 1990-91. If the Leader of the Opposition declares yet again that a larger sum is needed, he will make himself even more foolish than usual, but it is a racing certainty that he will.

Those huge increases have posed the Opposition a serious problem: how can they describe as cuts increases that match their most extreme demands? But they have risen to the occasion, and they now argue that the increase, if one excludes all its components, is not an increase at all. The hon. Member for Derby, South was at it today. She dismissed what is called the extra inflation in NHS costs. But that is largely the result of pay awards rising faster than prices. It is true that Labour did not succeed in getting nurses' pay to rise faster than prices, but there is no reason why Labour should dismiss the achievement when we secure it. The hon. Lady dismissed expenditure on the Health Service review. I am advised by my hon. Friends that on this subject the hon. Lady has little to offer. The fact is that expenditure on the Health Service review is

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

financing 100 extra consultant posts. Do the Opposition not want those posts? It is financing an improved medical audit. Are the Opposition uninterested in the quality of health care?

Mrs. Beckett: I hope that the Minister will try to be accurate. It is not 100 posts this year. The money to which I referred is the money for this year. This year only one third of those posts—30 to 35—will be provided.

Mr. Lilley: And this year only a fraction of the money will be going on that.

The hon. Lady talked about the spending attributable to what she dismissively called demographic factors. Nothing could be more spurious. "Demographic factors", in commonsense language, means people living longer, fitter lives. That is happening partly because of the very expenditure that we have committed to the Health Service. People live longer because they receive medical care, not vice versa. The hon. Lady tried to pretend that there had not been an increase and that the statistics could be dismissed. She at least ought to know better because in her own city we have seen completed in recent years at the Derby city hospital an obstetric, gynaecology and maternity unit costing £18·3 million. Secondly, Derbyshire royal infirmary stage 2 cost £12 million. Thirdly, Ilkeston community hospital cost £6·3 million. What gratitude from the hon. Lady.

We have heard a great deal about the Opposition's concern about training. I welcome the agreement that is beginning to emerge about the antiquity of the training problem and the importance of training for our future.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): If the future is so rosy, and if everything is so good, why did the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) quit?

Mr. Lilley: I knew that I should not have given way to an hon. Member who had not even had the courtesy to attend the debate. Now he makes a point that is wholly irrelevant to it.

It is increasingly accepted that, on training, this country has suffered, not just for years, not just for decades, but probably for a century, from three problems. There has been too little vocational training for school leavers who do not go on to higher education, too few of them entering higher education and too few of those who enter higher education qualifying in science or engineering.

What the Opposition do not like is that the Government have a track record of addressing those problems with vigour and increasing success. By contrast, when Opposition Members were in power they failed to do anything. Since they have been in opposition, they have denigrated and opposed every step taken and they have backed the unions when they have tried to prevent us from introducing constructive proposals for education and training.

The hon. Member for Derby, South was a junior Minister, although she probably prefers to forget it, in the Department of Education and Science in the previous Labour Government.

Mr. John Smith: That is insulting.

Mr. Lilley: I am in no way insulting the hon. Lady, only casting aspersions on the record of the previous Labour Government of which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the hon. Lady were members. She may be able to confirm that the Labour Government considered a proposal to deal with the lack of vocational training for school leavers similar to the youth training scheme, and turned it down because their priorities were the ideological ones of forcing through the rest of the comprehensivisation programme, in no way improving training for our school leavers. I note that she does not deny that. She cannot, because Labour did nothing to solve that problem. But we have done so. We have achieved a vast increase in the proportion of people going into higher education and we have increased the proportion who achieve qualifications in science and engineering. The proportion of British graduates in science and engineering combined exceeds that of all other major countries, not excluding Japan.

In one sense, this has not been a proper debate, although we have had some admirable contributions.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I confess. Take me to the Tower.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has not been a very good day for the House of Commons. If we could have fewer comments of that kind from Front-Bench Members, it would be helpful.

Mr. Lilley: It has not been a good debate because real debate requires an alternative, and the Labour party has failed to give us an alternative to our public expenditure White Paper. It has refused to respond to two questions posed by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary: how much would the Labour programme cost and how much——

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way briefly.

Dr. Godman: The Minister will recall that the Chief Secretary promised to answer my question on negotiations with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the funding of the decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Lilley: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman giving him the answer to the detailed point that he put.

Members of the Opposition Front Bench will be grateful for that intervention. They have once again failed to respond to the two questions: how much would Labour's programme cost and how much extra tax would it require? Labour Front-Bench Members are in a peculiarly embarrassing position. Their initial aim after the election was to steer clear of any spending commitments if possible, but they have failed. The rest of the party forced them to take on board a welter of commitments when they agreed the policy review. Recently I wasted a shining hour or two reading it and encountered no fewer than 170 potential spending pledges, and that is only a start.

Despite the best efforts of the hon. Member for Derby, South in her role as shadow Chief Secretary, each new party document that issues from the Opposition Front Bench contains more promises. Even in this debate we have had plenty more calls from every Opposition Member, Front Bencher or Back Bencher, for more expenditure on everything: training, education, research and development, science, health, and so on. The hon. Lady herself gave every impression, unless my ears

deceived me, of demanding more spending on health, training, research and development, investment and transport.

I could not help thinking how bizarre the public spending round would be if ever the hon. Lady were to become Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It would be a case of her going round to the spending Departments' Ministers and knocking on the door demanding that they spend a little more money but I happily give way to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure that "happily" is quite the right word. The hon. Gentleman has been too clever by half. If he looks at the commitments that I said the Government should not have cut, and at the choices that the Government should not have made in spending terms, he will find that they balance almost exactly.

Mr. Lilley: That is absolute nonsense. The only number of any size that the hon. Lady specified was the alleged costs which she asserted had resulted from the privatisation programme. Without the privatisation programme, the Labour party would be deprived of revenues far in excess of any costs she referred to and it would have a black hole that it would be incapable of filling.

During the debate the hon. Lady, in response to excellent questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield, dropped a bombshell. She declared that not only would those promises not be costed before the election, but they would not neceessarily be implemented afterwards. She revealed a core manifesto. It consists of just two pledges: higher pensions and better benefits for families with children. Everything else—every other item—would depend on circumstances, happenstances and maybes.

I do not want to misrepresent the hon. Lady, but will she confirm that there is no firm Opposition commitment to spend on any other items apart from those two? Is there no firm commitment for extra spending on health, no firm commitment for extra spending on training, no firm commitment for extra spending on transport, and no firm commitment for extra spending on infrastructure? I look at the worried faces among Opposition Back-Bench Members and I realise that the pledges that they forced the party to accept, to "Meet the challenge, make the change", have now been disowned.

Now I know what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East meant when he told *The Times* that there might be room only for what he calls "symbolic commitments". Labour's calls for more spending on health are, after all, purely symbolic and if ever a Labour Government were elected, patients could look forward to being treated in symbolic hospitals, we should be defended by symbolic tanks, and the ambulance men could, no doubt, look forward to a symbolic pay rise from the Labour Government. I shall happily give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman if he wishes to disown his remarks. He does not.

The other extraodinary remark made by the hon. Lady was that not one of Labour's pledges and promises would be costed until after the next general election. That is extraordinary, not only in terms of democracy and common sense; it flatly contradicts the commitment of her own leader, and it was a commitment not lightly given. In the preface to Labour's document, on page 8 the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) wrote:

> "At the time of the next General Election, we will set out the accurate costs of our manifesto proposals in the light of the economic situation we are likely to inherit and the priorities which we consider most urgent."

That promise has now been rendered purely symbolic, I gather. There is to be no costing exercise, no attempt to explain to the people the issues on which they will be voting. The fact is that we shall not let the Opposition get away with it, and it is not only us, but some Back-Bench Opposition Members who will not let them get away with it. I remember the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) saying:

> "You can be miles ahead in the polls, but when you get to the last three weeks people think, 'Could I afford a Labour Government?'"

He added:

> "If you can't tell people where the money is coming from, they won't vote for you".

Absolutely.

At the heart of the debate lies the question: does control of public expenditure matter? Conservative Members believe that it is crucial. Opposition Members appear to be willing to accede to any remotely plausible demands for more money. We have seen where that leads. We saw where it led in 1976, when the brokers' men from the IMF were called in.

There is a positive face to public expenditure controls: they make for a more dynamic economy. Ultimately it is everyone's right to spend his own money as he wishes, but the Opposition would take away that right. They have seen Socialism destroyed, but they are not prepared to admit it as they face the electorate in the next general election.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 274.

Division No. 73] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Cartwright, John
Allen, Graham	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Alton, David	Clay, Bob
Anderson, Donald	Clelland, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cohen, Harry
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Coleman, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Ashton, Joe	Corbett, Robin
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Cousins, Jim
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Crowther, Stan
Barron, Kevin	Cryer, Bob
Battle, John	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Beckett, Margaret	Cunningham, Dr John
Bell, Stuart	Dalyell, Tam
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Darling, Alistair
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Blair, Tony	Dewar, Donald
Blunkett, David	Dixon, Don
Boateng, Paul	Dobson, Frank
Boyes, Roland	Doran, Frank
Bradley, Keith	Douglas, Dick
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Duffy, A. E. P.
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Buchan, Norman	Eadie, Alexander
Buckley, George J.	Eastham, Ken
Caborn, Richard	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Callaghan, Jim	Fatchett, Derek
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Fearn, Ronald
Canavan, Dennis	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*

Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Mont'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stam'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hall'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil

MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew (E Berkshire)
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon Chris (Bath)
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim (Dorset W)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Andy (Sherwood)
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian (Herts N)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans for 1990-91 to 1992-93 (Cm. 1001-1009, 1011-1018, and 1021).

Prison Officer's Quarters (Ashford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a serious domestic problem facing one of my constituents which has been caused by the prison department, and to urge the Home Office to do something about it. For reasons that will become obvious, I do not propose to name my constituent tonight, although I have written to the Minister giving him her name and address.

In a nutshell, the problem I am inviting the Minister to solve is as follows. Contrary to the rules, the prison department allocated a second quarter to the husband of my constituent after he walked out on her and his two children. That amounted to helping a husband and father ignore his responsibilities. Now, two years later, the Home Office is seeking to rectify its error by putting my constituent and her children out on the street as there is no way that they can find alternative accommodation. That nasty little case of prison department incompetence and Home Office dither has caused great anguish to my constituent.

Let me set out the facts of the case. My constituent has been married to a prison officer for nearly 22 years. She has lived in prison department quarters for 21 of those years and she has lived at her present address for nearly 11 years. Her children were born in 1968 and 1970 and both still live with her. In autumn 1987 the prison department offered the house for sale at a discount under the fresh start scheme to my constituent and her husband because that house was surplus to requirements. In February 1988, the husband left home to live with another woman. Subsequently his plans fell through and he ended up in digs. In June 1988 the prison department allocated him another quarter. Thirteen months of silence followed. In June 1989, my constituent discovered that the Home Office was beginning to ask questions. In July 1989 my constituent asked the Home Office what was going on and in the same month she received her first contact from the prison department. On 11 August 1989 she received a notice to quit. That notice expired on 12 September 1989, since when there has been another silence, this time for five months.

Four issues arise out of that catalogue of facts. First, the prison department has broken its own rules by allocating a second quarter. Secondly, the prison department has actively helped a husband and father walk away from his responsibilities. Thirdly, the prison department and the Home Office have responded to my constituent's and my inquiries and correspondence with protracted delay and dither. Fourthly, contrary to natural justice, the Home Office is seeking to make my constituent and her two children put right its mistakes and those of her husband.

I do not need to say much about the first issue—breaking prison department rules—because the Government themselves are on record as admitting that the rules have been broken. A letter to me from the then Under-Secretary of State dated 22 August 1989 stated:

> "On the point you have raised about the allocation of a second prison quarter, I can confirm that this is contrary to Departmental policy. Since this allocation was made, very specific guidance has been issued to all governors and a similar situation should not occur in future."

[Mr. David Wilshire]

In plain English that means, "We were wrong. It will not happen again.". That is fine for the future, but it is not much comfort for my constituent.

The second issue concerns the role of the prison department and the Home Office in helping a husband and father walk away from his responsibilities. One letter from a Minister suggested that I was claiming that the Home Office had contributed to the breakdown of a marriage. Let me make it absolutely clear that I am making no such claims, but the prison department helped the husband to ignore his responsibilities. The husband left home for another woman. It did not work out. He could have gone back to his original home after making proper arrangements for his family. Instead, he persuaded the prison department to give him a second home. One accepts that he paid both rents, but his words make his motives absolutely clear. In a note to my constituent dated 21 July 1989, he says:

"I have checked again with the Prison Officers Association. After you receive your Notice to Quit you should not move. The Department then applies for a Possession Order and a time limit is set—even after this there is an appeal procedure. The whole process can take up to several months. They have never evicted anybody yet and Spelthorne Council have always eventually co-operated."

Again, in plain English, he is saying "I am OK; let the Home Office do my dirty work, and let the council pick up the pieces." Being party to such a plan does the Home Office no credit whatever.

The third issue that emerges from this sorry saga is a small but important one about bureaucratic dither and delay. Between February 1988 and July 1989—almost 18 months—my constituent heard nothing from the prison department. Last year it took the Home Office four months to answer one of my letters. As I said earlier, the notice to quit took effect five months ago, since when there has been another deafening silence. I invite you, Mr. Speaker, to imagine what it is like every time the letter-box rattles in my constituent's home. Every time that she hears something drop on the doormat she fears the worst. In my view, that is no way to treat a citizen of this country, and what has happened is no way to treat a Member of Parliament.

The fourth issue is that my constituent has been made to pay for the errors of others. Courtesy of a mistake, the husband has a roof over his head and has no worries. Meanwhile, my constituent and her two children face the prospect of sleeping rough.

Spelthorne borough council has made it crystal clear to me that there is no question of its providing her with a home. Private rented accommodation simply does not exist in my constituency. My constituent has approached over 40 housing associations for help, but has been given a no every time. There is no question of her being able to afford buying on the open market.

The situation amounts to this: the husband need do nothing; he walked out, but my constituent pays the price; he remains cosy and warm, but she will get cold and wet. Where is the natural justice in that? The Home Office should be ashamed of being associated with that.

What is to be done about the problem? I can foresee four possible solutions. The first is to evict the husband and let him sort out his own problems, whereby the Home Office would be back to one quarter for one prison officer. Secondly, the Home Office could transfer my constituent's home to the local council; the problem would go away because the council would have another house and she would have somewhere to live. Thirdly, the Home Office could make my constituent a secure tenant, and she would know where she stood in the future. Fourthly, the Home Office could sell the house to my constituent at a discount.

To date, the Home Office has shown little interest in trying to be helpful. Last August, all that it said was, "What a pity." Last December, it said, "We will do nothing for three months, and then out she goes." Finally, it told me, "We will sell to her at market price." That will not help. If my constituent could afford a house she would have bought one by now. That is not a record to be proud of.

We have reached a stage where the only honourable solution for the Home Office is to return to where we were in the autumn of 1987 and to agree to allow my constituent to buy her home at the discount that was then on offer. She has lived in a prison house for 21 years, and on that argument qualifies for the maximum discount. Her current home was declared by the Home Office to be surplus to requirements. I am aware that matters have moved on and that the Home Office is trying to say, in effect, "We did not really mean that, and the situation has changed." But it must still be surplus to requirements, for as recently as in the last two months the Home Office has again agreed to sell it.

At the same time, there is no danger, if the Home Office agrees to the sale, of setting a precedent. That is clear from a written answer that I received in December of last year from the Minister of State, who told me:

"I am aware of only two cases where a second quarter has been allocated to a prison officer before surrender of the original quarter with vacant possession."—[*Official Report*, 21 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. *387*.]

So there were only two, and hence there is no question of opening the floodgates if this wrong were put right. As I explained, there is no danger of it happening again because the Government have made it clear that they have tightened up the regulations.

Here we have an episode which does nobody any credit. A husband and father has walked away from his responsibilities, a Government Department has broken its rules and helped him to do so and a wife and two children face sleeping rough because of what has happened. That offends against my sense of decency and is contrary to what I believe government, of whatever party, is all about.

Those who caused this problem have it in their power to put things right. I call on my right hon. Friend to do just that and thereby to put an end to three people's anguish, to agree to sell their house at a discount and to restore my faith in decency and natural justice.

10.27 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I rise with some temerity to answer the debate because I am understudying for my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who has ministerial responsibility for prisons, as my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) appreciates.

My hon. Friend represented the issue characteristically, in a robust and forthright way, and nobody could hope for a better representation than my hon. Friend provided for his constituents tonight.

I apologise to my hon. Friend unreservedly for any delays in answering his correspondence on the part of the

Home Office. That should not happen. We try to make sure that it does not happen. Sometimes, alas, it happens, and when it does, Ministers are responsible. I apologise to my hon. Friend for the delays that occurred.

In responding as constructively as I can, it might be useful if I gave a brief history of developments in housing for prison officers and explained how the prison department finds itself in the position that we are considering tonight.

For many years, official quarters have been provided for prison officers, who were required, as part of their conditions of service, to occupy them. In other words, they had to live there. A housing allowance was paid if a quarter was not immediately vacant, but officers were required to move into official accommodation when it became available.

Permission to live out, as it was called—if an officer wished to buy his own property—was given infrequently and generally, in prison officer practice, only when an official quarter was not available. Such an arrangement meant in effect that the vast majority of prison officers, as they neared retirement, had no house of their own and little prospect of obtaining a mortgage. It was not a happy situation, and certainly not one that the present Government would wish to encourage.

An increasing number of prison officers began to seek permission to live out to enable them to become home owners and it became difficult to justify a policy that insisted that if a quarter was available, it must be occupied.

By 1979, about one third of all prison officers were living in their own houses. In August of that year, the Government introduced a change in policy enabling prison governors to allow applications to live out wherever possible. There was no good reason to oppose it. Where that resulted in quarters becoming surplus to long-term requirements, they were, in effect, sold on the open market, and I am sure that that has happened in my hon. Friend's constituency. Some quarters could not, and probably never can be, disposed of on security grounds. But some were sold to prison officers and others to authorities and private individuals at full market value.

By 1983 that approach had led to something of a revolution. By then two thirds of prison officers lived out. The Prison Officers Association sought a scheme whereby the remaining official quarters could be sold at a discount. That approach was in line with Government policy, of course, and during 1983 and 1984 negotiations between the Treasury, the Home Office and the Prison Officers Association took place. The official side offered two package schemes comprising discount sales and the consolidation of housing allowances into basic pay. The POA balloted its members, who did not like the schemes, and they were rejected.

My hon. Friend raised the issue of discounts. In the light of the rejection of the proposed schemes, it was concluded that there was little prospect of any progress being made on discount sales, but requests for such a scheme continued, understandably when prison officers looked round at others in the public service who were enjoying the right to buy at a discount. In 1987 the wider-reaching fresh start proposals, which included the consolidation of allowances, including housing allowances, into basic pay gave us in the Home Office another opportunity, rightly, to offer those in quarters assistance to purchase their quarter, or another surplus quarter if they preferred it, and the discount sales scheme was introduced.

Since the introduction of the fresh start scheme, as it is known, quarters are no longer provided as a condition of service. That has finished entirely. A prison officer no longer needs to go to the governor and say, "Permission to live out, sir." He has that automatically. Effectively an officer can choose to live wherever he or she wishes, but the distance the officer has to travel to work, any difficulty in getting to the establishment, or any domestic responsibility cannot be accepted as excuses for irregular attendance. The scheme is working well. We have agreed that those occupying quarters, who do not wish or are unable to purchase their homes at a discount, can remain in the quarter and pay a notional rent.

It became clear that with the end of quarters entitlement for prison officers and the introduction of a discount sales scheme, for which we have already received about 5,000 applications to purchase, the stock of quarters will reduce rapidly. There can, of course, be absolutely no suggestion of providing new quarters for staff, but we felt that there was a need to make the best use of the dwindling stock of housing, especially in London and the south-east where housing costs are high, as my hon. Friend knows. He said that there was no private rented accommodation available in his constitutency, which I understand. The available stock will be allocated to prison officers moving from a low-cost housing area to a high-cost area or where there are sound compassionate reasons.

How is a quarter allocated? How did my hon. Friend's constituent and his wife find themselves in a quarter? Allocation is made purely by virtue of employment as a prison officer; that is the key phrase. The quarter remains the officer's sole responsibility until it is returned to the department with vacant possession. In other words, a quarter is allocated because someone is employed as a prison officer. There is no other ground. Responsibility for allocation lies with the governor of each establishment who will liaise, as necessary, with his regional office.

So the allocation of a quarter is made to an officer on a personal basis and should be his main residence where he and his family should reside. In the event that he vacates the quarter, the officer remains responsible for the quarter and for payment of rent until it is returned with vacant possession. The officer cannot transfer responsibility for the quarter to his wife or to anyone else. The wife has no continuing right of occupancy. That is made clear at the beginning of the occupation of the quarter. By vacating, the prison officer has also broken his own continuity of occupancy and ceases at that time to be eligible to purchase the quarter under the discount sales scheme. That is an important point to make to the House.

The position of the wife and the children—if any—is that they have no right to remain in the quarter and will be subject to eviction proceedings. An officer will not normally be allocated a second quarter until he or she has surrendered the original quarter with vacant possession, but there is provision for second allocations to be made in exceptional circumstances.

That brings me to the specific case that my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne has so forcefully drawn to the attention of the House. With characteristic tact—and quite rightly—he has not named the individuals concerned and I shall follow his example. I am aware of the case at Ashford to which he refers, in which a prison officer separated from his wife, leaving her and the children of the marriage in occupation of a prison service quarter. I understand that, as my hon. Friend said, the officer made

[Mr. John Patten]

alternative temporary arrangements for accommodation until he was allocated a second quarter at the same establishment. That is somewhat unusual, to put it mildly, although it is not unique. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said in his letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, it has happened only twice before.

The governor clearly felt that the officer's circumstances were such that there were particular compassionate reasons for making the second allocation. The officer involved is, of course, responsible for both quarters and for the payment of both rents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne is very concerned to support the family in this country, as I know from listening to him on other occasions in the House. He and I share a similar interest in family policy and in trying to develop ways of supporting rather than diminishing the family. There has been a flavour of a suggestion in the discussion and correspondence of this case with others involved—and I do not mean only in my hon. Friend's lucid speech—that the prison department made it a bit easier for the officer, not to leave his wife, but to evade his family responsibilities by providing him with alternative accommodation. I have considered that because it is an important suggestion. It does not seem, on examination, to bear such a close relation to the facts when one considers the chronology. It was several months after leaving his wife that the second quarter was allocated to the officer. My hon. Friend was generous enough to say that he was not suggesting that the prison department contributed to the break-up of the marriage, and he generously gives his assent to that now. However, my hon. Friend feels that the allocation of a second quarter, albeit several months after the officer had left his wife, allowed the gentleman concerned to evade his responsibilities.

I have examined the matter, and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who has responsibility for prison issues, advises me that the wife can purchase the property at full market value and that the offer has been made. Failing that, she can be required to find alternative accommodation. I have also found that, in December 1989, my hon. and learned Friend agreed that no further action would be taken to evict the wife for three months, after which the case would be reviewed, and that it would not be right to prejudge the matter at this stage of a review.

I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne an undertaking. I do not want the Home Office to take precipitate action to recover possession of quarters, especially after listening to my hon. Friend's forceful speech. If the wife is unable to purchase, I can pledge at least that I shall ensure that the Home Office considers sympathetically a request for extensions of time to enable her to make alternative arrangements. That gives some time before the dread envelopes drop on the doormat.

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I shall give way to my hon. Friend before I finish, if he wishes. I shall convey my hon. Friend's deep concern to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office and put to him each of the three options that my hon. Friend outlined.

Mr. Wilshire: My constituent will be grateful for the consideration that has been shown but the facts will remain the same however much the time is extended. For the reasons that I gave, it will not be possible to make other arrangements when the time runs out. Whether the Home Office likes it or not, if it acts it will put my constituent and her two children out on the street with nowhere to live.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend's constituent has made heroic efforts to find a solution to her problem. She has approached some 40 housing associations. In my experience of such cases, an opportunity to deal with someone's housing difficulty sometimes emerges which was not there a few weeks before.

I have given a clear undertaking to my hon. Friend, and apologised to him for what he saw as poor handling of correspondence. His constituent's wife will be able to remain. We shall certainly consider sympathetically a request for an extension of time to determine whether alternative arrangements can be made. In the meantime, I shall put to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State the three possible solutions that my hon. Friend put forward, and for which we are grateful.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

West Germany

1. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in manufactured goods with West Germany.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): The deficit with Germany in 1989 was £9·6 billion on the manufactured trade account.

Mr. Bradley: As the deficit with West Germany has grown by over £6 billion since 1979 and now accounts for about half the total deficit, will the Minister acknowledge that he has a problem? Does he recognise that it is his responsibility and will he do something about it? When he acts to close the gap, will he develop an industrial strategy based on British rather than foreign industry?

Mr. Redwood: Many good things are happening. The Labour party never looks at the invisible account, yet we export services and earn a great deal of money from investments abroad. Do Labour Members realise that we earn more from invisible credits than from total exports of manufactured goods? Do they realise that exports were up by 15 per cent. in the last quarter of 1989 compared with 1988? Do they agree that the strategy that we have developed of a firm approach to fiscal policy and allowing enterprise to get on with the job is working? Have Labour Members seen the latest export surveys which show that exports are going well? Do they realise that their strategy would cause considerable distress?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the Minister at least accept that trade with West Germany has become a trade disaster area? The deficit is twice as large as the one with Japan, which is now a much more open market. Would it not do more good for British trade if, instead of spending a great deal of money on posters telling us that the internal market has arrived, the Minister considered the many examples that have been sent to him of how the Germans restrict imports for wholly bogus and non-tariff reasons?

Mr. Redwood: The Government are dedicated to completing the 1992 programme. We are especially keen to remove barriers to trade in invisibles to complement the good work being done in the manufacturing sector to remove such barriers. If my hon. Friend wishes to send more details of restraints on trade that are against the EEC treaty and against Government policy, I and my right hon. Friend will pursue the matter with vigour.

New York Speech

2. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place a copy of his recent New York speech in the Library.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I have already done so.

Mr. Kirkwood: In the New York speech the Secretary of State acknowledged that every trading nation had something to gain from lifting trade barriers. However, on textiles he seemed to leave the initiative in the hands of the American negotiators in terms of the current GATT round. It would be interesting to hear the American view of the current textiles position in the GATT round. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that he will not begin to dismantle the framework of the multi-fibre arrangement until the United Kingdom textiles industry obtains copper-bottomed guarantees of new export opportunities to new trading countries?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's interest in my speech. I note his liberal attitude to trade liberalisation. The position of the United States Administration is in one respect similar to that of the European Community. It is that the trade in textiles should in due course be returned to the GATT and that a considerable transitional period will be necessary. There is most dispute about what the interim regime should be. The Americans want global quotas, a solution which is unattractive to the other trading partners. The negotiations will be about a system of safeguards and the length of the transitional period. There is agreement that in due course, after a proper transitional period, textiles should return to a more free trading atmosphere.

Mr. Bowis: Was not one theme of my right hon. Friend's excellent speech the opportunities for world trade and prosperity that come from the single market, the Uruguay round and the changes in eastern Europe? Was not a second theme of his speech the dangers of protectionism? Does he agree that that is a great danger to world trade and prosperity from whichever side of the Atlantic it comes?

Mr. Ridley: Both points are correct, but I sought to make a third point—that freedom to invest freely in those countries is an important way for both partners in the transaction to prosper. I criticised the United States tendency to restrict inward investment, but I am sure that the Administration there will ensure that those tendencies are resisted.

Mr. Gordon Brown: In that wide-ranging speech in New York, why did not the Secretary of State explain that Britain has the worst inflation, the highest interest rates and one of the worst trade deficits of our major competitors? Will he now confirm not only that mortgage rises have put 400,000 families into mortgage arrears of two months or more, but that the latest figures from the Lord Chancellor show that there has been a 46 per cent. increase in small business liquidations over the last

quarter? As Secretary of State for Industry, will he press the Chancellor for a Budget for industry that will help to bring interest rates down?

Mr. Ridley: There are two reasons why I did not make those points in America. First, it is not my habit to knock my country from abroad. Secondly, the particular copy with which the hon. Gentleman suggests I should knock it is inaccurate and untrue. The hon. Gentleman is always in the business of measuring the gross, not the net. If he examines the net survival of small businesses, he will find that it is very much better than under the Labour Government. If he also examines the total of the mortgage sector, he will find the same.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one problem may be that, because of the two Germanys' headlong rush to merge, the deutschmark will weaken, and Germany will become even more competitive than at present with its £46 billion trade balance? Does my right hon. Friend have anything in mind to make sure that our manufacturers are not more disadvantaged than they are already?

Mr. Ridley: I think that the deutschmark has strengthened on the latest news, although I am not in the business of forecasting what will happen in view of the events described by my hon. Friend. Policy on eastern Europe is not particularly relevant to the value of the pound in relation to the deutschmark. I am confident that British exports will maintain their good record and their good showing whatever happens in East Germany.

Eastern Europe

3. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures in 1989 with *(a)* the USSR, *(b)* East Germany, *(c)* Poland, *(d)* Czechoslovakia and *(e)* Romania.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady will be delighted to know that in 1989 the United Kingdom had a surplus of more than £100 million with the five countries mentioned in her question, comprising a good surplus with the USSR and deficits with the other four.

Ms. Short: Will the Minister confirm that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry said that Britain was lagging behind the countries of western Europe in its trade with eastern Europe because at that time we were importing more than we were exporting, reflecting the mess that the Government have made of our balance of payments overall? Is it not time that the Government took action to implement the Select Committee's recommendations on trade with eastern Europe, given the current massive and important changes that are taking place there?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady has asked the wrong question. She obviously wanted to get a different answer. Had she asked about Hungary and Bulgaria, she would have heard about surpluses. I have just arrived back from Czechoslovakia where I led a delegation of eight British business men to encourage more British trade. The Government will take all reasonable steps to encourage British businesses to take advantage of the many new opportunities in eastern Europe. I urge more British business men to visit eastern Europe to follow up the advances that many are making in those countries.

Dr. Hampson: The whole House will praise my hon. Friend for the efforts that he has begun to put into trade with eastern Europe. In the process of expanding our connections, does the Department have any mechanism or unit for ensuring more secondment of people from the academic and industrial sectors here who can go over there to encourage those countries to look towards us and our processes, especially in distribution and marketing?

Mr. Redwood: Yes, 25 people in the Department of Trade and Industry specialise in eastern Europe trade matters. Together with those in the Foreign Office, they are working on the distribution of know-how moneys from our know-how funds to strengthen such links for the reason that my hon. Friend so rightly described.

Stock Exchange

4. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the stock exchange; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Ridley: Ministers meet the chairman of the stock exchange whenever appropriate to discuss topics of mutual interest.

Mr. Darling: Will the Secretary of State discuss junk bonds with the chairman? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs said last November that junkiness was in the eye of the beholder, but does not the Secretary of State know that the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has expressed concern about the matter and hinted in the clearest possible terms that he would like it to be referred to him for investigation? Will the Secretary of State agree to such an investigation? If he does not, the public will begin to think that the Government are prepared to condone, if not encourage, the sort of tacky behaviour that we see on the other side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir. I do not believe that issues of corporate financing are ones for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. They may be for the stock exchange, or even the Bank of England, to consider, but not the MMC. Only if there were a merger involving a highly leveraged bid, together with other factors that affected the national interest, would my policy be to refer the matter to the MMC. I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that junkiness is in the eye of the beholder.

Mr. Forman: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the stock exchange, will he urge him to make faster progress towards the so-called paperless transactions for share dealings as it is clear that the interests of the small investor would be greatly assisted if progress were more rapid?

Mr. Ridley: The stock exchange is making pretty fast progress with the Taurus system. When we see the full details, we shall ensure that it contains no conditions that will interfere with the interests of the smaller investor. I agree with my hon. Friend that the sooner we get the system up and running, the better.

Defence Contractors

5. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has anything to add to his answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, of 17 January 1990, *Official Report*, columns 280-81 about encouraging defence contractors to look for alternative work.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Yet again, no, Sir. As I stated on the two previous occasions when the hon. Gentleman raised this point, it is my firm view that such decisions are best left to those best equipped to take them—business men.

Mr. Bennett: I am glad that the Minister remembers his outbursts on the two previous occasions. Has he had the chance to read the speech that the Foreign Secretary made two days later, when he said that turning swords into ploughshares was a cliché, but that turning tanks into tractors was the politics that the Government were involved in? Is the Foreign Secretary more interested in protecting British industry and converting our arms industry into peaceful use than are Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry? When will the Minister take notice of the more sensible members of the Government?

Mr Hogg: I am becoming increasingly concerned for the hon. Gentleman, who has posed exactly the same question on three successive occasions. There are two kind explanations for his bizarre behaviour: first, that he has run out of ideas and the Labour party is intellectually bankrupt, which I know to be true; and, secondly, that he is trying to divert attention from Labour's losing policies —the roof and window tax and the payroll tax. The plain truth is that companies such as British Aerospace and Marconi need no advice from a conversion agency about how to diversify or find new markets.

Mr. Jack: Is my hon. Friend aware of the efforts being made by British Aerospace, through its involvement in Airbus Industrie, to diversify? Is he further aware of the damage being done to that effort by the continuing luddite strike by the engineering unions, supported by Opposition Members? Will he join me in condemning those unions for their inability to agree to a good deal offered by the company?

Mr. Hogg: As I would expect from my hon. Friend, he has made a powerful point. British Aerospace is participating in the Airbus, which is an extremely successful product. The future of Airbus Industrie is threatened by the strikes of the engineering unions. Those strikes are being supported by the Labour party, which is a discreditable activity and one calculated to damage British industry.

Tobacco Sales

6. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the number of retail shops licensed to sell tobacco.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): It is not necessary to be licensed to sell tobacco.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that the Prime Minister has given her full support to the Parents against Tobacco campaign? It is estimated that at least 50 per cent. of retailers are prepared to sell to children under age, and that as many as 500,000 under-age children are regular smokers of tobacco. What will he do to put pressure on local councils to take up the campaign when they are granting planning permission, or to put pressure on newsagents to refuse to sell tobacco to children under the age of 16? Will he support his Prime Minister by putting pressure on them?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has answered his own question. There is an adequate law to protect children against those who seek to sell tobacco to them. The problem is one of enforcement. It is for all hon. Members to take up where appropriate with local authorities and the police the effective enforcement of the existing law, and I am sure that they will, aided by the excellent campaign.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept the Department of Health's policy to reduce the consumption of tobacco?

Mr. Forth: Of course.

Footwear Imports

7. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on the future of voluntary restraint agreements on footwear imports from eastern European countries.

Mr. Ridley: In the light of developments in the EC's relations with Poland, the European Commission has suspended the voluntary restraint arrangement with Poland on leather footwear imports for one year from 1 January 1990. The position will be reviewed before the end of the year.

With regard to Czechoslovakia and Romania, we have asked the European Commission to maintain the voluntary restraint on leather footwear from those countries during 1990. The Commission is considering our request. The United Kingdom does not have voluntary restraint arrangements on footwear with the other east European countries.

Mr. Fry: Is my right hon. Friend aware that any increase in imports of footwear will considerably increase the problems of the British industry? Therefore, will he support the European Commission's renewed initiative to make voluntary restraint arrangements with South Korea and Taiwan? Will he also work towards the reduction or removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to enable British exporters to sell much more footwear abroad?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will agree that one thing that we can do to help the Poles in their gallant efforts to improve their economy and their present parlous position is to increase the opportunities for them to trade. It would be churlish to deny them the things that they need most, for example, trading opportunities. My hon. Friend may know that the Community has not yet made up its mind what to do about Korea and Taiwan. The member states of the Community are split 50-50 on whether the Commisson should take action. I hope that my hon. Friend will be content with that answer.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Secretary of State aware that in the past 10 years 45,000 jobs have been lost in the British footwear

industry—35 per cent. of the entire employment in that industry—and that two jobs are being lost every hour? Last week in my constituency, Glovese, the leading manufacturers of ladies' boots, closed because of the level of imports. Will he give an undertaking to the House that he will not alter any arrangements without full consultation with the manufacturers and the trade unions?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot give such an undertaking. But employment in Britain is running at 26·5 million, the highest ever, and within that remarkable figure it is inevitable that employment will be gained in some industries and lost in others. The flexible work force in the face of fast-changing trading and industrial conditions is one of the virtues that the hon. Gentleman should be preaching to his constituency because he can see with his own eyes the extraordinary effect on employment that such latitude can have.

Mr. Budgen: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the Government's policy on the provision of training and aid for eastern Europe, in that they are pointing out to all the advantages of privatisation and of joint ventures, and are not engaging in wasteful schemes involving inter-governmental aid.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and agree with him. I add to his list private investment in eastern European countries. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs recently returned from Czechoslovakia, and there have been other missions. More are planned for the future, when we shall take British business men to eastern European countries to show them the opportunities for investment there. That is the best way of helping those countries to re-establish their economies.

Manufactured Imports

8. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the growth in imports of manufactured goods from the European Community since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from the European Community have risen from £16 billion in 1979 to £52·5 billion in 1989. Exports of manufactured goods to the European Community have virtually trebled over the same period.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Minister agree that those figures are disgraceful? Will the effect of the single European market be to worsen them? Is not this the wrong time to dismantle the functions of the Department of Trade and Industry? Would not that be idiotic? Does the Minister agree that wherever the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry goes, acts of madness follow?

Mr. Redwood: No, I do not agree with that. Nor do I agree that the figures are disgraceful. The figures for exports are good, and we should be proud of the export efforts of a number of English manufacturers. The hon. Gentleman addresses only a quarter of the problem. He refers to visible trade but not to invisible trade, and to imports but not to exports. One must consider the total trade picture. It is about time the Opposition started realising that our trade position has been improving for five months. There is every sign in the latest surveys that exports will continue to improve this year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will not the development of Japanese-owned car assembly plants in this country do much to redress our trade deficit with the European Community over the next few years?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend makes the most important point of all so far in this exchange. There will be a major expansion of cars assembled in this country from 1·3 million to 2 million, and, as motor vehicles account for the biggest item in our manufactures deficit, right hon. and hon. Members can immediately calculate that a big change will result from the investment made here by Japanese companies.

Mr. James Lamond: The Minister seemed strangely reluctant to give the House the actual exports figure. Was that because Britain is in considerable deficit with the countries of the European Community? If so, did the Minister hear the Secretary of State a few minutes ago discarding the multi-fibre arrangement, contrary to the sentiments expressed by the Minister in a recent debate? That must result in an even greater loss to our textiles manufacturing industry, causing job losses throughout the country. Does not the Minister want to do something about that?

Mr. Redwood: I have clearly given the figures required by the original question. Of course I accept that a deficit exists with some countries—most notably the Federal Republic of Germany. I also pointed out that the position is improving. The Government believe that open trading and the extension of the 1992 programme is the best way of narrowing the trade gap. I particularly draw the attention of the House to the important role of invisibles in our total trading performance. They will be improved if we can persuade our European partners to keep the 1992 programme on track and on time.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

9. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to introduce his proposals to reform the structure of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Ridley: It is the Government's intention to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to bring about the changes to ECGD's structure that I announced on 18 December 1989. The aim is to establish the new company to be created from ECGD's insurance services group on 1 April 1991.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. Friend for that information. I agree that the insurance part of the Export Credits Guarantee Department should be privatised, but can he assure the House that the credit on capital goods will be maintained and that it will be possible for companies such as British Aerospace, which exports £150 million worth of goods per week or £6,000 million worth per year, to maintain their 10-year view on exports?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, I made it clear in December that the projects group would not be part of the privatisation but will continue its activities to aid British exports of the kind that my hon. Friend mentioned, including exports by British Aerospace.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the insurance services group, which is based in Cardiff and

employs many of my constituents, is profitable, that its achievements are a credit to the public sector, and that it has no requirement to be privatised? Can he also confirm that Malcolm Stephens, chief executive of the ECGD, recently made a statement that privatisation of the insurance services group would pave the way for foreign stakes to be taken in the ECGD?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Morgan: Does not the Secretary of State conclude that it would be a ludicrous irony if in a few years' time a support service for British exports were controlled by a foreign bank or finance house?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that the Cardiff operation is profitable and held in high respect by its customers. I also confirm that the hon. Gentleman got it totally wrong when quoting the chief executive of the ECGD. I have here statements that he made on radio referring to

"the Chief Executive in a press conference alongside Nicholas Ridley".

I remember no such press conference. *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Gentleman is advocating an illegal action if he is asking me to say that no national other than a British national may acquire a stake in companies in this country. He must recognise that we are members of a European Community which bans discrimination against its other members. The hon. Gentleman should wait and see who puts forward offers when the time comes to privatise the ECGD. If it is not privatised, it will have no future in the European market.

Mr. Bill Walker: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that export credits as they will be operated once reformed will make trade with eastern Europe more viable and possible as a reward for the desires and the declarations about human rights and democracy that have been expressed there? If that is so, can he explain the difference, as seen by the Opposition, between that and our similar programme with South Africa?

Mr. Ridley: The subject of ECGD cover for eastern European states also raises the question of their indebtedness and the risk that it poses for insurance cover. Different countries in eastern Europe have different debt situations, so I cannot answer the question in a general way, but I confirm that we are doing our best to make credit cover available for exports to eastern Europe when the country concerned merits the credit.

British Steel

10. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with the chairman of British Steel.

Mr. Ridley: I have no plans at present to meet the chairman of British Steel.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the importance of the steel industry to Scottish employment and to the entire Scottish economy, will the Secretary of State draw the chairman's attention to the need to locate a new steel plate mill in Scotland? That is necessary not just for the Dalziel works, but for Ravenscraig and for the whole future of steel making in Scotland. Does the Secretary of State accept any responsibility for the future of the Scottish steel industry, or was privatisation merely a means of abrogating all Government responsibility?

Mr. Ridley: Investment by the steel industry is entirely a matter for the steel industry to decide. The point of investment in the steel industry or in any other industry is to ensure the most efficient production and for no other reason.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that privatisation of the British steel industry in my constituency and elsewhere on Teesside has done much for the economic regeneration of the area and is one of the outstanding achievements of the Government in the past few years? Is he aware that continuation of that policy with the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority would be most welcome?

Mr. Ridley: I join my hon. Friend in welcoming the remarkable industrial transformation on Teesside. I should also point to the large increase in British industrial production in the past few years. I believe that both are connected with the policy of letting industry make its own investment decisions.

Ms. Quin: Given that the overall level of British steel production is still less than half that of West Germany, and given that our share of the continental market is very small, does not the Secretary of State see a great possibility for the expansion of British Steel? In the context of 1992, would not that safeguard the health of all the plants in the United Kingdom? Will he use his influence—or perhaps even his golden share—to secure such expansion?

Mr. Ridley: I am not sure that the golden share would be of use for that purpose, but I agree with the hon. Lady, and pay tribute to her for striking an optimistic note for once. I will do all that I can to ensure that British Steel has opportunities throughout the world—and in the Community—to increase its sales and its share of the market. We are fortunate in having persuaded the Americans to agree to end the voluntary restraint agreement in, I believe, three years' time, which will give British Steel big opportunities in the United States. It will also give that excellent company further opportunities to increase its market share in Europe.

Latin America

11. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Britain's exports to and investment in Latin America.

Mr. Ridley: In 1989 United Kingdom exports to Latin America were almost £1·2 billion. At the end of 1987, the last year for which figures are available, the level of United Kingdom direct investment in the region was almost £3 billion.

Mr. Arnold: Should not we bear in mind that the combined economies of Latin America are far greater than those of Africa, the middle east and the Indian sub-continent put together? Should not we be putting more effort into our exports to Latin America, and perhaps expanding the medium-term export finance cover, particularly for Brazil and Argentina?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that the opportunities around the world for both trade and investment will be exploited by British industry to an ever greater degree. I agree that Latin America remains an important market. Medium-term cover is available within an overall exposure limit for some of those countries, including Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, which will present plenty of opportunities for our business men to export to them, at least.

Mr. Ron Brown: The Government are allegedly committed to perestroika and glasnost. Which of the countries that the Secretary of State mentioned is supposedly a democracy, and how does he justify trade with any Latin American country that is not a democracy? Such trade is clearly an abuse of people's rights, when they know that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has asked his question.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said, now that perestroika and glasnost have broken out in Leith. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) must be able to hear the answer to his question.

Mr. Ridley: Only in the past two weeks, the president of Mexico and the president-elect of Brazil have been in London. They are both democratically elected. Many other countries in South America are also democracies. I believe that we should treat them with all the respect that is due to democratic countries, and seek to trade with them to the maximum extent.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I understand that my right hon. Friend met the president-elect of Brazil when the latter visited the United Kingdom recently. My right hon. Friend has said that he is in favour of British manufacturing industry. What steps did he take to urge the Brazilian Government to reduce the huge tariffs that they impose against British exports, particularly textiles and clothing? Does he agree that British manufacturing industry should have a level playing field on which to operate, and what does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Ridley: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what I have done. I raised my hon. Friend's points with the president-elect of Brazil, who gave me a fulsome undertaking that Brazil would play a full and forward part in the Uruguay round to reduce tariffs and protective devices of all kinds. He agreed with my hon. Friend's policy on free trade, which is also my policy—that we should clear away such restrictions—and I believe that Brazil will be very helpful in the forthcoming discussions.

Technological Standards

12. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he will be making to the report produced for the European Commission by the university of Louvain with respect to its assessment of the United Kingdom's technological standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nature of the report. The Government are well aware of the challenge of 1992, and we have policies in place to help firms in all regions to rise to it.

Mr. Snape: I thought that it was for the Opposition to ask supplementary questions. Does the Minister agree that the report places the United Kingdom, with Spain, at the bottom of the technology and training league? Does he agree that any further reduction in the industry budget will make it even less likely that the regions, particularly the west midlands, will be able to recover from the collapse of manufacturing industry brought about by the Government's disastrous policies?

Mr. Hogg: As might be expected, I have two pieces of good news for the hon. Gentleman. First, as regards technology, the hon. Gentleman will be very pleased to know that between 1983 and 1987 research and development investment in the United Kingdom rose by 27 per cent. in real terms. Secondly, the main lesson to be learnt from the report is the need to diversify the economies of traditional industrial regions, such as South Yorkshire. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government have been pursuing that policy vigorously —often, I may say, opposed by the Labour party—and we have achieved very considerable success with it.

Mr. Dykes: As the Right-wing economic ideologues in this country persist in saying that we misunderstand Germany—which, apparently, is bureaucratic, over-regulated, subsidised, corporatist and inefficient—could we send a DTI task force to Germany to acquire some of its bad habits?

Mr. Hogg: In many respects we could give the Germans some very good lessons indeed. For instance, we could give them a lesson in how to reduce unemployment in areas that have suffered economic deprivation. The House will be pleased to know, for a start, that the rate of unemployment in this country is now two thirds of the European Community average. To take Sheffield as an example, in December 1989 the rate of unemployment there was 9·6 per cent., whereas in March 1986 it was 16 per cent. That is a remarkable transformation, and it is due to this Government's policies—not those of the German Government.

Mr. Cohen: It seems as though there are two Louvain reports—the one that the Government have read, and the one that other people have read. Looking to the competition that there will be in 1992, the report shows clearly that there are major structural weaknesses in the regions of the United Kingdom. Will the Minister re-read the report and consider the first survey of state aid in the European Community? He will see that the average investment per head in manufacturing industry, apart from steel and shipbuilding, is £1,050. The United Kingdom comes at the bottom of the league with £448 and the Germans are well ahead. As for investment in research and development, training and infrastructure, the Louvain report shows clearly that that is where we are weakest.

Mr. Hogg: It would help if the hon. Gentleman were a little more candid. He has not read the report. It is in French and the hon. Gentleman does not read French.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Has my hon. Friend read the British textile industry's report? Is he aware that that

industry, which is worried about training in this country, sent a delegation to Germany where it found that training in the German textile industry is inefficient, expensive, out of date and no good at all for young people or re-entrants?

Mr. Hogg: I am very well aware of the German textile industry's shortcomings. More broadly speaking, we think —and most sensible people also think—that the textile industry must be brought back within the general agreement on tariffs and trade. That is the only sensible way forward. The proper way forward for the textile industry is to focus on products that add value to what the industry is already doing.

Post Office

13. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what was discussed.

Mr. Forth: I last met the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson, on 11 January. We discussed various matters of mutual interest.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the Post Office workers who have coped so ably with the extra-large load of card deliveries today? Despite the blandishments of the directors of TNT and others interested in acquiring the profitable sectors of the Post Office, will the Minister reassure the British public, especially those who live in rural areas, that their needs have not been forgotten?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for putting the question in that way. I agree with all parts of her question. First, I congratulate the Post Office in Glasgow on its excellent performance and on one of the best staff recruitment and retention records in the United Kingdom. Secondly, I join the hon. Lady in praising the Post Office for having one of the best delivery performances in Europe and for charging less for stamps than almost any other country in Europe. I can give her the assurance that she seeks. Despite the fact that my right hon. Friend has met a number of companies interested in the kind of services provided by the Post Office, none has put forward a proposition of interest to my right hon. Friend or to me. We are concerned to maintain not just the rural network but all parts of the Post Office network.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend recall that 13 years ago, with the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) I introduced a Bill to end the Post Office's statutory monopoly in the collection and delivery of letters? Will he now reintroduce that Bill?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is ahead of his time in many things. That is a reputation which he rightly enjoys. He must know, however—it has often been repeated—that we regard the Post Office monopoly as a privilege, not as a right, and the Post Office well understands that. The monopoly is kept under review so that an assessment can be made from to time of whether any action is appropriate. That process continues.

Mr. Henderson: The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that she believes in keeping the Royal Mail intact. The Under-Secretary of State wrote to me on 1 February saying that there were no plans to break up the Post Office monopoly, so on what basis did the Minister say today that propositions had been received relating to the privatisation of the Post Office? Why did departmental officials admit to the press this morning that they had received propositions and that talks had taken place with road haulage companies? Will the Minister make an honest statement and say whether the Government intend to sell off the letters business to the fat cats in the road haulage industry, or is he prepared to accept the need to protect the service throughout the country, especially in rural areas?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is confusing himself and there is a danger that he may confuse the House as well. It is no secret that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met a number of companies with activities in that sector. Indeed, it would be most odd if he had not, as I believe that my right hon. Friend has shown his usual open-mindedness in wishing to hear all points of view and all proposals. I can reassure the hon. Gentleman, as I reassured the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), that none of the companies' suggestions has found favour with my right hon. Friend, but we shall continue to consider the matter as it is our duty to do so.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I would not wish to stop the Minister talking to anybody, but will he give an absolute commitment to the House that he stands four-square, 100 per cent. behind the principle that the postage rate for letters should be the same no matter where in the United Kingdom they go? That is what matters to constituents in the further-flung areas, particularly in my part of the world.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. Interestingly, that principle and the principle of universal delivery provide the greatest difficulty for those who seek to provide alternatives to the existing postal services. I believe that our insistence on those principles is crucial and I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: If newspapers can be delivered all over the United Kingdom at the same price, why should the Post Office continue to have a monopoly? Private enterprise has already shown that it can deliver various goods just as well as the Post Office does.

Mr. Forth: I am delighted to see my hon. Friend here, obviously in good heart and good spirits. It is untypical of him to confuse deliveries of commercial items such as newspapers with postal deliveries. The two cannot and should not be compared because the Post Office has an obligation to collect an item anywhere in the United Kingdom and to deliver it anywhere in the United Kingdom, and it does so. It is seeking to improve deliveries, but it still delivers at a standard rate. That principle has been re-emphasised not only by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister but by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and we shall continue to do so.

Japan

14. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current trade deficit with Japan; and how much of the deficit is accounted for by manufactured goods.

Mr. Redwood: In 1989 the deficit in total visible trade with Japan was £4·8 billion. In the same period, the deficit for manufactured goods was £5 billion. Last year United Kingdom exports to Japan increased by £525 million to £2·3 billion, an increase of 30 per cent. over 1988.

Mr. Buckley: Now that the Secretary of State accepts that we have a deficit with Japan, Germany, Italy and the United States, and an ever-increasing deficit with other EC countries, does he accept that he ought to be doing something about it? The announcement today of an upturn in output of 4·3 per cent. in 1989, compared with 7·1 per cent. in 1988, is another indication of the devastating effect on the British economy of the Government's so-called economic miracle.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman scoffs too much when he derides the increase in output. He is talking about years of unprecedented growth in the United Kingdom economy. There has been strength in manufacturing, in invisibles and in all sectors of the economy. As I have told the House already, the trade position has been improving in recent months and there is every indication that more progress will be made in the current year.

Mr. Wells: Are not the areas in which our trade with Japan and Germany weakest the very areas in which Socialism applied in the 1960s and 1970s—motor cars, semi-conductors and all the other areas in which the Labour party tried to reorganise British industry?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. It is noticeable that the output and performance of those industries are improving by the day as the Government cease to intervene and cease to pursue the policies that the Labour party pursued when in office. The more the Government continue their enterprise-loving policies, the more industry will strengthen.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Minister cast his enterprise-loving mind over the problem of computer inanufacture? Can he name one major computer component in which we are in positive balance with Japan? If not, can he tell us of one thing that he intends to do in the coming year to improve the situation?

Mr. Redwood: I do not have detailed information about all component manufacturers and I would not wish to mislead the House, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that our trade is strengthening and a great deal of inward investment is coming from Japan which is very welcome here. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) will presumably not be telling the House today that near his constituency, Pioneer Electronics is to make a major investment, creating about 1,200 jobs in a very important sector.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my hon. Friend remind the Opposition that a nation that has never suffered any significant nationalisation, that has had low taxation and public spending and a superb education system and that, above all, has never suffered from a Socialist Goverment is always likely to be in better shape economically than one that has suffered from Socialism?

Mr. Redwood: That is so very true. Evidence from the other end of the spectrum can be seen in the way in which the Socialist economies of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are trying to get information from the West about how to run a proper enterprise economy so to enjoy the fruits of prosperity that we in the West have enjoyed for so many years.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

15. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to change the role of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Ridley: I have no such plans.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Secretary of State accept that while competition must remain central to takeover activities, other factors such as the strategic national interest and the impact of takeovers on regional employment or unemployment must be taken into consideration?

Mr. Ridley: I am glad to hear the hon. Gentleman agree that competition is the prime concern of monopolies and mergers policy. I accept there could be examples in which the national interest is involved. We also consider implications such as regional policy, but I stress that that is very much a secondary consideration to the competition issue.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be opened up and brought much closer to the American anti-trust laws with the ability to break up the large monopolies being created in Britain so that we can have real capitalism rather than over-large, domineering companies in any one sector?

Mr. Ridley: The commission has power to order divestment, or to suggest that I order divestment, in certain cases where monopolies are formed, and that power has been used. The policy that appeared to be evolving in the Labour party in a document called "Industry 2000"—I doubt whether anyone has heard of it—was virtually to put a stop to all takeovers. That would be disastrous for the continuing efficient function of the economy.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Secretary of State aware that W. H. Smith and Son Wholesale, which distributes many of the newspapers to which the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) referred, is a monopoly? Does he plan to do anything about that?

Mr. Ridley: These matters have been looked at by the Director General of Fair Trading. I do not think that it is a monopoly because others also circulate newspapers.

Manufactured Imports

17. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the growth in imports of manufactured goods from the European Community since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from the European Community have risen from £16 billion in 1979 to £52·5 billion in 1989, and exports have virtually trebled, as I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Clarke: Is not a deficit of £14·5 billion a serious matter? Is not that why the Confederation of British Industry is concerned about the impact of high interest

rates and the uniform business rate on fixed investment in 1991? Does that not worry the Minister as we approach 1992?

Mr. Redwood: Investment has been running at record levels and we have been enjoying an investment boom. I am sure that that will strengthen our industrial base for the early 1990s and will continue the improvements to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to read the Labour party document "Industry 2000"? Does it contain anything that would indicate—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be careful how his question is framed.

Mr. Bruce: Has my hon. Friend read the document and has he found anything in it to help our import-export balance, or does it propose a return to state intervention and central control? Is he surprised——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask about the Government's policy.

Mr. Redwood: I think that my hon. Friend asked about Government policy. He asked whether there were helpful ideas in a particular document. Having read the document carefully, I notice that a policy gap is developing as the document refers to very few of the ideas in the original Labour policy review. Apart from schemes that the Government are already pursuing, such as training and enterprise schemes, the document contains nothing that would help and many proposals which might be illegal under the European Community regime.

Manufacturing Industry (Competitiveness)

18. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most contacts that my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

Mr. Barron: Has the Minister had any direct representations on the lack of skill training in the British economy, especially in those areas where the major steel and coal industries have been running down? The lack of skill training has been well highlighted by my hon. Friends in relation to the Labour party campaign, "Industry 2000". Why has there been deskilling in many major industries that, according to EEC reports, lack skilled people for the jobs that we hope will exist in the future?

Mr. Hogg: That was a surprisingly uninformed question, even for the hon. Gentleman. He seems unaware that we have put the training councils in place. On a broader point, British industry is in infinitely better shape than it was 10 years ago. I should have thought that the Labour party would welcome the fact that the volume of exports is 15 per cent. higher than it was 12 months ago —a volume increase unprecedented since 1973. Incidentally, Labour Members would be well advised to tell their union friends not to pursue inflationary policies.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Member wants to explain that he speaks French.

Mr. Cohen: I do not speak French, Sir. I should like to present to the House the report, in English, to which the Minister for Industry referred when he accused the Opposition of not being able to speak French. It is evident that the hon. Gentleman has read the wrong report, that he cannot read French and that he has reached the wrong conclusion.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared to accept that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Cohen) may have glanced at the document and to that extent I withdraw my observation. A more interesting question is whether he understood it and whether he is prepared to submit himself for examination, and I shall report to the House on that.

Mr. Speaker: I think that that was a very helpful intervention by the Minister.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may recall that, on 17 April last year I was fortunate enough to have an Adjournment debate on the finances of the Mersey tunnels. I have in front of me a letter, dated yesterday, to Councillor Ingham, the chair of the Merseyside passenger transport authority, in which, in effect, the Secretary of State has ruled out any solution to the problems of financing the work on the Mersey tunnels. As my hon. Friends and I have raised this issue in the House, is not it wrong that the Secretary of State did not respond to the House but instead wrote a letter which Parliament has no opportunity to scrutinise?

Mr. Speaker: I must te the hon. Member with deep regret that I do not immediately remember his Adjournment debate last year. I suggest that he tables a question, and perhaps he will get an answer.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order will take time out of a very important debate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether I can ask for your advice before the debate on South Africa begins. I refer you to page 94 of a book called "How to be a Minister" by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in which he said:

"Do not waste your good lines on having"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a parliamentary book. I shall be very interested to read it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to do so.

If it were possible for me to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches in the coming debate on South Africa, I should do so. Indeed, even if it were possible to impose a five-minute limit on speeches, I do not think that I would be able to call all hon. Members who wish to speak. Points of order will take time out of that debate.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not think that it matters whether it takes up time. The liberties of the House are much more important than any debate.

Yesterday afternoon, we had, to quote you, Mr. Speaker, a particularly disagreeable exchange, in which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made an absolutely discreditable and disgraceful accusation, and he was allowed to get away with it. We had a build-up of pressure—in a pressure-cooker sense—because there was real outrage among my right hon. and hon. Friends about what was said on the Opposition side.

Is not it time for you again to examine the time when hon. Members may raise points of order? The idea that points of order have to wait until after however many statements there may be leads to more trouble, not less. Should not points of order, like any punishment or design, be made immediately after the offence, and not need to wait for hour after hour, as sometimes happens? On a most genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker, will you look at this matter again—that points of order are raised before statements and immediately after Question Time is concluded, because——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have frequently been asked to look at this matter. The hon. Gentleman will recollect that I have made numerous rulings on it. The proper time to raise proper points of order is immediately after private notice questions or statements. That is exactly what happened yesterday. If a matter needs the immediate attention of the Chair it should be raised as a point of order at the time. As regards yesterday, we cannot go back over that. I did not hear the remark of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: We all did.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may have done. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is in *Hansard*."] Of course it is in *Hansard*, because it was subsequently referred to, but I did not hear it. However, I have now had an opportunity of not only listening to it on the radio but seeing it on television. The remark appears to have been somewhat magnified on the medium. However, we cannot go back on it now. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Well, it was said from a sedentary position. It was not an unparliamentary expression, but it was certainly an offensive comment to make. It may be that we will have an opportunity today to put that right.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Many Opposition Members would want to go along with your ruling about the remark not being unparliamentary. The remark itself was very opportune, and most of us——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We shall not have a debate on that.

Mr. Skinner: Let me put the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman is always very helpful. Of course he has a lot of experience in dealing with——

Mr. Skinner: Let me put the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a point of order. The hon. Gentleman has simply prefaced it in that way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), Mr. Speaker. The observation by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was not unparliamentary, but she had to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: The House should look at what I said in *Hansard*. I did not hear that remark, either. What I said was that if the Prime Minister had made an unparliamentary allegation, I am sure that she would wish to withdraw it. She did withdraw it. That is exactly what happened.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. You referred to restricting speeches to five or 10 minutes. Many Back-Bench Members do not think that the quality of debate would be improved by a restriction of either five or 10 minutes, except perhaps in my own case.

Mr. Speaker: I subscribe to that view. It is a pity that the Chair does occasionally impose limits, because I am a believer in personal restraint. If hon. Members could limit their speeches today to about 10 minutes, we would be much better off.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, you rightly followed precedent by saying that you could not pursue remarks made from a sedentary position that you had not heard. However, you were equally saying yesterday that we should have regard to the fact that the television cameras are now here. This afternoon, you said that, on reflection, having taken advantage of what the cameras picked up and of programmes this morning, you had heard something today that you did not hear yesterday. Is not there a case for you to reconsider precedent and, when you find something to have been offensive, to require it to be withdrawn the following day?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for the Chair to require offensive remarks to be withdrawn. Offensive remarks are, I fear, frequently made in the House. The role of the Chair is to ensure that unparliamentary expressions are not used here. It is up to the right hon. Gentleman concerned to decide what to do in relation to that, and perhaps today we shall hear something from him about it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said some moments ago that it would not be possible to go over an incident that occurred in the House some time ago. Did you mean that? Surely we are constantly going over matters——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Yes, I did mean it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it on a different matter?

Mr. Marlow: It is on a slightly different matter, Mr. Speaker. It is now in the public domain, as we all wearily know, that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), a man who chooses his words carefully, said yesterday that the Prime Minister should have done 27 years—*[Interruption.]*—inside. For the right hon. Gentleman to have said that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not certain that this is going to add to the quality of our discussions in the House. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order for me?

Mr. Marlow: The point of order for you, Mr. Speaker, is that if the right hon. Member for Gorton has evidence for that remark, perhaps he should bring it before the House. If not, like any other hon. Member, he should do the decent thing and withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps he will.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that we might clear the matter up by putting the words used by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in the form of a motion? There were so many Tory wets laughing yesterday that we might just carry it.

BILL PRESENTED

Control of Amusement Arcades

Mr. Kenneth Hind, Supported by Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. Den Dover, Mr. Patrick Thompson and Mr. Tim Devlin, presented a Bill to control the licensing of amusement arcades by local authorities; and to restrict entry to amusement arcades to persons over eighteen years of age: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 72.]

Recycling of Plastics

3.42 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that ownership of plastic wrappings and containers shall remain with the manufacturer or retailer; to require the return of such materials for recycling; to provide for incentives in the form of returnable deposits for consumers and a standard labelling format to ease segregation of materials; to impose controls on the incineration and disposal by other means of certain plastics; and for connected purposes.

The Bill is timely because it arises from a recognition by the plastics industry, heavily represented in my constituency, that there is a waste disposal problem with plastic materials, and because it outlines the path down which the industry may wish to go in future.

I begin by paying tribute to the managers and staff of Visqueen Limited, in my constituency, one of the largest manufacturers of plastic bags and film in this country, who first raised this important subject with me.

World consumption of plastics has risen from 1·5 million tonnes in 1939 to 80 million tonnes last year. In the European Community, plastic makes up 7 per cent. of municipal waste by weight, but 25 per cent. by volume. Its use is to be encouraged because it has the inherent advantages of lightness, economical cost and excellent mechanical properties. It is a particularly important material in the protective wrapping of food, in the distribution trade, in building and in the electrical industries.

However, encouragement means that we must think creatively about the disposal after use or possible reuse of plastics. With that in mind, the industry has already taken positive steps actively to collect post-consumer waste and to introduce in-factory reclamation of waste. All the in-factory waste at Visqueen is reused to make black plastic refuse sacks. The parent company now has two further plants on stream—one to deal with agricultural plastic film and bags at Ardeer in west Scotland and the other to deal with supermarket waste at Heanor in Derbyshire, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). It is due to be opened by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs next Monday.

Recycling has been slow to be recognised as a major option for waste, but we cannot sustain our present throwaway attitudes indefinitely. If we do not move to tackle the problems of plastic waste, we shall increasingly harm our surrounding environment. There are few alternative options open to us.

Refuse dumped at sea leads to plastic film damaging aquatic life, smothering fish and plant life and wrapping round the propellors of ships. Agricultural film which is ploughed into the ground comes back up, choking animals and ruining the countryside. In cities, plastics make up much of the lightweight litter about which we complain so bitterly.

According to William Rathje, an American garbologist —apparently that is the term for someone who excavates dumps—plastics have not been a major problem in landfills. They are inert and compactable. The largest single item in landfills is paper, with telephone directories the main culprits, but landfills are filling up, and thermosplastic materials—the six main commodities—are made from crude oil, which is not limitless.

We must tackle the problems the right way round. The European Commission intends to legislate on the matter, according to Commissioner Schafter-Sotiropoulou. However, as we have found with paper and glass, encouragement cannot be given to recycling until industry has a demand for the collected materials.

The Bill provides for a marking scheme to ease separation of the six basic materials. It might work in the same way as the Australian green spot system, in which a number or code is put on products to say into which group they fall. I am sure that many consumers who currently collect their bottles and paper, could collect and separate plastics to go in with plastic waste collected from supermarkets.

Consumer goods, from lawn mowers to clothing, begin their useful life only when sold, but packaging has almost completed its useful life by the time that it reaches the consumer. Like all products, packaging uses raw materials and energy, which are both costly to the manufacturer. Therefore, there is an economic incentive to keep the use of those resources to a minimum.

Consideration should be given at the design stage to the impact that the package will have as waste. Features that will aid recycling must be considered. These days, few items need only one layer of protection. Most are packed in primary consumer packaging such as a jar, and grouped together by secondary distribution packaging, such as a cardboard box or shrink-wrapped tray. There can come a point where reducing the use of material in the primary pack is counter-productive, because the secondary pack has to be strengthened and more material used.

Some packaging is so efficient that its secondary packaging gives rise to more waste than the primary packaging. The secondary packaging accumulates at retail outlets and can be more easily collected for recycling.

Biodegradability is some times held up as an option, but it is not. First, none of the so-called biodegradable plastics are truly biodegradable. Secondly, the research into biodegradability is far from complete. Thirdly, waste in landfill is so compact that it may take centuries to rot.

If anyone wants a mint condition 1952 newspaper or telephone directory, our American garbologist advises digging down through 38 layers of any tip. With further development of recycling technology, I hope that it will be possible—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very important Bill. Would hon. Members mind having their conversations outside the Chamber?

Mr. Devlin: With further developments in recycling technology, I hope that it will be possible to reopen landfill sites by the end of the century and to recycle the plastic materials in them.

Plastic materials are one of our best options for the future if they are constantly reusable. We can start by recycling waste from large users, such as distribution, supermarkets, the building trades and agriculture. Deposits would work for large users, but they have been found to be ineffective for household goods. Proper labelling is also vital.

In my part of the world, we want to stop the dumping of rubbish in our North sea. We have run out of landfill

space in our county and are looking for more. Our people do not want to incinerate any more than we have to, even if plastic burns well with other materials.

Recycling represents a crucial fourth option. With this Bill, I ask the House to seize the opportunity with both hands.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tim Devlin, Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. David Tredinnick, Mr. Stephen Day, Mr. Toby Jessel, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Hugo Summerson, Mr. Gerald Bowden, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Spencer Batiste and Mr. Kenneth Hind.

Recycling of Plastics

Mr. Tim Devlin accordingly presented a Bill to provide that ownership of plastic wrappings and containers shall remain with the manufacturer or retailer; to require the return of such materials for recycling; to provide for incentives in the form of returnable deposits for consumers and a standard labelling format to ease segregation of materials; to impose controls on the incineration and disposal by other means of certain plastics; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 23 February and to be printed. [Bill 73.]

Opposition Day

[7th Allotted Day]

South Africa

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I repeat what I said in reply to the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson): a voluntary restraint of 10 minutes or even less would be extremely helpful this afternoon.

3.51 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move,

That this House salutes Nelson Mandela on his release after more than twenty-seven years of wrongful imprisonment; welcomes the constructive actions taken by President de Klerk to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations with the African National Congress on the future of South Africa; notes that the basic structure of apartheid remains intact and that the world community, including the European Community, has imposed sanctions in order to secure the dismantling of apartheid; and calls upon the European Community at its Ministerial meeting next Tuesday to reject the untimely call of the United Kingdom Government for the abandonment of key sanctions.

During the past two weeks, the world has witnessed historic events in South Africa. First, there was the dramatic speech by President de Klerk announcing the unbanning of the African National Congress and other organisations; the suspension of capital sentences; the freeing of certain political prisoners, and the decision to release Nelson Mandela. That was a courageous speech, on which we congratulate President de Klerk.

Then, last Sunday, came the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in prison, a sentence mostly served in brutal conditions, and a sentence which he should never have served. I note that, although the Government amendment to our motion

"salutes Nelson Mandela on his release",

it does not include our phraseology that Mr. Mandela was wrongfully imprisoned. Opposition members salute this great man on his regaining the freedom which he should never have lost.

Let us be clear that, although the measures taken by Mr. de Klerk are welcome, they do not affect apartheid's basic structure. The Group Areas Act continues, the Land Act continues, detention without trial continues, the state of emergency continues, censorship of the media continues and the police state continues.

Nelson Mandela is free within South Africa, but South Africa is not free. Nelson Mandela is out of prison, but South Africa continues to be a prison, stunting the lives of all in it who, under its racialist laws, are not classified as white. Mandela and his fellow black Africans do not have a vote. They live in poor housing in racially segregated townships. Nelson Mandela, on returning home, returned to a dwelling in one of those townships.

How is South Africa to become free? We are told that negotiations are to begin—negotiations which we in the Labour party believe can end acceptably only with a South African democracy that gives the vote to every man and woman on a common role. What hon. Members from both

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

sides of the House demand for the countries of eastern Europe, we must also demand for the people of South Africa.

What is the balance of power in the negotiations that we hope will soon begin between the African National Congress and the South African Government? On the one hand there is the South African Government, buttressed by the laws made by their stooge Parliament, the army, the police, the prison, and the gallows, which still remain. On the other hand, there is the non-white majority with nothing but its courage, its readiness to suffer and endure, and whatever pressure the international community can exert through sanctions.

Nelson Mandela asks for sanctions to continue. He said that clearly on his release from prison on Sunday, in the historic speech that he made from the balcony in Cape Town. He said:

"To lift sanctions now would be to run the risk of aborting the process towards the complete eradication of apartheid."

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I shall certainly give way to any hon. Member who calls me his right hon. Friend.

Mr. Field: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. As the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that it would be a useful gesture to relax sanctions, and President Kaunda has called on the African National Congress to give up the armed struggle, would not the Labour party find itself in good company if it made a gesture of that nature to celebrate the freedom of Nelson Mandela?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman has ingeniously managed to combine Nos. 3 and 11 of the interventions that the Foreign Office suggested, in a circular, should be made in my speech. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get on.

Mr. Field: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It cannot be a point of order. I think that the hon. Gentleman did not like the answer.

Mr. Field: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have not had an answer, and I combined nothing. This House would do itself a great service in South Africa if it tore up the Gleneagles agreement and allowed sportsmen——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to outline that matter later on.

Mr. Kaufman: I quoted what Mr. Mandela said in Cape Town——

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members have a great interest in the debate, and interventions take up time.

Mr. Kaufman: I am selective about my friends, Mr. Speaker. But if the hon. Gentleman would, from a sedentary position, care to call out the number of his intervention, I shall do my best to deal with it as I proceed.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman has twice referred to a list produced by I know not whom. Am I to understand that, if any Conservative Member wishes to raise a matter that he genuinely feels to be important, it can be dismissed just because it happens to be on somebody else's list as well?

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of any list. If anyone has one, perhaps I could have a look at it.

Mr. Kaufman: I quoted Mr. Mandela, and most of the international community agrees with him—the United States, the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the European Community. Mr. Manuel Marin, the European Commissioner for developing countries, said on Monday that sanctions should continue until the situation is sufficiently clear to accept that the end of apartheid is a reality. Against that near-unanimity in the international community that sanctions against South Africa are essential, only one significant country stands out—the United Kingdom, and especially the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is not only completely isolated on this issue: she glories in her isolation. She has turned being alone into a political way of life—in NATO, in the European Community and, above all, on this issue of sanctions. Her retort to the rest of the international community is, "Don't try to confuse me with the facts of apartheid."

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, because his question will have been supplied not by the Foreign Office but by the South African embassy.

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who, as usual, is giving misinformation to the House. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that Mr. Mandela has called for sanctions to be continued, but will he give an assessment of other voices within South Africa, which represent far more people? Mr. Mandela represents the Xhosa tribe, with 3 million members, but Chief Buthelezi, who represents 7 million people, is against sanctions, at least 2 million coloureds are against sanctions, 1 million Indians are against sanctions and 4·5 million whites are against sanctions. The right hon. Gentleman is fond of quoting numbers from Britain and the rest of Europe, but will he consider the matter from a South African perspective rather than choosing Mr. Mandela as a reason for continuing sanctions?

Mr. Kaufman: To take one of the hon. Gentleman's examples, Chief Buthelezi has already announced that he would like to enter into association with the ANC in the negotiations to take place with the South African Government. The South African Government have released Mr. Mandela and unbanned the ANC because they are the people with whom the South Africans wish to negotiate. Therefore, it is especially appropriate to pay heed to what they say.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, not at this stage.

The Prime Minister is alone in the international community among leaders of significant countries in

opposing sanctions. This weekend her press secretary, Mr. Bernard Ingham, talking about the Prime Minister's isolation, said:

"The truth is the Prime Minister is in command in this situation. She is leading the world."

Leading the world sounds all very grand, but what was ever achieved by a procession of one? To be alone in the world and right is to be heroic, but to be alone in the world and wrong is futile and destructive. That is the position in which the Prime Minister has placed herself and this country.

For years, at every conceivable international meeting, the Prime Minister and her Government have striven to block sanctions. The episodes stand out: at Nassau in 1985, making a space of half an inch with her fingers, and boasting that she had moved just "a tiny little bit"; at Vancouver in 1987, ordering her press secretary deliberately to distort the Canadian record on sanctions; at Brussels in 1988, ordering her then Foreign Secretary to block a joint declaration by the European Community warning of punitive action if the Sharpeville Six were executed; at Kuala Lumpur in 1989, allowing her then poor novice Foreign Secretary to sign a declaration in good faith, and within an hour betraying him and the Commonwealth by issuing a separate declaration—and now, rushing headlong into taking unilateral action in consequence of the recent developments in South Africa.

The Prime Minister's actions have been surrounded by great confusion. There was the episode of the rebel cricket tour of South Africa—now sensibly called off, as we sensibly demanded. Mr. Gatting seems to have learnt more about the facts of South Africa in three weeks than the Prime Minister has learnt in 11 years in Downing street. But then, Mr. Gatting has a clear advantage over the Prime Minister. He admits that he knows nothing about the realities of South African politics. Questioned in the House, the Prime Minister said that the Gatting tour was "not contrary to the Gleneagles agreement".—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 735.]

But the Gleneagles agreement—to which the Prime Minister is, in her words, "signed up"—calls on participating Governments to take every practical step to discourage contacts or competition by their nations with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa. The Gatting tour, contrary to the Prime Minister's statement, is a clear breach of the Gleneagles agreement.

At the time of the Moscow Olympic games, the Prime Minister personally wrote to the chairman of the British Olympic Association urging the British Olympic team not to go to Moscow. Why did she not write to Gatting and Graveney in the same way? The answer is that she did not care whether or not that team went to South Africa.

Then there was the press conference that never was. Recently, the Prime Minister has taken to turning Downing street—fortress Downing street as it has become, since the barricades were erected to keep out the populace—into an equivalent of the White House lawns. On Sunday, journalists were kept waiting for one hour in the rain there before the ubiquitous Mr. Ingham came out to see them. Incidentally, I was touched to learn that Mr. Ingham was briefing the press against me last night. I am honoured to join the company of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), the deputy Prime Minister, and a cast of thousands.

Mr. Ingham told the soaked journalists, "She is not coming down. She does not think she has anything further to say." The Prime Minister with nothing further to say? I bet that the Cabinet would not have minded being soaked to the skin in exchange for such an unprecedented bonus.

Confusion extends to the Prime Minister's view of the sanctions' legal status. She has scrapped one sanction already. On Sunday, she announced that she has lifted the ban on artistic and cultural contacts with South Africa. That is a harsh decision. Exposing innocent South Africans to the plays of Jeffrey Archer and to the musicals of Andrew Lloyd Webber is a form of punitive sanction in itself.

Then we come to the sanction on new investment, which the Prime Minister also said on Sunday she wanted to lift. Is this a voluntary sanction which we are free to lift, without the agreement of the European Community? Yesterday, I contacted the Foreign Secretary's office and asked for a definitive ruling. After some delay, the right hon. Gentleman's staff courteously telephoned my office with their reply. They offered no guidance other than to refer me to what the Prime Minister had said in the House at Question Time. It is no wonder that the *Sunday Telegraph* said last Sunday:

"The Prime Minister's good relations with her new Foreign Secretary have caused some surprise."—

said a Minister.

"He accepts rebukes and he isn't operating an independent Foreign Office policy."

In the House yesterday, the Prime Minister was unclear. She said that this sanction was voluntary, but she did not say whether it could be lifted unilaterally. My advice is that it cannot. The decision of the ministerial council of 27 October 1986 says:

"Member states shall take the necessary measures to ensure that new direct investments in the Republic of South Africa by natural or legal persons resident within the Community are suspended."

We

"shall take the necessary measures."

That seems pretty binding to me, and it is especially binding for the United Kingdom because of the circumstances in which the decision was made.

The document containing the decision on the ban on new investment in South Africa concludes:

"Done at Luxembourg, 27 October 1986."

It was signed "The President G. Howe".

The circumstances under which sanctions may be relaxed are strictly laid down in agreements to which the Government are a signatory party. The United Nations declaration of December 1989 demands the release of all political prisoners and detainees, removal of all troops from the townships, the end of the state of emergency and the repeal of the Internal Security Act. None of those conditions has been fulfilled. By seeking to drop sanctions now, the Prime Minister is seeking to breach a united declaration which she has signed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, underlying the points that he has correctly made about the isolation of the Prime Minister on the question of sanctions, is the fact that Britain is the largest single investor in South Africa, with £12,000 million-worth of investments? Consolidated Gold Fields has regularly made more than £100 million a year profit out of the blood and bones of black miners. That is why the Prime Minister is such a friend of the white regime in South Africa.

Mr. Kaufman: When I was in South Africa last July as a guest of the South African Council of Churches, I visited the people who had been sacked by the subsidiary of a British company—BTR Sarmcol. They were thrown out of work, on to the scrap heap, with no job, no wages and nothing to live on. That is the way in which British investors are taking advantage of conditions in South Africa.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: The statement by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at Kuala Lumpur last October declares that the

"justification for sanctions against South Africa . . . was . . . to abolish apartheid by bringing Pretoria to the negotiating table and keeping it there until that change was irreversibly secured."

That change has not been irreversibly secured. By seeking to drop sanctions now, the Prime Minister is seeking to breach a Commonwealth statement which she signed. It was a part of the statement that she assented to, and did not disclaim. The statement of partial disclaimer, issued separately at Kuala Lumpur by the Prime Miniser and the Foreign Secretary, clearly states "the necessary steps" under which

"it would be right to lift some of the measures imposed by the international community."

Those steps—listed in a statement issued by the Prime Minister as her personal policy—include lifting the state of emergency. But the state of emergency has not been lifted. In seeking to drop sanctions now, the Prime Minister is trying to breach a personal statement that she herself drafted and signed. It is impossible to imagine anything more unprincipled.

The fact is that the Prime Minister has never wanted any sanctions to be imposed on South Africa at any time. She is now falling over herself at what she regards as a golden opportunity to get rid of them. She is trying desperately to wriggle out of commitments on sanctions that she made apparently in honour.

In the House yesterday the Prime Minister said, again creating confusion:

"The sanctions . . . are totally voluntary".

But there are several sanctions that, as the Foreign Secretary must know, are absolutely binding on us in international law. The Prime Minister is wrong about that. She also said in the House yesterday that the sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom were

"some very minor gesture sanctions".—[*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 136-38.]

At other times she has warned of the dire effect of sanctions and their capacity to cause economic damage to South Africa. Most notable, of course, is the ban on new investment presided over in Luxembourg by the deputy Prime Minister in 1986.

The Prime Minister is confused about every aspect of sanctions except one. The point that she is clear about is that she wants to lift them. Why? There is no doubt of the damaging affects of the ban on new investment: the Trust bank of South Africa calculates that the country has lost $14 billion in loans and direct investments over the past five years, and that 280 foreign companies have abandoned it since 1984.

A few months ago, the South African Finance Minister spoke of the "economic onslaught", the "beleaguered community", the

"need to break the isolation imposed on us . . . the elementary but remorseless truth . . . for both the economic and the political policymakers that no country can stand alone."

The South African Law and Order Minister has also admitted the effect of sanctions on his country:

"Our ability to make decisions is limited. If sanctions are introduced against us we can do nothing . . . We do not live alone in the world."

There is no doubt that sanctions have worked; there is no doubt that they are working. Nor is there any doubt that that is why the Prime Minister wants to get rid of them. She wants to rescue the very regime that sanctions are helping to bring down: she is the world's best friend of apartheid.

The most sickening aspect of the Prime Minister's opposition to effective sanctions is the argument against them that she has offered. She says that they would put hundreds of thousands of black South Africans out of work, and would cause deprivation and starvation. When did the Prime Minister ever care about unemployment? When did she ever care about poverty? It is true that South Africa contains unemployment and poverty on a horrendous scale, by any standards in the world; that unemployment and that poverty, however, are caused not by sanctions but by the system—the very system which the Prime Minister wants to prop up.

Let us be clear that apartheid is not racial oppression for its own sake; apartheid is racial oppression to make possible the use of the cheap slave labour of millions of blacks to provide a luxurious standard of living for the minority of whites.

I do not accuse the Prime Minister of condoning the racialism of apartheid, but I do say that, shorn of its racialism, the economic objective of the South African Government is Thatcherism in its ultimate form: the poor financing the high living standards of the rich. That is what exists in South Africa, and that is what the Prime Minister, given the chance, wants to bring about in this country too.

Speaking in Soweto yesterday, Mr. Nelson Mandela said:

"South Africa is a wealthy country. It is the labour of black workers which has built the roads and factories that we see . . . Our people need proper houses, not ghettos like Soweto."

Mr. Mandela said:

"They"—

the black people of South Africa—

"cannot be excluded from that wealth."

This great man, his mind crystal clear after 27 years of incarceration and suffering, states the position in its starkest terms. Mr. Mandela explains the situation and the product and the objective of apartheid in South Africa. He explains why the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is so wrong. He explains why sanctions must stay. He explains why this House should vote for this motion tonight.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During exchanges before this debate started, you said that you hoped that an apology might be given during the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). No such apology has been given. Perhaps that was an oversight. Could you, Mr. Speaker, invite the right hon. Gentleman to give that apology?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. I have already made my position clear.

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"salutes Nelson Mandela on his release and welcomes the constructive actions taken by President de Klerk to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations with all parties in South Africa towards a non-racial constitution enjoying the support of a majority of South Africans; and believes these steps deserve a positive and practical response from the international community."

It is always difficult to know how to qualify a speech such as that which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has just delivered. Fortuntely, he has come to my help on this occasion. In his book, "How to be a Minister" he gives this advice:

"Your final paragraph should be grandiloquent, even if almost meaningless."

The right hon. Gentleman is certainly consistent. Indeed, he has expanded on his own advice by covering in that way not only the final paragraph but the whole speech.

I am glad that the Opposition chose this matter for debate because it enables me to set out, in what I hope will be a coherent way, the approach and reasoning behind Her Majesty's Government's policy towards South Africa. I am glad to be able to do that as, up to now, I have not had the opportunity.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, the world had seen remarkable changes in recent months, but few have been more remarkable, or more welcome, than the transformation being wrought in South African politics—a transformation symbolised by the scenes that we saw last Sunday and thereafter. I congratulate Mr. Mandela on his release. Even those who, like myself, have been able to watch only snatches of the events that have followed the release must have been impressed by the overwhelming warmth of the welcome that Mr. Mandela has received and by the dignity with which he met it. It has been a formidable welcome—this is a serious point—bringing with it a formidable responsibility for one man to carry, and we wish him well as he begins to shoulder that responsibility.

Contrary to the thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, the Government's policy towards South Africa has always been based on our rejection of apartheid. It is wrong; it does not work; the sooner it is ended the better. If the right hon. Gentleman had heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister speaking as forcefully in private as in public about apartheid, he simply would not have made the misleading and perverse remarks that he did about my right hon. Friend. What we have done in the past and what we are doing now is designed to speed up the end of apartheid.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman be kind enough to inform the House whether, before the Prime Minister decided to abandon certain of these sanctions, she bothered to consult her Foreign Secretary or even that amiable dumb-bell, the deputy Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here yesterday, but I do not think that remarks of that kind add any quality to our debates.

Mr. Faulds: On reconsideration, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that. I have considerable regard for the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I am only sorry for the suffering that he has to put up with.

Mr. Hurd: I do not wish to contradict you, Mr. Speaker, but I thought that the contribution from the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) was rather above the level that we have had so far from the Opposition. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. What has been said and what is being done is part of a measured response, worked out well in advance, to the kind of actions that we hoped the President of South Africa would take and that he is now taking.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I should like my right hon. Friend to clarify one point. There are different ways of interpreting different events. I understand that the Government's interpretation of the situation is that it would help Mr. de Klerk if we began to lower the sanctions barriers. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is also the opposite argument: that at the moment Mr. de Klerk's main problem is the white Fascists in South Africa, not the African National Congress? If sanctions are lowered, Mr. de Klerk faces the possibility of the white Fascists saying, "We are doing quite well out of what the Government have already done." Since Mr. Mandela's release, has Mr. de Klerk specifically asked the British Government to do anything about sanctions?

Mr. Hurd: President de Klerk made it clear in our contacts with him throughout that he very much hoped that if he began to move down the path that we and others —but eminently we—have been urging, there would be some response. That seems to be an entirely reasonable point. It is highly desirable that he should have that response to be able to reply to his critics on the Right who are pressing him fairly hard and who have been pressing him even harder since he made his speech on 2 February. We want to help to bring about in South Africa the peaceful replacement of apartheid by a non-racial, representative system of government that is fair and acceptable to the people of South Africa as a whole.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on with my speech.

To this end, the Government have maintained a consistent policy towards the South African Government of pressure and encouragement. We want to bring about an environment in which the negotiations that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned—on an end to apartheid—can take place. We believe that that requires encouragement.

Mr. Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman a little later, if he persists, but I must make some progress with my speech because many hon. Members wish to speak.

We believe in encouragement when steps have been taken in the right direction and pressure when they have not—a combination of encouragement and pressure. That is why we supported the mission to South Africa in 1986 of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. The

[Mr. Hurd]

group developed a negotiating concept. That, in our view, represented the most feasible basis on which to get the negotiations under way.

Mr. Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) is, I believe, one of those who wishes to participate in the debate. Perhaps he could leave his point until then.

Mr. Hurd: The core of the EPG concept was one of matching and reciprocal commitments by both sides in South Africa. It is worth recalling what it asked them to do. The EPG called on the South African Government to unban the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress, to release Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and detainees, to remove troops from the townships, to provide for freedom of assembly and discussion and to suspend detention without trial; in short, to normalise political activity in South Africa. It called on the ANC and others, for their part, to suspend violence and enter negotiations.

The negotiating concept of the Eminent Persons Group had wide international support. The whole House should be glad that President de Klerk has now gone so far towards meeting the EPG's conditions for dialogue. We urge the ANC and other opposition groups to make an equivalent response by suspending their campaign of violence.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: Let me justify what I have just said. President de Klerk came to office on 21 September last year. In October he released from long years of imprisonment eight black leaders, including Walter Sisulu, the former general secretary of the African National Congress. In November he announced the dismantling of the national security management system. He began an investigation into serious allegations of covert activities by the South African security forces against anti-apartheid activists, an investigation which has since been raised to the level of a full judicial inquiry. In the same month he opened South Africa's remaining segregated beaches to all races and promised that the Separate Amenities Act, which permits segregation of other facilities, would be repealed.

Those in themselves were major steps, but they were overshadowed by the further steps announced in President de Klerk's speech on 2 February. Before he made his speech in Parliament on 2 February, we urged him to release Mr. Nelson Mandela unconditionally, to unban the ANC, the PAC and the South African Communist party, and to lift the state of emergency. We expressed the hope that the South African Government would look again at the law on capital punishment and think in terms of protection for minority rather than "group" rights. President de Klerk has taken many of the steps we urged on him and which the Prime Minister urged on him when she saw him in London last June. We have exerted our influence to the full in that direction in South Africa, and we have been able to do so more directly and more successfully than most other countries.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: Every one of those steps is therefore something for which Britain has repeatedly called and pressed over the years. Now they have been taken, it is absurd to say—as the Opposition do in their motion—that we should behave as though nothing had happened. To propose, as the Opposition do, that sanctions should be maintained in all their forms merely reveals the irresponsibility of their policy. Talk of intensified, comprehensive sanctions, in which the Opposition still dabble from time to time, now clearly belongs to another world.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that we should do as Mr. Mandela asks and maintain all sanctions. That is not our analysis. To do that would be to shirk our responsibility. The ANC is a key participant in negotiations about the future of South Africa but, as has already been pointed out, it is the only one. It is the job of a British Government not to favour one party or another, but to try to do what we can to contribute to a peaceful, democratic solution in South Africa.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): It is precisely the point of a peaceful and democratic achievement that I want to raise with the Secretary of State. If sanctions are lifted, the tragic fact is that the only force for change remaining in South Africa will be mass action, with all the risks of tension and upheaval that come with it. In the knowledge that that is the case, and that if sanctions are lifted, the ANC and the other forces striving for the abolition of apartheid are left to their own internal devices, is he prepared to reconsider any of his current views on sanctions?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is making the same mistake as I think he made yesterday, although I was not in the House. He is assuming that we propose the abolition of all sanctions, but we are not doing that. We propose a step-by-step, measured response. The President of South Africa has taken a large number of the measures which we, with the support of the House, have urged upon him. That response, which is a courageous one on his part, requires a response from us if he is to be taken seriously. He has not gone the full way, and we are not proposing to go the full way. Surely the right hon. Gentleman realises that if someone has started a process that we have urged upon him, it is sensible that we should respond by some encouragement so that he can proceed. If we give him no encouragement and say that nothing that he has done is worthy or deserves any response or relaxation, we are throwing him away and discouraging him from taking any further action. If the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that basic point, he is not looking at it through straight eyes.

Mr. Kinnock: I apologise to the Secretary of State for intervening again, but it is a fundamental point. First, the right hon. Gentleman is representing a Prime Minister who has shown that she is antagonistic to sanctions in principle. Secondly, she has described the sanctions that she installed as gesture sanctions. What real case can he build for suggesting that by the withdrawal of sanctions on which the Government put no value he can exert an influence over or offer a reward to President de Klerk?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I can answer the right hon. Gentleman by continuing my speech and dealing with the sanctions in question.

I return to my main point—that we have to encourage the process that is under way. It does not make sense to take punitive actions when the South African Government are doing all the wrong things and to maintain all those punitive measures when the South African Government, at long last, are doing many of the right things. There is an obvious need to encourage the South African Government to take further steps, including the complete lifting of the state of emergency. That is where the right hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. We are not rushing to lift all sanctions. Ours is a measured response. Mandatory sanctions, including the arms embargo which is crucial, remain. We stand by the Gleneagles agreement, to the disappointment of some of my hon. Friends. There is no question of reviewing the arms embargo or associated military sanctions until there is a full democratic constitution in South Africa. We are giving a measured but positive response to President de Klerk's bold moves.

I now deal with the European Community, on which the right hon. Member for Gorton spent some time. In 1986, the Foreign Ministers of the European Community agreed to impose restrictive measures on South Africa in response to the actions of the South African Government. The European Community imposed those measures to send a signal to the South African Government that they should take steps to open the road to dialogue. In particular, it mentioned the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, and the lifting of the ban on the ANC, the PAC and other political parties. Community Ministers also called for the ending of the state of emergency, and on 10 February President de Klerk made it clear that that could take place within weeks if there was no upsurge of violence.

We propose a logical, step-by-step response; not to lift all our measures, but to consult our Community partners about lifting those measures adopted in 1986, starting with the Community ban on new investment which was always voluntary in our case.

The right hon. Member for Gorton may not know that our approach has been endorsed by a letter to a number of Community Foreign Ministers from Helen Suzman, who is one of the leading veteran opponents of apartheid in South Africa, asking the Community to revise the policy of sanctions against South Africa to fortify President de Klerk's ability to combat white fears and resistance, and to enable the South African economy to grow to provide education, social services and employment opportunities to all South Africans in a non-racial society.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: Before I give way to the right hon. Gentleman, it is worth remembering that the population of South Africa will grow by nearly 1 million people a year over the next 10 years. There are 7 million children at school today in South Africa. By the turn of the century there will be 12 million people needing education. If we were to inflict the serious economic damage on South Africa that the right hon. Gentleman favours, we would leave any future South African Government with a hopeless task.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to clear up a matter which his office, with all the good will in the world, was unable to clear up yesterday? The right hon. Gentleman referred to the ban on new investment made under the presidency of the deputy Prime Minister as a "voluntary" measure. It is certainly a voluntary measure for the companies, because the decision states that the provision

"may be complied with by the issue of guidance to natural and legal persons."

Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear whether the Government's advice is that they can get rid of this ban on new investment unilaterally, or whether that can be done only by another decision of the European Community?

Mr. Hurd: I shall gladly elucidate. The decisions made in September 1986 were to place bans on new investment, imports of iron and steel and imports of certain gold coins. The bans on those imports were implemented through Community legislation, but the ban on new investment was not—it was a separate decision by member states outside the framework of the treaties. Its implementation was left to the decision of individual member countries. We have no capital controls in this country, and therefore we could only discourage companies from new investment. That was done in a written answer by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The last paragraph of that written answer stated:

"Meanwhile, if the South African Government were to take those steps for which we and our partners have called, in order to establish a process of dialogue across racial lines, we have made clear in the Commonwealth communiqué that we stand ready to review and, if appropriate, to rescind the measures we have adopted."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. *220*.]

We seek to lay before our Community partners—I shall do this in Dublin next week—a reasoned case, to consult them on our proposals and to explain why we think there is no logic in the continuance in present circumstances of this voluntary ban on new investment.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer my question?

Mr. Hurd: I have answered. We are pursuing the correct policy. We are consulting our European Community partners and making it clear that we see no sense in continuing the ban.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way? This is a very important point.

Mr. Hurd: I think that I should continue. Perhaps I can clarify the matter further. We shall not, of course, instruct companies to invest in South Africa, because Governments do not direct such decisions. We would simply say to the companies, "Make your judgment on straightforward commercial grounds in either direction, free from politically motivated pressures." Companies will look to South Africa's long-term prospects as a stable and prosperous country. South Africa will have to satisfy that requirement, which will remain a powerful incentive for all South Africans to make further progress. South Africa needs to restore its valued place in development if it is to satisfy the aspirations of all its citizens. It will need help from abroad. That is what led the Commonwealth at Kuala Lumpur to call on international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund, to examine how resources might be mobilised once there is evidence of clear and irreversible change. That evidence is now before us.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the right hon. Member for Gorton.

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman has not answered clearly the question that I put to him. Can he take the action that he has described—withdrawing the guidance to the companies unilaterally—or can he do that only if he secures agreement in Dublin next Tuesday?

Mr. Hurd: We are doing what I am advised we need to do—consulting our partners. There is no written answer and no statement rescinding that decision. We will point out that the logic of the voluntary ban on investment has run out. In the light of the September 1986 decisions, there is no further purpose in carrying on with that.

At the same time, we remain fully engaged on the ground in South Africa. Part of the trouble in these debates is that they are all about sanctions, whereas sanctions are only part of the answer. We are continuing our bilateral aid programme and are thereby proving in a thoroughly practical way our commitment to help ease the transition to a post-apartheid society.

I should like to give the facts. The right hon. Member for Gorton has visited some of these projects and knows how important they are. Together with our contribution to the European Community programme, we expect to spend about £40 million in the period 1987 to 1992. Most of this will be spent on supporting education and training. By the end of this year, we shall be funding more than 1,000 scholarships for South African students. We are supporting education projects throughout South Africa. Last year, we played a leading role in helping to set up a scheme run by the Urban Foundation which will enable 40,000 South African families, who would not otherwise have the chance, to buy their own homes. We are contributing to hundreds of community projects that will help to improve standards of health care, education, community support and so on.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall continue.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State now give way? He has given way to several Members, so will he now give way to me?

Mr. Hurd: I have given way extensively. I gave way to the hon. Gentleman the last time we had questions on South Africa, and I shall not do so today.

It is true that mitigating the hardships caused by apartheid is no substitute for working for its abolition—we must do both—but I hope that the persistence of apartheid will not be used as an excuse for not getting involved. Through our focus on education at all levels, we are helping to prepare the generation that we hope will inherit the post-apartheid South Africa.

Mr. Nellist: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way? He said 15 minutes ago that he would.

Mr. Hurd: I did not say that, and I do not intend to give way.

Mr. Nellist: The Secretary of State said that he would give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) wishes to participate in this debate. It will not improve his chances if he does not listen to the Foreign Secretary and delays proceedings.

Mr. Hurd: I have given way extensively, and I shall not give way again. Hon. Members who are seeking to interrupt me will be able to make their own speeches, if they catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Some people argue that when the Securitate starts to crumble, one should not make concessions to it. That is a false and over-simple analogy. There are lessons for South Africa in eastern Europe, as President de Klerk has acknowledged, but anyone who thinks—this view was apparent in some of the comments of the right hon. Member for Gorton—that the South African Government are about to surrender power for fear of having it wrested from them is deluding himself about the real position. No one who really cares about the future of South Africa would advocate a policy that would set back reform and lead to bloodshed. It is very easy for people to warm themselves with their rhetoric on this subject, but we do not intend to do that. We shall continue to take measured steps to contribute to a peaceful solution inside South Africa.

Of course, it is true that apartheid has not yet been abolished and that the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act remain in place. The South Africans are not yet at the end of the road, but they have taken the first steps upon it. The South African Government have made it clear that all the so-called "pillars of apartheid" are open for negotiation. They are setting no limits on the agenda. By any reasonable standard, it is now for their opponents to respond.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State respond——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must resume his seat.

Mr. Nellist: The debate is supposed to be about South Africa and——

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to join the debate by making his own speech.

If there is no response from the international community of the kind that we have suggested, there will be—as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said the day before yesterday—a danger of a Right-wing reaction, even though those opposing President de Klerk can offer South Africa nothing but increasing strife in a hopelessly divided society.

If we wanted to snuff out the present process of reform, condemn the black majority to greater poverty than the right hon. Gentleman described, and condemn the white minority to extremist white Government, we would follow the right hon. Gentleman's advice and make no response to President de Klerk's initiative. But we do not intend to do that. That is the wrong way around.

It is reasonable to look to the many opposition groups in South Africa to take this opportunity. A chance now exists to bring about genuine change through peaceful negotiation, involving not only the ANC but the PAC, the black consciousness movement, the Inkatha movement, which has already been referred to, and all the other political organisations that have struggled against

apartheid for so long. They should take up the challenge and heed the many calls, most recently from President Kaunda, to suspend violence and enter negotiations.

In his speech on 2 February, President de Klerk called on his opponents to walk through the open door and take their place at the negotiating table. I was heartened by that, and I am heartened by Mr. Mandela's belief that the negotiations will begin very soon. I sincerely hope that that is the case. That is the way to speed the end of apartheid. The prize of a free, democratic and prosperous South Africa is one for which we have worked for a long time.

4.50 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The whole House will feel some sympathy for the Foreign Secretary because he had to make that speech today. I remain one of those who are convinced that we would not have had this debate had it not been for the Prime Minister's maladroit remarks over the weekend in response to President de Klerk's press conference and Nelson Mandela's release. One could almost hear the tearing of hair in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the time. That explains why the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was so uncomfortable at the Dispatch Box on Monday.

I do not dispute for a second that the Prime Minister is opposed to apartheid, but we all know—more important, the people of South Africa know—that her denunciation of apartheid has always been ritual, while her denunciation of sanctions has always been passionate. That has always been the impression gained by people in South Africa. My party would not object to the Foreign Secretary laying down a reasonable programme of looking ahead to the lifting of pressures and sanctions. Of course that is sensible in response to the changes that will come about in South Africa, but we object to that being done prematurely and not in concert with our European and Commonwealth partners.

I noticed that the Foreign Secretary did not pray in aid this afternoon, as the Prime Minister attempted to do yesterday, President Bush, the Archbishop of Canterbury or anybody else. They, too, have made it quite clear that they are talking about a future programme of lifting sanctions, not about prematurely lifting sanctions.

I again quote to the Foreign Secretary the words to which the Government are committed. At the Council of Ministers meeting on 10 September 1985 it was agreed that the objective of European Community measures was

"the complete abolition of apartheid as a whole and not just certain components of the system."

That is an important recollection to which the Government are wholly committed.

At the Commonwealth conference at Kuala Lumpur, the Government entered many reservations about the communiqué, but there was no reservation about paragraph 7. It was one of the paragraphs to which the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister assented. The communiqué states that the Heads of Government

"agreed that the only justification for sanctions against South Africa was the pressure they created for fundamental political change. The purpose was not punitive, but to abolish apartheid by bringing Pretoria to the negotiating table"—

I stress this—

"and keeping it there until that change was irreversibly secured. In this respect Heads of Government noted that leading personalities in the South African Government had themselves acknowledged the increasing pressure on the South African economy, and that those pressures would not be diminished until fundamental political change had taken place."

That is in the Commonwealth communiqué to which the previous Foreign Secretary assented.

Mr. Hurd: Looking fairly at the situation in South Africa, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that while apartheid still remained there had been fundamental political changes?

Sir David Steel: I agree with the Foreign Secretary that there is the foreshadowing of fundamental political change, but the whole apartheid system is still in place.

I have been to South Africa since President de Klerk came to office. There is no doubt that there is a major change in attitude, mentality and objective between the de Klerk Government and the previous Government. That is not in dispute. It was put to me time and again, particularly by sections of the black population, that once Nelson Mandela was released and the state of emergency was lifted, the country would just be back to bad normality—the apartheid system would still exist. That is the position that we face today. Of course we must look forward and hope for the best, but the change has not yet happened, and it will take a little time.

Moreover, those who doubted, including the Prime Minister, whether sanctions would be effective should look at what was said in the National party manifesto in the elections in the autumn. It states:

"boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment, have strained the economy of the country and of every business and household."

We do not rejoice because that has happened, but it is an open acknowledgment of what many of us knew was happening—that the pressure inside the National party and inside the business community led to the removal of President P. W. Botha and his replacement by President de Klerk. There is no question but that they played a major part.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East) *rose*—

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*—

Sir David Steel: Hon. Members know that Mr. Speaker has called for brief speeches. I have given way once already.

Mr. Dykes: Is not one of the problems vis-a-vis the majority of the population that, although President de Klerk is an enormous improvement on the previous state President, there is still anxiety? Botha originally promised a great deal of reform, but he did nothing about abolishing the Population Registration Act, the Land Acts and the Group Areas Act.

Sir David Steel: I made that point in response to the Minister's statement the other day. We must make sure that there is pressure for their abolition and maintain it.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has been forced to elaborate on what he said in Bangladesh. In his press release this morning, he said:

"But the hardest work—and the hardest tests—lie ahead. When those tests—such as the legislation that enforces apartheid—are tackled, the government of South Africa will need encouragement so that they can show their electorate that the dismantling of the system is good for all the people of South Africa. That, after all, is the whole point of the existing sanctions."

[Sir David Steel]

The archbishop concluded:

"We should applaud President de Klerk for taking the essential first steps and be ready at the right time to respond with the easing of sanctions. I pray that time may not be long delayed."

That is precisely my party's position also. I do not believe that the Government are right to rush unilaterally ahead of our allies in taking unjustified steps.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir David Steel: I will not give way again. I shall conclude my remarks in just a couple of minutes.

In November, when I was last in South Africa, it was quite clear that every section of white opinion—even those who, slightly to my surprise, did not agree with the imposition of sanctions, including colleagues and friends in the Democratic party who have always disagreed with us on this issue—acknowledged that international pressures had played their part in bringing about the change. Equally, I could find nobody of any particular persuasion in the black community who believed that the Prime Minister had done anything but hinder change. In a sense, that is rather unfair. The Foreign Secretary and I know that her private pressures have been helpful. The work being done by our embassy in Pretoria and by our consulate in Johannesburg on the ground and the projects to which the Foreign Secretary referred are wholly admirable. The trouble is that we have been doing good by stealth. The overall impression among the black population of South Africa is overlaid by the Prime Minister's repeated and isolated antagonism to bring effective pressure to bear.

I welcome President Mandela's first speech—*[Interruption.]* I am moving too far ahead. I welcome Mr. Mandela's speech on the balcony in Cape Town, when he paid tribute to the sections of the white population who had played their part in the struggle. He mentioned the black sash movement and the National Union of Students in South Africa. He could have mentioned others also. All the churches have played a significant role.

I should not like the chance to go by without paying tribute to our colleagues in our sister Democratic party in opposition within the South African Parliament. I refer to Helen Suzman, Colin Eglin, van Zyl Slabbert and others who have a record, admittedly within a limited white parliamentary system, of trying to mitigate the effects of apartheid.

The challenge facing Nelson Mandela is difficult, but he is the one person who can reunite the black movements. It is essential that Inkatha—Chief Buthelezi's movement—be brought back into a reconciliation with the ANC and the other movements, and Mr. Mandela is the only man who can do that.

In November I had the extraordinary experience of talking with Walter Sisulu at his home in Soweto. I was deeply impressed and moved by the fact that a man who had spent a quarter of a century in gaol could talk for an hour calmly, reasonably, realistically and with no bitterness about how it would take time for the changes to come about in South Africa and about how they would be under pressure from younger people with rising expectations of instant change. That is a frustration with which the ANC leadership and others will have to deal. In the meantime, while that is happening, there should be no let-up from the outside world in keeping the pressure going.

5 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I should at the outset declare an interest. I have been associated for many years with the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa. I have no reason to regret that. Indeed, I have some reason to be proud of it, as it has pressed for many years for dialogue between the South African Government and the different African organisations. Indeed, the present chairman of the corporation undertook a journey to Lusaka to talk to the ANC leaders some months ago.

We must, however, face the fact that until the last year there was no basis for dialogue. Under the Brezhnev regime in the Soviet Union, central and southern Africa were turned into a major theatre of the cold war. Cuban troops were sent to Angola, and SWAPO and ANC forces were equipped and encouraged to attempt to overthrow South African rule by force. Only in the last year has western diplomacy, and American diplomacy above all, succeeded in convincing Mr. Gorbachev that he was on to a no-win situation in central and southern Africa and that there was no possibility of overthrowing by force the white regime in the South African Republic.

Only in the last 12 months have we got agreement for the withdrawal of Cubans from Angola, for SWAPO being prepared to come in peacefully in the South-West African —Namibian—elections. Only in the last few months has the ANC leadership, including the Communist leader, Mr. Joe Slovo, accepted the idea that they could make progress only by negotiation and no longer by violent force. That has been a tremendous change, and it has created a situation in which dialogue should be possible. It has gradually sunk in on the black and white sides.

I join in saluting Mr. Mandela on his release and for showing great dignity since then. I praise Mr. de Klerk because he has taken a tremendous risk, in domestic and global politics. He has opened a gate and he cannot be sure whether, at the end of the day, there will or will not be fruitful negotiations. He deserves our congratulations.

I regret that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is not in his place, because I intend to be rather harsh towards him. I have attended and taken part in many debates in the House under what might be described as the broad heading of decolonisation. Although we no longer have dominant influence, we have some influence as we deal with the future of 25 million people. This is not the occasion for a cheap solicitous speech, which is what we heard from the right hon. Member for Gorton. Had the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) been here, he would have raised the level well above that.

Because we are dealing with the future of so many people, this is not an occasion for scoring cheap debating points about whether a particular sanction was or was not an international commitment. There is a case to be made, although I do not hold with it, for retaining sanctions, and there is a case for lifting them, but the issue should be dealt with in a more measured and statesmanlike way than we heard from the right hon. Member for Gorton.

The right hon. Gentleman's remarks left me with the impression that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was absolutely right in her strictures about him yesterday,

which a leading article in *The Times* this morning tended to confirm. Analogies are always dangerous, but it seemed as if the Labour party was committing itself to the point where its South African policy would be dictated by the ANC.

That happened before, in Mr. Attlee's time, with the Indian Congress party. The result was the partition of India, first into two and later into three, with 2 million dead and with chaotic consequences visible still in Kashmir and Karachi. It is dangerous for a great party such as the Labour party to commit itself to one particular faction in another country. Luckily, its influence—indeed the influence of the Government—is limited today.

It is equally important to remember that, while the ANC is an important factor in the equation, it is not the only one. There are other important black African factors. There are also the Indians and coloureds, together about 3 million people; and at the end of the day, whatever negotiations are achieved, the conclusions will have to be submitted to the white electorate, whose views we must also have in mind.

I am not sure that sanctions have played a great part in leading up to Mr. de Klerk's speech—the withdrawal of Soviet support from the revolutionary elements has been far more important—but I would not deny that sanctions have had an important symbolic effect, because they have made the South African whites feel isolated. It is important, if we are to carry them in the general movement for reform, that they should realise that sanctions will be lifted and that they will be less isolated, as already they are, as they move towards reform.

It is important to remember that President de Klerk has already been received by several African heads of state, that trade between South Africa and black Africa has increased by leaps and bounds, and that even relations with the Soviet Union are progressing. No wonder, since they are both gold and diamond producers and both are benefiting from cheap labour.

We should have made some gestures in the time of President Botha, because he started the reform process. Let us not under-estimate what he did. It was regarded as revolutionary at the time in white South Africa, and what is happening now goes a long way forward from those steps.

We must always have in mind the wider objective of our policy in southern Africa. The dismantlement of apartheid is no doubt a worthy goal, but it is not in itself a great objective of British policy. We are really concerned with reviving the economy of southern and central Africa as a whole.

The report of the World bank shows that this area of Africa is dying, and there are many reasons why that is the case. It is clear that we shall not be able to revive it—to rescue it from its present decline—without co-operation from South Africa, which is the only modern industrial country in that part of the world.

Until now South Africa's stance has inhibited its co-operation with its neighbours. The real reason why I should like to see apartheid dismantled is to enable South Africa to fulfil what should be its right purpose—to develop and bring forward the economies of its neighbouring countries.

We want to see progress towards democracy but, as we keep saying about eastern Europe, it must be based on a market economy and private enterprise. The ANC has not yet come round to that view. I hope that it will. It is clear that, unless it does, it will not only bring destruction to what is still a prosperous economy in South Africa but will abort the possibility of the constructive work which the South African Republic could bring about in southern or central Africa.

5.10 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I have just returned from South Africa. South Africa is a beautiful country, full of resources, but it is a tragic country. One gets the feeling when one goes there that the situation is extremely tense and that unless something of substance happens reasonably quickly there could be an almighty bloodbath.

I was a member of Rev. Jesse Jackson's party invited by the South African Council of Churches and the ANC to South Africa. On our way, we visited Zambia, where we were the guests of President Kaunda. In Zambia, we had meetings with the ANC leadership in exile. We then went on to Johannesburg and Cape Town, where we met various people, including the South African Council of Churches, clergy from all the South African churches, including the Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and African independent Churches.

We also met the Pan-Africanist Congress, the United Democratic Front, Soweto People's Committee, Soweto teachers, NACTU, the Azanian People's Organisation and representatives of the British Council, lecturers in the university of the Western Cape, the National Sports Congress, the Western Cape Traders Association, several ANC and Church leaders such as Oscar Mpetha, the Rev. Allan Boesak, Archbishop Tutu and Mr. Frank Chicane. We also met the mayor of Cape Town and, of course, Mr. Nelson Mandela.

All those people, except the British consul officer—I did not ask him for his opinion—agreed that sanctions had to be maintained and asked me to take that message back to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Grant: I saw the oppressors at first hand. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Last Saturday at Crossroads, just outside Cape Town, we held a peaceful rally attended by some 2,000 to 3,000 people. As soon as our party got into our vehicles, vigilantes started shooting at the crowd. The police then started shooting. The Kitzkonstabel, the paramilitary police, who are given three weeks' training and then given rifles and shotguns, surrounded our vans as we were assisting into a lorry a man who had been shot in the stomach. I have spoken about the Kitzkonstabel before in the House. As they pointed their guns at us, I could not help hoping that they had not read *Hansard*.

Several people were injured and I witnessed a perfectly peaceful rally being fired on by the security forces. The whole incident was witnessed by the television cameras and a dossier has been submitted to the Minister of Justice for his investigation.

I was told by the British consul officer that the day before a peaceful crowd had gathered outside the British consul to protest at the Gatting cricket tour. They had been refused permission to demonstrate outside the Wanderers stadium in Johannesburg. The deputy consul-general himself had agreed with the police that the protesters could remain, but as soon as his back was turned the police immediately baton-charged the crowd. Several injuries resulted. I got the impression that, as

[Mr. Grant]

soon as anyone of any substance turned his or her back on a peaceful situation, the security forces immediately went in to deal with the people who were doing nothing but enjoying themselves peacefully.

The continuing state of emergency in South Africa allows such atrocities to take place because it empowers the police and security forces to act without any accountability whatever. That is why the ANC and other liberation movements have called for the cancellation of the state of emergency as one of the prerequisites for talks.

Mr. John Carlisle: I have listened with sadness to the hon. Gentleman's account of what happened in that demonstration, and I have no reason to doubt his word. As he was an eye-witness to that incident and is well aware of other incidents, would it not have been sensible for him to seek a meeting and discussions with members of the security forces and, indeed, members of the South African Government? He gave us a list of the people to whom he spoke when he was in South Africa, but, if I ascertained it aright, there was not one Minister or Government official. Would it not have been prudent to have the other point of view put to him? He may not have liked it, but at least he could have come back to the House better informed.

Mr. Grant: We submitted a dossier to the Justice Minister. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was the head of the delegation, tried to have a meeting with him, but he was out of town. On the day that I returned to Britain, meetings had been set up with Mr. de Klerk, Mr. Pik Botha and Mr. Viljoen, who are senior members of the Cabinet. Those meetings took place. I am here to give an account of what transpired at those meetings. It was clear that our party intended to meet as many people as possible. It also intended to meet representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church and Mr. Gatsha Buthelezi and other people.

The situation in South Africa is complex and new. The state has been maintained on the basis of violent and evil oppression of black people by a minority white population. Now we have a chance to do something about creating democracy in that country.

It is important to understand how South Africa has reached this point and what worldwide pressures have prevailed on both the Government and the democratic forces. There can be no doubt that sanctions and the armed struggle have had a major part to play. In just one example of the armed struggle, at the battle of Cuita Cuanavale, the combined forces of the Angolans and the Cubans forced the South Africans and the forces of Savimbi into retreat, to such an extent that now, for the first time after decades of struggle, we have a newly-emerging independent Namibia. The battle of Cuita Cuanavale also assisted the South African Government in changing their mind.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the battle of Cuita Cuanavale makes the case for sanctions? Because of the arms embargo, the aged Mirage of the South African Government was out-gunned by the MIGs of the Angolan Government.

Mr. Grant: My hon. Friend is correct. It was clear during those battles that the South Africans could not match the firepower of the Cubans and Angolans.

It is important to understand the complexity of South African society. Few of those who have not visited the country can appreciate it. I had only a slight taste of it in a few weeks, but I know that it is an extremely complex situation.

At the moment, South Africa is very volatile. It is not unlike a boiling pot, because to take off the lid suddenly without turning down the fire would be to risk the escape of a cloud of steam that would scald all those people—of whatever colour—who are gathered around it. The task that faces Mr. Mandela is to turn down that fire so that successful negotiations can ensue. It is precarious and challenging, and such an undertaking needs the full understanding of hon. Members here.

I have no doubt whatsoever that the Mr. Mandela whom I was privileged to meet is equal to that task. He exudes a strength, calmness and authority that is remarkable in a man who has been incarcerated for 27 years. He is astonishingly without bitterness, but remains standing full square behind the principles for which he has sacrificed so much—the principles of a non-racial and democratic South Africa, in which black and white people alike can share equally. It is clear from what he has said since his release that he is a responsible and wise statesperson, who is now ready to play his part in steering South Africa into the future, and who knows full well how perilous and inflammable the scenerio is.

What, then, should be our role in Britain if we genuinely wish to see a peaceful transition towards democracy in South Africa? I believe that we should see ourselves as outsiders—as outsiders with a grave responsibility, given the sorry contribution that this country has made to prolong the system of apartheid, but as outsiders nevertheless. We should not seek to inflame the situation by raising red herrings about the danger of a white backlash or by raising the bogey of the armed struggle.

If there is danger of such a backlash, Mr. de Klerk is well aware of it, and it is something that he is well able to handle. Mr. de Klerk does not seem to have been surprised by the ANC's continuing commitment to the armed struggle, and nor should the British Government. It is a weapon that the ANC must hold in reserve in the negotiations that lie ahead in the event of there being no movement to dismantle the institutions of apartheid, which have themselves perpetrated so much violence against the mass of South African people.

The Prime Minister seeks to make petty distinctions between different kinds of sanctions. She talks, for example, about voluntary sanctions, but to the man or the woman on the omnibus in Soweto or on the train going into Johannesburg, those distinctions do not mean very much. To them, the fact that the British Prime Minister talks about the removal of sanctions is a matter of great anxiety and grief. They are not concerned about, and they are not aware of, the ramifications of discussions with the Commonwealth leaders or the European Community. Frankly, they could not care less, but they are concerned when they see what they believe to be a sell-out by Britain.

Nor must we rush to destabilise the position, as the Prime Minister has done, by pressing for the removal of sanctions. The demand worldwide is that sanctions should stay until the pillars of apartheid are removed. To remove sanctions now would be the height of irresponsibility. It would strengthen the hand of the South African

Government against the mass of the people who have already given so much to reach this position, and who are already at a disadvantage in any future negotiations.

If the British Government really want to find a way forward, they should be helping to ensure parity in the capability of both sides to negotiate. It seems that the Prime Minister wishes to see the mass democratic movement going naked into the negotiating chamber. Mr. Mandela and the mass democratic movement are already at a gross disadvantage. They do not have the backing of a vast army of civil servants or all the paraphernalia of diplomacy that the South African Government clearly have. They have few resources. Their key personnel are scattered throughout the world, subsisting in impoverished exiled communities.

Our Government should therefore compare their attitude to South Africa with their attitude to the restoration of democracy in eastern Europe. There, they have given £25 million to assist the process of democracy. They should therefore come to the House with similar proposals for funding the democratic forces in South Africa.

Britain has done enough damage in South Africa. Let it now be bold and positive. Let us put our money behind all that we have mouthed about supporting the oppressed people in South Africa. The soundest investment that we can make is to ensure that, when there are future negotiations, those people are properly prepared to play their full part.

5.25 pm

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): The tragedy of today's debate is that it has arisen out of such a negative Opposition motion. After paying their tribute to Nelson Mandela, which is hardly a matter of dissent in the House, and after some rather grudging acknowledgments to the moves that President de Klerk has made, the motion concentrates almost entirely on sanctions policy which, I submit, is irrelevant to the opportunities opening up in South Africa for dismantling the apartheid system.

Sanctions pressure has never been particularly welcome to the black population of South Africa. I have made many visits to South Africa, including a couple last year, and have always taken all the opportunities presented of talking to leading blacks. I have never found them pleading with me to urge my Government to impose more sanctions.

Mr. Nellist: Who paid?

Mr. Gardiner: I have never been asked to urge others to cease buying the products that provide those people in South Africa with their livelihoods. I have never been urged to ask British industrialists to disinvest and to sell their companies' equity in South Africa to white South African groupings.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gardiner: However, they have talked about and urged the need for improvements in their schools—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Gardiner: No, I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gardiner: They have pleaded with me and talked about increasing investment in their schools——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have a point of order to hear. I call Mr. Nellist.

Mr. Nellist: Would it not have been more correct, in terms of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman, who has admitted correctly that he has been to South Africa twice, had at least shared with the rest of us what it has just taken us a few seconds to look up in the Register of Members' Interests? He was paid on one occasion by the South African coal industry and on the second by the International Freedom Foundation.

Mr. Gardiner: I should have thought that the whole point of that was served by the declaration made in the register. I return to the point that I was making before that bogus point of order.

When speaking to blacks in South Africa and to the leaders of their communities there, I have not found them speaking on the matters that Opposition Members seem to expect. Their concern has been about investment in their schools and clinics and, above all, in jobs for themselves and their families. Of course they have always said that they wanted to see the release of Nelson Mandela, not necessarily because they share all the objectives of the ANC but because they saw him as a symbol of the black condition in South Africa. Of course, they looked forward to having a vote in the future towards the government of their country, but they do not want that on an empty belly.

We have heard the arguments today, and on earlier occasions in this House, between Conservative Members who think that our opposition to a sanctions policy has helped to speed the process of reform in South Africa. We have heard the arguments advanced by the Opposition who claim that sanctions policy has achieved that. That is an argument of historical interest but, quite honestly, it has become arcane. It reminds me of the arguments that I witnessed when I was a student in the 1950s, when undergraduates debated among themselves which side they would have supported in the Spanish civil war if they had been alive at the time. History has left such questions way behind.

I make one concession to the Opposition on sanctions. There is no doubt that sanctions have had some effect. When I was in South Africa in February I paid a return visit to Mamelodi, a well run black township to the north of Pretoria. I spoke to the mayor of Mamelodi, a gentleman whom I met previously, and asked him what effect sanctions had had on his area. He said, "Well, Mr. Gardiner, I can only put it this way—last year in this town we had an unemployment rate of 9 per cent. This year we have 22 per cent." That has been the outcome of the sanctions policy.

If sanctions have had any effect, they have impoverished the black population. Evidence of that is crystal clear if one looks at the opinion polls, conducted by a range of independent organisations, of black opinion in South Africa. They have found that between 70 and 80 per cent. of the black population do not want to see further sanctions imposed against them.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my hon. Friend agree that in the light of the evidence that he has just adduced, and the other evidence available to us, it

[Mr. Quentin Davies]

is inconceivably two-faced and duplicitous—if that is not an unparliamentary expression—for the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to allege in his speech that it is disgraceful that British companies create unemployment in South Africa and, two seconds later, urge divestment by British companies and speak in favour of sanctions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he said that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was duplicitous.

Mr. Davies: I was referring to the words that he spoke, not to his character.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman says things that reflect on the integrity and character of a right hon. Member, he should withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Davies: I withdraw my remarks entirely. They were intended as a reflection on the internal logic of the right hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is making an unqualified withdrawal.

Mr. Gardiner: I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

When it comes to discussing sanctions and whether they should be continued, I refer to the words uttered by Chief Buthelezi at the end of last week:

> "Blacks see the international community being brutally unconcerned about both the wishes and the well-being of the victims of apartheid."

I can only hope that those words are heeded by the Ministers who will be congregating in Dublin next week.

All hon. Members welcome the process that has been begun by President de Klerk. It is a challenge to the whites in South Africa, to the blacks, to the African National Congress to make a suitable response to that initiative by dropping its arguments in favour of an arms struggle, and to other groups. I referred to Chief Buthelezi and the Inkatha movement, and there are others. It presents a challenge to us to do all that we can to encourage negotiated reforms and to help secure the wellbeing of blacks in the process.

As the reform process became stalled under the previous president, blacks managed to obtain and build up for themselves an economic clout in the fast expanding informal sector of the economy. One has only to go to South Africa to see the black taxis, which we would call mini buses, and which are the fastest growing industry in the country. Provision shops are being run from back rooms of houses, and building materials are being supplied from back yards. There is no lack of enterprise among the black community.

Mrs. Currie: I am interested in what my hon. Friend says. Does he agree that tourism would be a good way of encouraging the sort of developments that he has mentioned, and would provide employment? Am I right in thinking that tourism is one of the sanctions that still operates and is quite effective? Does he agree that there is something not quite right about hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, being tourists and going on jaunts to South Africa and then deciding that the rest of us should not be able to do so?

Mr. Gardiner: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The Government accepted a voluntary discouragement of tourism. I am glad to say that it has not had a great deal of effect because tourism provides a great number of jobs for the black community in South Africa.

What South Africa needs above all else to coincide with negotiations on its constitutional future is investment in industries large and small, with all the spin-offs in the townships and the informal sector. I am glad that the British Government have seen the need for that and are raising the voluntary curbs on investment. I applaud that.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to switch much more into the positive vein and go all out to encourage investment to help South Africa along the way. That will provide a foundation for the new vision that is opening up in that country. It will ensure that when all Africans get the vote, as I am sure they will, they will inherit a meaningful economic foundation to enable them to use their vote in the most responsible way.

5.36 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): It is extremely difficult in this short but welcome debate to know where to start, where to finish and what to put in the middle. It would be a good idea to start with the Government's amendment. In their speeches, Government Members seek to make us accept that their intentions are bona fide, that we are all working for the same objectives, and that there are no real differences between us or about what the end product should be, but minor differences about how we get there.

The Government's amendment says that they welcome the move towards a non-racial constitution. That jars with what the Government did at the United Nations General Assembly last December. They gave their assent to a wider-ranging document suggesting what the conditions for negotiations should be and what the new South Africa should be like. No sooner had they signed it—a most dangerous thing—than they entered a reservation. Britain was the only country in the United Nations to enter a reservation that it was against the possibility of a new constitution for South Africa based on a non-racial voters roll. What hypocrisy there is in their amendment that they welcome the moves towards a non-racial democracy, after having entered such a reservation at the United Nations. It is hardly surprising that we find it difficult to accept that we are all working on the same side and that it is only a matter of differences of approach.

The second best starting point for my speech is last Sunday, at 2.05 pm, on that historic occasion when Nelson Mandela walked out of prison. It is difficult to describe the excitement, interest, exuberance and near euphoria felt when he came out of prison. He has not walked into freedom, because the pillars of apartheid remain. He does not have a vote, he cannot live where he likes and there are a number of things that he cannot do. The state of emergency remains and there are still many political prisoners yet to be released. Paradoxically, Nelson Mandela is a much freer man than President de Klerk.

I fully accept that President de Klerk has made significant moves. He went much further on 2 February than I had expected, and I welcome that. I welcome the

unbanning of the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress and the South African Communist party. I welcome the unbanning of all the other organisations previously restricted.

The prospect of negotiations, or a real dialogue to freedom, is a wonderful thing. The sad thing is that it did not happen 20 or 30 years ago. The suffering during that time has been enormous. What a different country South Africa would be today if only the white Government of South Africa had recognised that they had to negotiate and bring about a peaceful transition. Many tragedies could have been avoided if there had been decisive action.

We are told that we should look not to the past but to the future. We all have a tremendous hope for the future, but the lessons that we have learnt from the past must govern and guide our future actions. I remember, and I am sure that it is in the memory of most hon. Members, the long process of the independence of Namibia. It is 12 to 15 years since the South African Government accepted the principles of UN resolution 435 and the principle of negotiation along the lines of the United Nations plan for that independence to come about, as it will do on 21 March. The South African Government used every dilatory and delaying tactic in the book, but South Africa does not have a time scale of 12, 15 or 20 years to make some real progress.

We have sometimes spoken in the past, perhaps too glibly, about the last chance and the last window of opportunity. But if this chance is allowed to slip away, the future of South Africa will be too dreadful to contemplate. That is why we must keep up the pressure. That is why we must ensure that, until the process of change has really become irreversible, the pressure cannot be lifted.

I accept that there is a genuine difference of opinion about sanctions, although not all my hon. Friends agree. When the sanctions argument started, there was a great deal of discussion on the Left, never mind between the Left and the Right or between both sides of the House, about whether imposing sanctions was the right policy.

We must remember that the call for sanctions came first from the people of South Africa, who said that, if we could not help them in any other way, we should help them through sanctions. I am not saying that sanctions have been fully effective or that sanctions alone have brought President de Klerk to his present position. I am not saying that at all. I have too much respect for the people of South Africa, who have fought in many different ways.

I say quite frankly that I have too much respect for the members of Umkhonto we Siswe and for those who have fought apartheid through passive resistance to make that claim for sanctions. But they have had an effect. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) quoted President de Klerk's election manifesto. He could have quoted what he said on 2 February, when he made it clear that South Africa could not stand alone, that it had to be part of the world community and work together with other countries.

What annoys me intensely about the Prime Minister is that she refuses even to give a nod or to genuflect in the slightest way, not just to the effects of sanctions but to the struggle of the people of South Africa. I do not like to personalise things, but the Prime Minister's egocentricity casts her in the role of the wicked fairy in Snow White, asking, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the cleverest of them all?" Given her hostility to anyone who disagrees with her, it is not surprising that we charge her, as I charge her, with colluding in and collaborating with the oppression of the people of South Africa. Why could the Prime Minister not have waited? Why could she not at least have allowed more time to pass before rushing in?

President de Klerk has made many moves, but we should never forget that, when he was elected, he said,

"Do not expect me to negotiate myself out of power."

Yet the negotiations must be precisely about the transfer of power from the minority to all the people of South Africa irrespective of their race, creed or colour. That is a noble vision, which Nelson Madela restated after his release. He restated the steadfast principle which our Prime Minister, for some reason unknown to any of us, cannot stomach.

Many conditions were laid down during the United Nations special session, yet the Government have admitted that not all the conditions have been met. The state of emergency has not been lifted, the Internal Security Act remains in place.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I cannot. This is a short debate and many hon. Members wish to speak.

None of the pillars of apartheid have really been tackled, and President de Klerk has said nothing at all about his vision for the new South Africa, beyond the fact that he wants to see some sort of negotiation and dialogue. We would do well to listen to the people of South Africa, who are saying clearly that they do not want sanctions lifted until the process has become irreversible. It is not yet irreversible. We wish it well, but if we take the pressure off now the temptation will be to delay and delay in the hope that somehow, sooner or later, the white Government of South Africa will not have to take the major step and make the major change that is necessary.

I have no doubt that we shall soon see a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and united South Africa. But what Nelson Mandela has described as the long road to freedom is not yet over. The suffering along that road has been immense and more suffering may yet have to be faced by the people of South Africa before they get their freedom. It has not been in vain in the past and it will not be in vain in the future.

Many people have stood proudly, shoulder to shoulder, with the people of South Africa in their struggle. It is surely not too much to ask even of this Government at this stage to do something positive to end apartheid. We live in historic times. I regret to say that the Government have so far not lived up to their responsibilities. But if we and the Government all act with a sense of history and on the side of freedom, there will be something that we can all enjoy and celebrate.

5.46 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I confess that I am mystified by the Government's policy on South Africa and I cannot, in all conscience, support it.

One would think from the innocuous words of the Government's amendment to the motion that there was little that was contentious in South Africa apart from some constitutional issues. But the harsh reality of apartheid is ignored. The oppression of 80 per cent. of the population and their deprivation of civil rights is passed over. The internal violence and the destabilisation of the economies of the surrounding countries is completely passed over.

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

Nelson Mandela is saluted, but there is no recognition of the fact that his emergence on the scene is the one new factor that gives us all the best chance of solving the big problems and bringing peace, stability and reconciliation to this important but unhappy country.

Discussing South Africa without discussing apartheid is completely unrealistic. Apartheid is an evil and wicked doctrine, used by unworthy people to justify the retention of power by the minority, a minority which uses whips and dogs upon those who protest against it, which deprives the majority of the vote and even of the right to live where they choose in their own country—all in the name of racial superiority. It is contemptible. I would have expected better from the Government in condemning it in an amendment of this kind.

I accept that the British Government are sincere when they say that they want to get rid of apartheid, but if so, they conceal their intentions well. They applied what few sanctions there are timidly and half-heartedly when under pressure to do so, and they now seek to withdraw them at the first sign that they are working.

The present willingness of the South African Government to come to terms with its African majority has been prompted by a combination of internal and external pressures. Our reluctance to add to that pressure, and even to seek to abate it, may have helped to keep open the lines of communication between Downing street and Cape Town, but it cannot have brought about the South African Government's change of policy. My right hon. and hon. Friends in government are made to look foolish by asserting otherwise. I am not convinced by all the intellectual arguments addressed to us by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in the House this evening.

I am concerned most about the apparent disregard of our Government for the possibility of establishing friendly relations with a future predominantly African Government of South Africa. Our interests surely lie in being a good friend and an ally of the predominantly black democratic Government that will eventually emerge. In practice, we seem to be writing ourselves out of any role in South Africa's future.

The present South African regime is on its last legs. Nelson Mandela's release has acted as a catalyst, and things will never be the same again. Pray to God that his life will be preserved. As with eastern Europe, the move towards democracy in South Africa is unstoppable. We British have no interest to serve in propping up a doomed regime—only in so far as we can assist in ensuring a peaceful transition to democracy.

Tribalism is a curse in Africa and in South Africa as elsewhere.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): As in Ireland.

Mr. Stanbrook: In Ireland also, as my hon. Friend says—but it is a particular problem of government in South Africa.

South Africa is fortunate in that there is now someone on the scene who commands loyalty and allegiance across tribal boundaries, with some chance of achieving reconciliation and being able to negotiate on behalf of the majority of Africans in South Africa. Mr. Mandela will, I believe, be able to command the overwhelming support of the people of South Africa once it has the smallest chance of becoming a democracy.

We must welcome President de Klerk's initiative, but we should put our money on Nelson Mandela and give him all the help that he needs to bring peace, reconciliation and democracy to a great African country.

5.52 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I echo the comments already made in welcoming the release of Nelson Mandela as the most significant development in South Africa for many years. I welcome, too, the speech of the state President to the South African Parliament on 2 February. Conservative Members suggested that President de Klerk took a great risk in making that speech. Although I acknowledge that it was a courageous speech, involving some risk, if President de Klerk had chosen not to take that line, there would have been an even greater risk to his Government and the consequences for South Africa might have been so disastrous as to make problems in other parts of the world appear insignificant.

Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress and other organisations have a role to play in achieving a peaceful solution and a free South Africa where all races are equal. One of Nelson Mandela's most significant statements in his speech earlier this week was that he does not want to replace white domination by black domination. Such statements guarantee a role for him in future negotiations.

I had a motion on the Order Paper for Monday that was not reached which concerned the conditions under which the Prime Minister should undertake an official visit to South Africa. The necessity for such a debate was strengthened by the right hon. Lady's recent comments on sanctions and investment. Because of those statements, our country is regarded by blacks and whites in South Africa as the strongest supporter of apartheid outside their country. I have visited South Africa twice and Namibia, and all their peoples, black and white, consider the British Prime Minister and Government as apartheid's strongest supporters. The Prime Minister's statements since President de Klerk's announcement tend to support that view.

The Foreign Secretary and the Government should take due note of the role that Britain must play in South Africa which is of great importance for a number of reasons. We are an important member of the Commonwealth and of the European Community, and we have a special relationship with America and, whether we like it or not, this country's investments and commercial interests in South Africa are also significant. All those factors mean that, when our Prime Minister speaks about South Africa, she does so from a position of greater stature than almost anyone else outside South Africa itself.

Although President de Klerk has opened the door, one can never be too sure what lies behind it. At this stage, President de Klerk has not given any indication, or taken any action, to suggest that apartheid will positively be ended in South Africa. Although our policy on relaxing sanctions and investment restrictions should be kept constantly under review, it would be premature to take any action before receiving from the South African Government a positive sign of their intention to abolish apartheid. The country's racial registration legislation

must be repealed, as it underpins the whole basis of apartheid. The Land Act, the Group Areas Act and other statutes must also be abolished.

A few years ago, the Prime Minister made the important statement that she believed that the form of South Africa's future Government was a matter for the people of South Africa to determine. I share that view, provided that one is talking of all the people of South Africa, including the 80 per cent. who happen to be black. I once asked the Prime Minister whether that statement meant that she accepted a future black majority Government for South Africa, but she weaved and dodged and did not answer. The following day, *The Daily Telegraph* commented that that was an unanswerable question for the Prime Minister, because although she really wanted to say no, she could not—but she could not say yes either.

At the end of the day, the Prime Minister must recognise that if we want universal suffrage and freedom in South Africa, it will mean a black majority Government. However, that does not mean that we wish to replace white domination by black domination—to use the words of Nelson Mandela. He wants a free South Africa that can use its tremendous benefits to the advantage of all its people.

I recognise that when apartheid ends in South Africa there will be major problems. It will be difficult to ensure that the blacks have opportunities for education, health treatment and many other things. The South African economy may be the strongest in the continent, but it will be unable to bear the burden alone. One positive step that the British Government could take would be to say now that if steps are taken to end apartheid and to give freedom to all the people of South Africa, we will assist the country to tackle the problems of the 80 per cent. of their people who are deprived at present.

At this time it would be wrong for the Prime Minister to make an official visit to South Africa, and it is wrong for us to talk of investment and of ending sanctions. We need more positive signs, and we should encourage President de Klerk for the moves that he has made.

Ultimately, I hope that there will be genuine talks around a table—talks that will include Nelson Mandela and other people who are genuinely selected to represent the different races in that country. I hope that we will see a day when apartheid ends, and we can welcome South Africa back into the Commonwealth.

6.1 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I had planned to say how disappointed I had been by the reactions of the House at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday, and by the approach of the leader of the Government and of the Leader of the Opposition to the difficult question of South Africa. It seems that the two leading parties are more concerned with fighting about their domestic differences in the House, and in this country, than raising their sights, showing that they have vision and recognising the momentous events that have taken place in South Africa.

The main event has been the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years of wrongful imprisonment for his political views. That is the vision, and the clue. Through Nelson Mandela we may find a way through the serious difficulties which face the South African people.

Let me demonstrate that. Back-Bench Members have demonstrated more vision than the leadership. They understand. The hon. Members for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike), and my hon. Friends the Members for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) showed that understanding in their speeches.

We are concerned with the difficulties that South Africa and its people face—both white and black, with all their many differences. How do we bring the country away from the state of military oppression and racial oppression, from the denial of basic human rights, towards education for black children and jobs for young black men and women, who are denied the professional qualifications that might help them to progress within society? The community is becoming more and more violent as it objects to the violence of the state and the apartheid system. How do we bring the community from violence to a peaceful, democratic and racially equal society?

We have a responsibility, and the sort of behaviour that we saw in the House yesterday at Question Time from both sides of the House, and again today at the beginning of this debate, is unhelpful, insensitive and entirely counter-productive to bringing about a peaceful solution to these difficult problems.

At the age of 70, after 27 years in gaol, Nelson Mandela has to face the problem of trying to bring about a democratic, non-racial society. He still wants to bring about all the things that he said he believed in in the wonderful speech that he made from the dock 27 years ago. His conviction, his authority and the degree to which he has suffered make him the bridge.

To argue about sanctions—whether we should take them off or not, whether they are voluntary or not—is totally irrelevant to the argument. We should be embracing Nelson Mandela's hope for the future, and helping him to bring about the reconciliation that is required in South Africa, but what are we doing? We do not encourage meetings of the African National Congress here. When Mr. Oliver Tambo had to be treated in hospital in Stockholm, the ANC meeting took place in Stockholm, not in London, because the Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave it no encouragement to do so. The FCO has ignored Mr. Tambo, the leader of the ANC, and his wife who lives in Camden and does an important job as a nurse, living in humble surroundings to keep the family together. Reconciliation and meetings should be encouraged to take place in London.

Why do we not respond generously to Nelson Mandela? Why does the Prime Minister not phone him, as President Bush did, and invite him to come here? To my knowledge, the Prime Minister has not rung him. She sent an official from the British Embassy to see him in Cape Town. That does not show any warmth or understanding of the problems, nor does it demonstrate the support that we should be giving Mr. Mandela and all those who seek peace—people on all sides.

We should remember the white community, which is extremely frightened. Its members do not know how they can continue to live under an African majority Government. They have many reasons to be frightened—because of their treatment of black people for so many years, and because of the example that has been set in the north of South Africa and in most African countries. They are not successful communities, and they cannot be described as respecters of human rights or as democracies.

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

White people have serious misgivings and fears. Mr. Mandela recognises that, he has said so, and we should respond to that.

Of course, the white Government and Mr. de Klerk should be congratulated on the release of Mr. Mandela. As a lifelong opponent of sanctions, I say that we should lift them as soon as it is practically possible. Surely Britain should say, "Come here and discuss it." We should say that we will reinforce the elements within South African society—black or white—to encourage them to form the bridge and to keep the peace.

A prosperous society, in which there would be new investment, and a reduction of unemployment among the black population are more likely to put the pieces together and to go through a peaceful transformation. This is no time to talk about loosening sanctions. It is a time for encouraging and meeting everyone in South Africa who wants peace and the evolution to democracy and equality. That is what I expect the Government to do.

6.8 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) made a remarkable speech, as did the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). The Front-Bench spokesmen on both sides of the House would be well advised not to call a Division.

The mood of today's speeches has reflected the complexity of the issues that face us all, but especially South Africans, both black and white. Hon. Members' conduct yesterday was a disgrace, given the gravity of the position and the incredible opportunity with which South Africa is now confronted. If we spend our time engaging in a petty little squabble about what has or has not been done in the past, we shall be unable to contribute as much as we might to the resolution of those difficult problems.

Profound changes are taking place in South Africa, and there is no doubt in my mind that things are already moving far faster than most of us realise. President de Klerk and Nelson Mandela have an understanding about how such matters should be dealt with. I believe that the ANC's role in applying pressure to secure the cancellation of the extremely ill-advised Gatting cricket tour is a sign of that: it was realised that such events can provide a focus for the kind of unrest that would make a repeal of the state of emergency very difficult.

The state of emergency is the main impediment to the relaxation of sanctions. The Prime Minister recognised that in her statement in Kuala Lumpur. Lifting sanctions would be absurd, and it will not happen: the Council of Foreign Ministers, which is to meet in Dublin, would not dream of relaxing them while the state of emergency continues. That is a sine qua non, as the Foreign Secretary knows. He also knows that he and the Government are not entitled to say that they no longer wish people not to make new investments. He quoted from the resolution, passed under the chairmanship of the deputy Prime Minister, to "rescind". Action cannot be taken on a single decision made by a member state; we are bound by that 1986 resolution. We are also bound by something far more important, and that is honour.

For the past decade or more, the Prime Minister has waxed eloquent against unilateral nuclear disarmament —rightly, in my view—and unilateralism cannot be criticised at one moment and embraced at the next. For 20 years or more, this country has acted in the deepest concert with the United States, and often with France, on the question of sanctions against South Africa. We have not once been split on that issue, which has not been easy, because of the tactics aimed at dividing us.

It would be entirely irresponsible for the British Government to abandon the sanction on new investment unilaterally, knowing full well that President Bush has not the freedom to do the same because of the legislation by which he is bound. It is obvious to us all that Anglo-American relations are going through a difficult period, but the improvement that we all want—the Foreign Secretary must want it, too—will not be possible if Britain acts unilaterally. We must act in concert, as we have done in the past.

I still believe that, properly applied, external pressure can be constructive. Let us face it: the biggest problem is President de Klerk. He represents the minority, but the minority happen to be in power. Under the apartheid system—wrongly—South Africa has all the violent structures of minority power which must be dismantled progressively over the next few years. We know that there will be considerable resistance. Of course, President de Klerk must be encouraged, but he must be encouraged in a manner that ensures that there can be no going back. Having conversed with him, I think that he understands that perfectly. International agreement on a serious reduction of sanctions will be very difficult until negotiatons have started: that should be the threshold.

It would be mad—crazy—for the two main parties to do anything to damage South Africa's future economy once the talks have begun. I say "the two main parties", meaning the National party and the ANC, but I believe strongly that agreement should be widened to include Inkatha, and the PAC is perfectly entitled to make its case in the talks, as is the Conservative party. There is no doubt that if the negotiations break down and anyone is shown to have entered into them in bad faith, the world will make a judgment. If it should happen to be the South African Government who entered into them in bad faith, the result will be the reimposition of economic sanctions that will really hurt.

In 1985, for the first time, we discovered a really effective economic sanction, when banks such as the Chase Manhattan refused to roll forward credits. By 1988 it was really biting: the Prime Minister need only read the South African newspapers to discover that. The overriding of President Reagan's veto by the American Congress, on a bipartisan basis, was the biggest single reverse of the Reagan presidency. From that moment South Africa knew that there would be no comfort from Washington, and that Republicans and Democrats were determined to combine to put pressure on South Africa to end apartheid.

That bipartisanship still exists in Congress, and it will not be broken. I believe that an agreement will be reached, and that President Bush will respond: he has already urged the parties to come together. Would it not be marvellous if the British Prime Minister occasionally came to the House and said that she would like to try to secure agreement here about the pace at which sanctions should be removed? Then the Foreign Secretary would be asked to conduct a dialogue with his opposite number and with

the other parties to try to reach a measure of understanding, so that we could act in concert with our European partners, the United States and the world.

Let us try to restore the kind of recognition that the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford described. We have an important foreign policy responsibility. We want South Africa to develop quickly the unity of purpose that will lead to a common electoral roll—one man, one vote—and proportional representation, which will provide significant minority safeguards: no constitutional change will then be possible without, say, 80 per cent. agreement. Namibia has shown the way with a Bill of Rights, providing for proportional representation and one of the best constitutions, which will be enacted on 21 March.

Massive change is taking place in South Africa, but we spent our time yesterday in the House hurling insults at each other. Such behaviour is below the level merited by such events. It is time that the Prime Minister recognised that she is not entitled to act unilaterally—that there must be international agreement. I hope that when the Foreign Secretary goes to Dublin on Tuesday he will be able to say, "We want to give President de Klerk a significant response: we want to encourage him to move forward."

I do not mind giving the House some idea of the criteria that should be applied. Let us remind ourselves of the provisions of the American Congressional legislation—the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act 1986:

"The bill provides that the sanctions contained in the bill shall terminate automatically if the South African Government meets five conditions specified in the bill. These conditions related to (1) the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners"—

negotiations on who the political prisoners are have already begun—

"(2) the repeal of the State of Emergency and all detainees"—

I expect that to happen in a matters of weeks—

"(3) the unbanning of political parties"—

that has already happened—

"(4) the repeal of the Group Areas and Population Registration Acts"—

it will be hard to repeal the Group Areas Act immediately, but if the Government start to sign on for definite progress there is no reason why the Population Registration Act should not go as well—

"and (5) agreeing to enter into good faith negotiations with truly representative members of the black majority without preconditions."

That last criterion has virtually been fulfilled: President de Klerk is clear that there are to be no preconditions, and I believe that he will respond, as will all parties to the negotiations.

It never ceases to amaze me that liberation fighters throughout the world, and black Africans in particular, can demonstrate a spirit of reconciliation at a time of transition, and can forget the oppression that they have experienced in the past. Jomo Kenyatta is a classic example of that; it was seen from the late President Machel; it has been experienced by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe; it is now being demonstrated by Sam Nujoma; and it has been seen from Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. I am glad that the role of Oliver Tambo has been mentioned. I hope that that will not be forgotten, because in the past 30 years Mr. Tambo has shown remarkable courage in relation to the ANC outside the country. The Foreign Secretary understands these issues.

Mr. Dykes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: I cannot give way. Time is limited.

I hope that the Foreign Secretary will ignore the vote tonight and that he will take the spirit of the House with him into the chamber of the Council of Ministers in Dublin on Tuesday.

6.21 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I know that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) will not consider me in any sense discourteous if I do not follow him closely, though I undoubtedly agree with some of his very interesting speech. I wish to refer to something that was said by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) who accused the Prime Minister of collaborating and colluding with apartheid.

It was my privilege, in August, to carry a message from the Prime Minister to my old school in Natal. There I addressed a very large audience—about 1,500 people. The Prime Minister's message contained the most unequivocal and total condemnation of apartheid that anyone could expect. The chief justice of the Republic of South Africa was in the audience, and there was no doubt whatever about the message that the Prime Minister was conveying or about the message that I was conveying. All the nonsense about the Prime Minister really supporting apartheid must be demolished. I have no doubt whatever that there is an argument about sanctions, about the means of achieving the end, but I do not think that the first proposition can be sustained.

I wish also to refer to the very interesting speech made by the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). On occasion, the hon. Member has roused my ire, but this time he did not. He made a profoundly interesting and moving speech, and in his analysis of the major problem of the South African security forces being almost uncontrollable or out of control he put his finger on the central problem of manipulating change in that very difficult country. I welcome what he said about the vast complexities in South Africa. His remarks—if I may say so without being in any sense patronising—indicated great progress on his part.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was a very different proposition. The right hon. Gentleman is a kind of one-man antiques road show. He comes to the House with his little brown paper parcels, filled with prejudice, half-truths and all sorts of other things. When he opens them—one of his favourites is the one that he likes to open when we debate South Africa—one gets a very strong whiff of smear gas. We know what is happening when the right hon. Gentleman speaks. He has absolutely no sympathy for, and very little understanding of, this question.

I wish to confess three mistakes that I have made—I believe that humility is the order of the day. Had I been asked 35 or 40 years ago whether an Afrikaner-dominated Government, a nationalist Government, would be proposing what Mr. de Klerk has proposed I should have said, "Not a chance—never." Had I been asked whether an Afrikaner leader of the stature of Mr. de Klerk would emerge and would lead that movement, I should have said the odds were 1,000 to one against. I had the privilege of meeting Mr. de Klerk when he was in London last June and I am happy to admit to the House that my assessment of him was totally mistaken. We now have a situation which opens up great hope and great possibilities.

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

I made those confessions because it is easy to be pessimistic about South Africa, as I myself was and as other hon. Members have been today. It is all too easy to underestimate the idealism, the political skill and the judgment of great Afrikaners such as Smuts. Smuts was one of the founding fathers of the League of Nations and one of the architects of the United Nations, so let no smear on him come from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). In this context I should also mention Louis Botha, the first prime minister of South Africa, as well as people such as Helen Suzman, Hofmeyr and, most recently, President de Klerk.

Perhaps we can inject some humility into this debate. I have read most of the speeches made in this House and most of the early-day motions on this subject in the past 25 years. What comes through most of them is an astonishing certainty, conviction and, above all, condemnation. As the hon. Member for Tottenham has realised, however, South Africa is probably the most ethnically complex society on earth. Most hon. Members' knowledge is derived largely from television programmes, articles—usually hostile—and 10-day visits, or perhaps even shorter visits such as the one that the right hon. Member for Gorton made recently. Nevertheless, they propound solutions and give prolific advice to all concerned about the problems in South Africa —problems which defeated Smuts and Hofmeyr. They are problems which also defeated Helen Suzman, a great battler for the cause of freedom in South Africa, and, indeed, defeated my late and lamented great personal friend, Patrick Duncan, who probably fought as courageous a campaign against apartheid as anyone mentioned in the debate so far.

We have exhibited an overpowering urge to condemn —an urge against which the great Goethe warned many years ago when he said that people should be suspicious whenever they met anyone with an overpowering urge to condemn. No one disputes the fact that such condemnation has been fully earned by apartheid, but—this is the principal point that I wish to make—the condemnation has assumed a somewhat less defensible form and is in some subtle way becoming a form of anti-South-Africanism which shares the bigotry, the vindictiveness and the viciousness of anti-semitism. I see this emerging in a number of ways and, regrettably, in a number of places. A basic distinction lies at the heart of this debate—the distinction between apartheid and South Africa. There is no defence for apartheid and no one in this House would attempt to make such a defence. South Africa, however, for all its faults and for all the grave situations that have rightly been described, is the nearest thing to an economic miracle in Africa south of the Sahara, and that fact lies at the heart of the debate.

The House had a similar debate about 40 years ago, when it was suggested that Germany, which had introduced possibly the most appalling doctrine that the western world had ever known—the Herrenvolk concept —should be not only defeated but totally destroyed. That was a great debate and a great argument, and it is one that is mirrored in, and in some senses at the heart of, this debate. I do not believe in total destruction. Nor did the West. To save western civilisation, and to save Europe, after Germany had been virtually destroyed, the Marshall plan had to be brought in. The purpose was to reconstruct Germany, and to enable its great economic engine to serve the purpose which in western Europe only it could serve.

I therefore have three fundamental objections to apartheid. The first relates to economic change. I do not think that it is arguable that sanctions have not been an important factor, but neither do I think that any hon. Member, on either side of the House, can prove that it has, or has not, been the factor that some hon. Members would like to think that it has been in the change of heart that has taken place. I do not believe that it is so. I believe that that argument ignores the character of the Afrikaner, who seldom makes the kind of cringing response that Opposition Members might expect him to make to pressure from outside. I remind the House that there are 2 million of us out there. When I say "us" I refer to English-speaking South Africans. There are 2 million English-speaking South Africans, whose connection with this country is close and often continuous. As every hon. Member knows, we do not like to be pushed around, and we are talking to "us". When in this House or in this country we use the wrong methods in our attempts to influence people we know what reaction we get. The reaction out there will be exactly the same.

My second objection is to the blunderbuss character of all sanctions. They are indiscriminate. They affect doctors and nurses and hospitals. They affect teachers and schools. One of South Africa's most distinguished physicists, Professor Serette at Fort Hare, in the most recent issue of *New Scientist*, stated unequivocally his condemnation of and opposition to sanctions because of the damage that they have done to black education at his university. Opposition Members suggest that all South Africans agree with them, but Professor Serette's remarks give the complete lie to that suggestion.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Ian Lloyd: No. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but there is no time for me to give way to him.

Does the existence of racial discrimination or ethnic violence justify sanctions anywhere? If so, where does it stop? Who comes next? With whom do we not trade or communicate when this problem has been solved? Not many members of the United Nations would qualify, according to the conditions that we are trying to impose on South Africa.

There are two phrases in the Opposition motion with which I cannot agree. They are "the dismantling of apartheid" and

"the basic structure of apartheid remains intact."

In 1947, there was a most offensive legal institutionalisation of segregation and discrimination, which caused everything that has happened since. South Africa was then one of many countries with segregation; it was endemic in an imperfect world. Between 1939 and 1945, this very imperfect world lost 20 million to 30 million people, and 30,000 of those who died were South Africans who wanted to defeat the Herrenvolk concept. The people who introduced apartheid in 1947 grotesquely underestimated the reaction of the civilised world to what they were doing.

By definition, therefore, all the legislation that has been passed since 1947 should be dismantled. I wholly share that view, but the ANC is asking for the repeal of all legislation passed since 1910. That may be desirable, but it is a very different proposition. It is like asking Mr. Gorbachev to atone for history by dismantling the USSR

and all that has happened there since 1917. Both are utterly impractical and both are beyond possibility. It is an unrealistic, naive and fatuous policy which implies that we have a right to sit in judgment. I do not think that we have.

Therefore, I wholly and fully support the Government's policy. I also support the first three lines of the Opposition's amendment, which have very much in common with the Government's policy. I hope that all my hon. Friends will go into the Lobby tonight and give the fullest possible support to the Government.

6.32 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I want to refer briefly to three themes that are uppermost in the minds of the public as they consider the recent events in South Africa: jubilation, expectation and apprehension.

If last weekend's events are the fruits of anything, they are the fruits of years of unsung, unselfish campaigning by ordinary people, black and white, through picketing, collecting signatures and lobbying Members of Parliament. I know many people, black and white, who have dedicated their lives to a free South Africa. If the release of Nelson Mandela is a tribute to anything, it is a tribute to all those campaigners, black and white, in Britain and throughout the world. His release has created jubilation among them.

There is also a sense of jubilation among many young black people in Britain. They are often told who their heroes should be, but for many young black people their supreme hero is Nelson Mandela, because of the example that he has set of fortitude, courage, bravery and commitment. He has shown young people what it is to be a black man in the 1990s. Above all, there is a feeling of jubilation among ordinary black people in South Africa, who for generations have borne the brunt of the brutality of apartheid.

There is a sense of expectation, because a free and democratic South Africa might lead to hope for the whole continent. A free and democratic South Africa, with its huge natural resources and its level of industralisation, could help to raise economic standards throughout the continent. There is expectation, too, among many hon. Members and those outside the House that we shall live to see Nelson Mandela as head of state in a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

There is also apprehension, due to a tiny Fascist element among the white population in South Africa. They will fight as fearlessly and ruthlessly as the Algerian settlers fought, but to as little purpose. However, they will cause enormous disruption and there might be great bloodshed. One wonders whether the police and the army are really under the control of the state.

Although there has been much talk about fear of a white backlash, I urge the Secretary of State to look northwards to Zimbabwe. I had the privilege of visiting Zimbabwe two years ago. After one of the most bitter civil wars, it is a tribute to the essential humanity of African people that both black and white people live side by side in peace in Zimbabwe. Ian Smith can walk the streets without a police guard. We should not, therefore, be too carried away by talk of threats to the white minority.

There are many different groupings and many different tribes. The possibility therefore exists of upheaval, of the exploitation of tribalism and of the policy of divide and rule. If Ministers accuse the Opposition of irresponsibility in supporting sanctions and of wishing the armed struggle to continue, what do they say to President Bush, who has stated that sanctions cannot yet be removed?

The overwhelming feeling in the hearts and minds of us all when we saw Nelson Mandela walk out of prison after 27 years was jubilation. It proved to the Opposition that there is no power on earth that can keep down a people who are determined to be free.

6.36 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): During the last few months, we have savoured sweet moments of history. The Berlin wall is down; the Brandenburg gate is open. Now the most important political prisoner of our day has been liberated. Who can forget, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) has just said, the joy of seeing Mr. Mandela step that grand step into freedom? He can play a unique role in the transition from the old to the new South Africa. His royal progress culminated in yesterday's rally and triumphant homecoming in Soweto. His appeal for discipline and dignity was echoed by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and other contributors to the debate.

The historic grandeur of that moment of joy was not matched by the British Government's response. After her ritual expression of pleasure, the Prime Minister, true to form, rushed into a call for the easing of sanctions. She had already abandoned unilaterally some of the sanctions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) mentioned the new investment. That cannot be justified legally. The sanctions relating to scientific and cultural exchanges that have already been abandoned ought properly, had we been true partners, to have been taken to the Commonwealth and the European Economic Community.

I remind the Foreign Secretary of the preface to the 1986 Commonwealth Nassau statement on scientific and cultural exchanges:

> "For our part, we have, as an earnest of our opposition to apartheid, reached accord on a programme of common action as follows:".

That is very different from a unilateral abandonment of sanctions. Similarly, the preface, agreed with our EC partners, on the discouragement of scientific and cultural exchanges says:

> "the Ten and Spain and Portugal have decided to harmonize their attitudes on the following measures".

Again, that would be working in partnership with our colleagues.

The tragedy for Britain of the unilateral enunciation is not only that it spurns our colleagues, but it gives a clear and wrong signal to white and black in South Africa. To the white reactionary element, it says effectively that we are ready to yield at an early stage. To the blacks, it only underlines what they have known all along—that the Prime Minister is ever ready to protect the reactionary element against the wrath of world opinion. The Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State must know in their hearts as they speak to our people in South Africa just what damage is being done to our work among the black community, which will be the South Africa of the future, by the image which the Prime Minister gives.

We know that policy on South Africa comes from No. 10 and that the Foreign Office is increasingly marginalised.

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

The Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State know the damage being done by the attitude of the Prime Minister. It has confirmed the view in South Africa that her passions are stonger against sanctions than against apartheid. Indeed, she fails to recognise that apartheid itself amounts to sanctions against the majority in South Africa.

When Mr. Mandela, as a black South African, stepped out into freedom, it was in many ways the unfreedom of all black people in South Africa. Sanctions must be maintained, as a continued pressure for change and as an indication of the international resolve to end apartheid, until we are further down the road, when the momentum to negotiate is well under way. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said:

"I do not think that sanctions have achieved anything". —[*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 1967, c. 140.]

Let her tell that to the business community, the Anglos and others in South Africa, and see how they respond.

The Prime Minister does not recognise that she is on her own, not only in Europe, but in respect of President Bush. Worse, in regard to our international stance, she is gratuitously using up our international goodwill, as, sadly, she has done in another sphere in her response to German unification, again by gratuitously irritating our allies in Europe and in the German Federal Republic. It cannot be good for British foreign policy to be thus isolated. Gareth Evans, the Australian Foreign Minister, said it all when he said that the Prime Minister is "isolated and irrelevant".

Already, in December 1989, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, we had entered reservations in what was otherwise a consensus resolution at the United Nations. That is why I believe that I speak on behalf not only of the official Opposition but of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who spoke for the Liberal party and who has played such a distinguished role in the fight against apartheid, when I say that it cannot be good for Britain that we are now seen by those who have struggled over the years for freedom in South Africa as the major protectors of a system which has done so much damage to them.

In that context, given the past protection of the white minority, and given the fact that the Government have refused to meet ANC leaders and that the Prime Minister has called the ANC "just another terrorist organisation", with her real passion coming from attacks on the ANC, is it not clear that the Prime Minister's invitation to Mr. Mandela to visit this country is both naive and impertinent?

The purpose of the debate is not just to expose the Prime Minister and to show that we are alone, but to take the opportunity to affirm to the world that there is a different view from that of the Prime Minister, as we have seen from the courageous speeches of the hon. Members for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), Hertford and Stortford and others. We want to reaffirm to the world that the majority here are progressive and concerned, and rejoice with the underprivileged majority in South Africa at the liberation of their great leader. We know, as they do, that it would be wrong to lift sanctions, because sanctions have been one of the key factors which have led to change.

Events since 2 February have raised hope that the bloodbath which the Eminent Persons Group of the Commonwealth foresaw in 1986 may not come to pass. That, in part, is the result of the vision of President de Klerk and the integrity to which Mr. Mandela himself paid tribute. Indeed, those two men can play a key role in history, President de Klerk as, hopefully, the last white President of South Africa and Mr. Mandela as, hopefully, the first black President of that country.

In passing, if the whites in South Africa have apprehensions, let them look over the border to Namibia and remember the dire predictions about the whites fleeing from Namibia and about the economy collapsing. What do we see now? A democratic constitution was agreed last week as a prelude to independence, which will take place on 21 March. There is major investment by the international community in that country. In our judgment, it is a model for what can happen across the border in South Africa if only we have men of vision able to carry forward the dialogue to the new South Africa.

Having spent many weeks in South Africa over the years, I never fail to be amazed at the capacity of the blacks to forgive, as we have seen in Zimbabwe. For that I have great respect. Part of the tragedy of British foreign policy in past weeks has been that the Government, in the shape of the Prime Minister, have identified us with the old regime at a time of rapid change. The Prime Minister takes the reluctant Foreign Office with her. By contrast, we identify with the new, and with those who seek fundamental reforms in South Africa, who seek an end to apartheid and who want to use the vast potential of that country for the benefit of all its citizens.

6.47 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) who, if we remove the obligatory rude remarks about the Prime Minister which have to decorate every Opposition speech, made many points with which I can agree.

I shall start with a secondary issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition—the question of isolation. It is a secondary issue because, if we could win the argument that the action that we are taking is right, it does not matter that we are alone. A radical party such as the Labour party should be wary of saying that we always have to move in total consensus. A radical party would find itself in an odd position if it believed that that was so. The argument is about whether we are right. As the Leader of the Opposition asked what will happen if we are isolated in the European Community, let me make matters clear, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did. Of course, we are obliged, and willingly accept the obligation, to consult our partners in the European Community, which is what we will do on 20 February. If we fail to reach agreement, the Government must reserve the right to act on their own, if necessary. That is the legal position.

The much more fundamental argument that goes to the root of whether we are doing the right thing has been mentioned on all sides, and it was raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) and for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). There is a profound sense in which we are not isolated. No one doubts for a moment that it has been the policy of the ANC to argue for comprehensive sanctions; it is unclear whether the Labour party is still arguing for comprehensive mandatory sanctions. But that is a legitimate argument.

Many people in South Africa and elsewhere who have perfectly good credentials to argue against apartheid take a different view. It was quite fair for my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate to refer to opinion polls among the blacks in South Africa, and it is fair to refer to the views of Chief Buthelezi.

It is obvious that Mr. Mandela will be a key player. Many take the same view as the hon. Member for Swansea, East that he will be the key player, but he is one voice among many in a complex situation, rightly defined in a formidable speech by the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and an excellent short speech by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). We often oversimplify such issues, and one of the dangerous oversimplifications is to say that the ANC is the only voice of South Africa.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made perfectly clear, we are not arguing for the abolition of all sanctions. No one is arguing that we should abolish the sanctions on arms sales, for example. As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, until the end of the speech by the hon. Member for Swansea, East, no one on the Opposition Front Bench tried to deal with the issue at the centre of our case. Is it not right to try to make some response to the steps that Mr. de Klerk has taken? My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), in an intervention, at least produced an argument —the first that I had heard against doing that—which was taken up by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that we might strengthen the hand of the Right wing by doing so. I agree with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington that we should not make too much of the white backlash, although comparisons with settlers in Rhodesia who always knew their status and the Boers in South Africa are a little dangerous. However, while President de Klerk has the present constitution, he must show his own constituents that it is worth their while following him.

The Leader of the Opposition asked whether there have been any requests from South Africa. The South African Government have made it clear that they desperately hope for some response to the steps that they have taken. They are not unrealistic; they do not believe that they will get very much, but they want some response so that they can demonstrate to their own constituents that it is worth continuing down that road. Surely that argument is at least worth considering. Our emotional commitments against apartheid should not make us doubt our role. It is better that it be done by consensus, but that is not always possible. We have to find a policy, not simply an emotional response, and our policy is to push, press and argue that negotiations are the way forward.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman did not give way. I shall respond to his important speech in a moment. I have only 12 minutes left to speak.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) who did not get in earlier.

Mr. Nellist: As I have now been reselected, perhaps I can turn up some dangerous ground. I knew that I would be in a better position with the Minister than I was with the Foreign Secretary. I shall ask the Minister the same question as I would have asked the Secretary of State. How can the Government ask the ANC to make concessions, following Mr. de Klerk's announcement and the release of Nelson Mandela, when the largely cosmetic changes that were made about segregation do not belie the fact that the Group Areas Act and the Labour Relations Act are still in force in a country where some people do not have a vote? Most important from my point of view, as I represent the interests of trade unionists internationally, there is still a system in which poverty wages down the pits, in the factories and in the townships mean that millions of people live in misery. Until those problems are solved, how the hell can the Government ask the ANC to make any more concessions?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman's points were dealt with in the speech of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), which I shall turn to next, paying tribute in passing to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). I am sure that my right hon. Friend is right that the background of world politics has contributed to changing the attitudes of both sides in South Africa. No one is immune from the spirit of the possibility of peace and negotiation that is sweeping the world. The attitude of the Communist party in Russia to its connected parties in South Africa has been very important.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall not give way as I must deal with the speech by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North.

Like the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North asked how we could take such a step before the pillars of apartheid had been destroyed. That shows a complete misunderstanding of the European Community sanctions. I beg the hon. Gentleman to read once again the preamble to the 1986 decisions which were designed to bring about national dialogue across the racial barriers. As Mr. Mandela, among others, says, we are now approaching that— *[Interruption.]* I quoted it yesterday and my right hon. Friend quoted it earlier. As usual, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) comments from a sedentary position. If he still does not know the truth, I shall send it to him and he can learn it by heart.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said that what has happened is all cosmetic—the words of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East—because the really big things such as the dismantling of apartheid are not up for negotiation. That is where he and I disagree. Perhaps he and Mr. Mandela divide on this issue, because when Mr. Mandela talks about integrity, he is surely saying that he trusts President de Klerk to negotiate those issues. Mr. de Klerk's spokesman, the Minister of Constitutional Development, reiterated the points of agreement with Mr. Mandela and said that they now have a climate conducive to a negotiated settlement. Mr. Viljoen made those points, and President de Klerk agreed with him again today that they reject any system of white or black domination—or any domination of one group over another. On the two most fundamental issues of all they say that the remains of apartheid—although some of us believe that the most important parts of the structure still remain—must be removed. Whether they are remains or pillars of apartheid, they must be removed. Even the South African

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Government Minister believes so, and that will be included in the negotiations. Finally, Mr. Viljoen said that they were aiming for universal suffrage in a united democratic South Africa, and President de Klerk reaffirmed that in television interviews today.

If that is not putting the pillars of apartheid on the table for negotiation—if I can be excused a mixed metaphor—I do not know what is. The South African Government are making it clear that the door is open for talks; they are welcoming everybody, including the ANC, to those talks; they are not making unnecessary difficulties about the background of anyone to whom they wish to talk; and they are moving towards accepting the olive branch that has been offered by Mr. Mandela in terms of talking about defensive action. That is very close to the principle that we have espoused in the House of mutually winding down on both sides. The South African Government are cutting their defence forces.

Against that background, with the talks ready to begin and the South African Government making it clear that what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North calls the pillars of apartheid are the subject of negotiations, should we still behave as though nothing has changed? The British Government consider that a response should be made, as my right hon. Friend made perfectly clear, without sweeping away the existing pressures which are not fundamentally caused by the actions of any Government. We all know that what really shook South Africa was not the sanctions or any act of Government, but the actions of the commercial banks in their credit negotiations. Those banks and investors know very well that, unless South Africa moves, there will be conflict. That is why people will not invest there. It is not because the Twelve, the 24 or the Commonwealth tell them not to invest there; it is because they can see the truth. Now that there is a chance of movement and the hope that those investments will return, whatever anyone says, it is perfectly legitimate for us to say that it is pointless to discourage them. In the new climate it would be wrong to discourage them. We should look for some response to the steps that have been taken.

For many years, the Labour party told us that the Government had caused a dreadful block because there were no sanctions. Labour Members cannot now argue that the fundamental changes have been brought about by sanctions which they have repeatedly argued in the House have no more than symbolic power. They try to have the argument both ways, but logically they cannot.

I hope that the powerful speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) laid to rest any claims that the concerns about apartheid are felt by only one side of the House. There is no Member of the House who is not committed to the destruction of apartheid. The arguments are entirely about the tactics and how to make the transition without the revolutionary destruction of the economy and potential of South Africa that could all too easily come about. That is why I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for the Government amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 278.

Division No. 74] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Allen, Graham	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Alton, David	Golding, Mrs Llin
Anderson, Donald	Gordon, Mildred
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Gould, Bryan
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Graham, Thomas
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Ashton, Joe	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Grocott, Bruce
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Hardy, Peter
Barron, Kevin	Harman, Ms Harriet
Battle, John	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Beckett, Margaret	Haynes, Frank
Beith, A. J.	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Bell, Stuart	Heffer, Eric S.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Henderson, Doug
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Hinchliffe, David
Bermingham, Gerald	Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Blunkett, David	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Boateng, Paul	Home Robertson, John
Boyes, Roland	Hood, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Howells, Geraint
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Hoyle, Doug
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Buchan, Norman	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Buckley, George J.	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Caborn, Richard	Ilsley, Eric
Callaghan, Jim	Janner, Greville
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Johnston, Sir Russell
Canavan, Dennis	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Clay, Bob	Kennedy, Charles
Cleiland, David	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Cohen, Harry	Kirkwood, Archy
Coleman, Donald	Lambie, David
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Lamond, James
Corbett, Robin	Leadbitter, Ted
Corbyn, Jeremy	Leighton, Ron
Cousins, Jim	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Crowther, Stan	Lewis, Terry
Cryer, Bob	Litherland, Robert
Cummings, John	Livingstone, Ken
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Livsey, Richard
Cunningham, Dr John	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Dalyell, Tam	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Darling, Alistair	Loyden, Eddie
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	McAllion, John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	McAvoy, Thomas
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Macdonald, Calum A.
Dewar, Donald	McFall, John
Dixon, Don	McKelvey, William
Dobson, Frank	McLeish, Henry
Doran, Frank	Maclennan, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	McWilliam, John
Eadie, Alexander	Madden, Max
Eastham, Ken	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Marek, Dr John
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Faulds, Andrew	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Fearn, Ronald	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Maxton, John
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	Meacher, Michael
Fisher, Mark	Meale, Alan
Flannery, Martin	Michael, Alun
Flynn, Paul	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Foster, Derek	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Foulkes, George	Morgan, Rhodri
Fraser, John	Morley, Elliot
Fyfe, Maria	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Galloway, George	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Mullin, Chris

Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogs, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bleker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't'e)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm

Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Walker, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Madam Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House salutes Nelson Mandela on his release and welcomes the constructive actions taken by President de Klerk to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations with all parties in South Africa towards a non-racial constitution enjoying the support of a majority of South Africans; and believes these steps deserve a positive and practical response from the international community.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Given the total lack of regard in the previous debate for the real reason why the white Government in South Africa have retreated—namely, the heroic role of the black working class and the youth of that country—I give notice that I shall seek to prolong the debate by using the mechanism of the Adjournment debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That matter has nothing to do with the Chair. All that I can say to the hon. Member is that I wish him the best of British luck.

Rail Fares and Services

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I advise the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.13 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's approach to British Rail and London Underground that has produced the poorest quality rail and tube services and the highest fares in Western Europe, and has left Britain's transport system unable to cope with the challenges posed by the Channel Tunnel and the Single European Market; believes that Britain's transport crisis is now so severe that it is doing severe economic and environmental damage to the whole nation; deplores the low pay and long hours which typify the average working period of railway workers; recognises the need to set tougher quality of service standards to ensure that real passengers enjoy a safer, more reliable and efficient service at a fairer price and have greater powers to demand redress when those standards are not met; believes that compared to the railway systems of other developed nations, British Rail deserves greater financial support from public funds; and resolves that these problems can only be solved by adopting a co-ordinated approach to transport policy, increasing the level of public service obligation and other grants paid to British Rail and London Regional Transport, and adopting a new approach to investment to ensure that all plans are judged on a common basis, taking full account of environmental, economic and social benefits for both users and non-users.

This is the first proper transport debate since the new Secretary of State's appointment. Today, the Opposition will express the anger of millions of passengers who, after 10 years of cuts in subsidy and moves towards privatisation, are fed up with paying the highest fares in Europe for a dirty, unreliable and overcrowded railway service. The amendment paints a picture that is a million miles from the daily experience of millions of people who travel on our railway system today. The Government fail to understand that transport has become a major political issue, not only because the Opposition have chosen to make it so but because people feel helpless and frustrated at the scale of our transport crisis.

The facts of a poor quality service are well documented and are available for all hon. Members to see in the various reports. A dossier of shame has been compiled. It shows that one in six InterCity trains—that is, more than 300 trains per day—are at least 10 minutes late, that 112 trains on Network SouthEast are cancelled every day because of staff shortages, and that more than 800 trains on Network SouthEast are more than five minutes late every day. The position on provincial services is even worse.

Despite the fact that the number of passengers has increased by 10 per cent.—almost 70 million passengers—since 1983, there are 676 fewer carriages, which is about 50,000 seats, and 2,500 fewer locomotives in the railway system. With the increasing number of passengers on our rail system and with less seating capacity, it is hardly surprising that overcrowding has become so bad on Network SouthEast that on journeys lasting more than 20 minutes there must be at least one third of passengers standing before British Rail will put on an extra train—provided, of course, that there is one available and there are staff to man it.

On London Underground, one in three escalators are out of order on any given day. Also, 551 tube stations were closed for all or part of a day in the past six months

because there were not enough staff to keep them open. An increasing number of stations are being closed at certain times because of dangerous overcrowding on platforms.

The question for the House and for the country is why that has happened. Instead of having arguments about policy differences, it is fair to draw a comparison with the European experience. Other European countries have transport systems which move millions of people around, they have trains and buses, and it is fair to see how their Governments manage to provide a far better system. That is why many people in this country are increasingly angry. They go abroad and see the systems there, and they know that there is no need for the standard of service that they get in Britain to continue.

Undoubtedly, one of the key differences is the financial framework. The level of Government grant in European countries is far higher and it maintains a better quality system. Almost uniquely in Europe, the present British Government have pursued a policy of reducing public subsidy. In 1983 it was more than £1 billion, but it has been reduced to £560 million this year and there is to be a further cut of £340 million by 1992. The Treasury has saved nearly £2 billion compared with the 1983 levels of support. British Rail now receives only one third to one half of average European financial support.

The only way in which British Rail could compensate for such a massive loss of income is to pursue a policy of massive redundancies with the loss of more than 40,000 jobs, which has affected the quality of service. British Rail has also had to sell off assets—some very cheaply, as we recently saw in the British Rail Engineering Ltd. case about the sale of land, which is quite usual in privatisation programmes. Fares have risen by 24 per cent. in real terms in the past 10 years. That makes our fares the most expensive in Europe. An average 10 km journey costs twice as much in London as in other capital cities in Europe. That problem can be solved only by a very different policy.

The Secretary of State inherited a major problem, and it was hoped by many that his different approach might produce an entirely different policy. Opposition Members believe that a different policy is needed. As I shadowed the right hon. Gentleman on energy matters, I am bound to say that I did not believe that there would be any change in policy. He is a great man for explaining why things ought to be working and giving out the message, "It's the way I tell them."

That is not good enough because the Government's policies are wrong. They are going in for presentation. That is always the Tory approach to problems. They regularly argue that there is nothing wrong with their policies, simply that the presentation is wrong. In this case, the Secretary of State, who has earned himself a name for presenting matters in a better way than his predecessor, has done his best to go in for better presentation.

When the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) was replaced by the present Secretary of State —known as the Prime Minister's trouble shooter—I thought that a fresh mind was being brought to the urgent problems of the railways and that, as the right hon. Gentleman is good at PR, he might recognise, on studying the problems, that presentation and PR are not enough on this occasion. I regret to say that the right hon. Gentleman was brought in not to solve Britain's transport crisis but to improve the presentation and interpretation of Tory policies.

When Sir Bob Reid said that his job was not to run a service that was desirable but to run one that was profitable—he was talking about the Channel tunnel services—the Secretary of State explained to the House that he had been misunderstood. When Sir Bob warned that Britain's future as the transport hub of Europe was threatened by a lack of investment, the Secretary of State claimed that his speech had been widely misinterpreted.

When I warned in a statement on rail fares that the downturn in the economy, with the slump in the property market, meant that British Rail would have to cut its investment programme by up to £500 million, the Secretary of State told "The World At One" that there had been a misunderstanding of the figures. His office asked for a copy of my press release, which highlighted the figures and he must have studied them in detail. The right hon. Gentleman with his background as an accountant presumably understands figures better than most, although that is not obvious from the presentation of his policies.

Does the right hon. Gentleman deny, as I predicted a couple of weeks ago in regard to the corporate review and the Government's financial statement, that we shall be underfunded in the proposed £3·7 billion investment programme? I predicted cuts. Does the right hon. Gentleman deny the story in *The Guardian* this morning that trains are to be shortened and services scrapped? Is that another misunderstanding? I trust that the right hon. Gentleman will deal with that when he speaks in the debate.

Such cuts have been happening throughout the system for a long time. Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that the electrification of the King's Lynn and Uckfield lines has been delayed, that station modernisation schemes have been shelved and that park 'n' ride schemes have been scrapped? Does he appreciate that British Rail's investment programme assumes a rate of economic growth that is twice the Treasury's prediction?

The Secretary of State has assumed that the programme of investment will be protected and will not be cut. He said that in an interview that he gave to *The Financial Times*. If that is so, how is it to be financed? If the programme is to be maintained and not cut, who will pay for it? Can passengers expect a higher level of fares, or will more jobs on the railways be lost? Will the Government sell more railway assets? Or are the Government prepared to protect the railway system and provide more financial support?

If the Government genuinely wish to support the railways—not claim that there has been another misunderstanding or misinterpretation—they will have to review the corporate plan that has just been announced by British Rail and the financial framework that has been announced to Parliament. I call on the Secretary of State to review that corporate plan. If he is to provide the investment that he and we wish to see in the British Rail system, that is vital.

The Secretary of State claimed in an article in the *Financial Times* that the problem with me—and, I assume, many others—was that I did not understand the figures. "It's not my fault John's not an accountant", he said. That is true, though I have met many creative accountants who have been paid to present different positions on the same figures. The Secretary of State is a past master at doing that.

The right hon. Gentleman's knowledge of accountancy did not do him much good when it came to electricity

[Mr. John Prescott]

privatisation because he constantly said in the House that there would not be any price increases. That claim was blown apart with the statement in the House last week, and particularly with what has happened over electricity privatisation and nuclear plants.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Prescott: I gather that the right hon. Gentleman disagrees with me. The record proves the correctness of what I say, including statements made by the right hon. Gentleman to the House and on television. I shall be only too pleased to provide him with the details of that record. His reputation on figures was not good in that respect, which is no doubt why he moved to the Department of Transport.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does the hon. Gentleman have an opinion about creative returns to the Customs and Excise by people coming through with cameras accompanied by false receipts.

Mr. Prescott: I shall not enter into that issue. I would be prepared to discuss it with the hon. Lady, and I assure her that I felt as aggrieved as anybody else about that matter. Hon. Members will accept my reputation as one who has never entered into personal slights, and I regret that the hon. Lady has done so on this occasion. She will find that the House does not admire Members who get involved in that kind of slagging, on either side of the Chamber. Professional politicians are better occupied dealing with the substances of politics.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Get on with it.

Mr. Prescott: Not much need be said about the egg woman. She has said enough already.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I had better get on with the transport matters with which we are dealing.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way. If that is the case, the hon. Lady must resume her seat.

Mr. Prescott: The country has not gained in the past from interventions by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I cannot see that anything would be gained by my giving way to her now.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: In the White Paper on London traffic we were again challenged on the figures—

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely it is not in order for an Opposition Front Bench spokesman to be so rude and personal about Members on the Government side when we simply wish to ask questions about the railway service and know the views of Opposition Members on that subject. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to refuse to give way on that basis? If so, it is thoroughly bad manners on his part.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are no Standing Orders to that effect. The hon. Gentleman made it clear that he was not giving way to the hon. Lady, so I cannot allow her at this stage to intervene.

Mr. Prescott: No doubt the hon. Lady feels that she has said her television piece. People in glasshouses should not throw eggs.

When it comes to judging estimates relating to prices, the Secretary of State does not have a good reputation. The House may recall an exchange that took place about the London road assessment figures and the judgement that rail prices would increase by 40 per cent. in real terms. That was contested by the Secretary of State at the time, supported by other Conservative Members.

I have now seen the correspondence between the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and it is clear that the right hon. Gentleman has had to concede that, judged in terms of GNP or price increases, our predictions are right. I have since checked my facts with the Library, and if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to deal with that in his speech, I shall be delighted.

The Secretary of State's judgment is so faulty that he is making fundamental mistakes in his transport policy. Not only is there a fundamental difference between the two sides of the House about how we should approach the whole issue of transport, but there is that difference between all parties in the Opposition vis-a-vis the views of the Secretary of State.

When discussing these issues with the Council of Ministers in Europe, the right hon. Gentleman must find himself isolated in the policy that he is pursuing. As we heard on Monday, the right hon. Gentleman is fond of talking about the situation in eastern Europe, especially on matters of intervention, integration and co-ordination. Every other country in Europe is pursuing policies different from his.

The only crumb of comfort he seemed to gather was that the subsidies being put into their transport system by the Germans did not meet with his approval. But whether or not the right hon. Gentleman is proud of what is happening in Germany, the Germans have a far superior system to ours. That is the crux of the matter, especially as in Germany they are not talking about reducing their subsidies.

The British Government are isolated in their transport policy. If it is a question of disagreement between the two sides of the House, I call in aid—to show that it goes deeper than just disagreement—some of the editorials that are now appearing in the press about the Government's policy in general and the Secretary of State in particular. For example, readers of *The Daily Telegraph* were told to be "wary of misunderstandings" and that the Secretary of State was taking

"A pitifully myopic approach to our desperate transport problems."

Presumably the writer meant to say that he was doing a wonderful job. The same newspaper claimed that the "luckless Transport Secretary" was in

"possibly his last Cabinet post."

The right hon. Gentleman no doubt interpreted that to mean that he was heading for the top—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Back Benchers need have no fear because I am now coming to them, and in particular to the hon.

Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). After all, Back Benchers travel on the trains. I extended to the hon. Member for Selly Oak the courtesy of informing him that I would be referring to him. He said:

"You get the feeling that Mr. Parkinson wants the Tories to lose the next election".

He said that to tell inter-city commuters that they are getting travel too cheap was bizarre nonsense and that the Secretary of State was living in cloud-cuckoo-land. I am sure that the Secretary of State will say that, on careful reading of his hon. Friend's remarks, he is sure that he was widely misunderstood. I do not take that view. It is a clear and categorical statement about the Conservative party's policy on transport, particularly with regard to fares. As I have been told to keep to transport, I shall say that as an influential Back Bencher—[HON. MEMBERS: "Senior."]—yes, a senior Back Bencher or Front Back Bencher, whatever the hon. Gentleman's position is called, he made a trenchant criticism of the Government's transport policy.

The Secretary of State is finding out that all the clever messages and nice images are not the way to solve major problems. I shall tell him why his message will have no effect on the electorate. The daily experience of British people is so bad—they know what they are experiencing—that they will not listen to such blandishments and messages. We could all give many examples, but I shall give the Secretary of State my experience on the railway yesterday.

I had to go to Manchester to address a CLES conference on the future of British Rail. I joined one of BR's flagships, the Manchester pullman, at 8 am. The toilets did not work, the brakes were faulty, a boiler had failed and there were staff shortages. The train stopped and I looked out of the window and saw that we had been connected to the other British Rail flagship, the 7.30 Liverpool pullman, and were pushing it into Nuneaton. We arrived 40 minutes late.

I returned on the 3 pm train, which had worn-out shabby coaches and brake problems and was an hour late arriving in London. I then joined the London Underground Victoria line system, but we were informed that it would not be stopping at Victoria. I bailed out at Green Park and got on to the Jubilee line, which the Secretary of State intends to abolish in one of his new proposals for cross-London links, but found that the escalators were not working. I managed to arrive at Charing Cross on the good old Northern line—as soon as the doors open, one always faces a wall of bodies through which one has to fight one's way on to the train—and took the Circle line to Westminster and was informed that there would be delays and cancellations because of shortages of staff.

That tragedy of a journey was by no means exceptional. It is the daily experience of many people in Britain. We know that the Secretary of State's experiences are somewhat limited. He told the *Daily Mail* when he took the job:

"When all the fuss dies down I must get myself on a bus or train, I haven't been on either for years."

In another interview we were told that he intends to travel incognito on the trains and tubes. I do not blame him for that. If he is recognised while travelling on a train or Underground, he will be in trouble. If he had been on the InterCity trains yesterday to and from Manchester and people had seen him, he would certainly have been in trouble. Actually, of course, they did see him—on the front of the InterCity propaganda magazine which stated:

"Parkinson's mission is to produce a balanced alternative."

I wish that he had been on the train yesterday to explain the balanced alternative to interested commuters. I agreed that I would pass on their message. I would never use strong language, but I think that the Secretary of State gets my meaning.

If the policy is wrong, what needs to be done? If we are to learn anything from the European experience, it is that the transport system needs more money. Whatever the argument—politicians cannot buck this—the Government must find more resources for the British Rail system. They cannot sack more people, sell more assets or put the fares up any more. More money has to be found. That is the reality and none of us can duck it.

Whether it is expressed as a proportion of GDP or in the amounts of money involved, we give only a fraction of what other European countries give to their rail systems. The problems cannot be solved by real fare increases. The Secretary of State puts up the argument that long distance passengers are subsidised and should pay a great deal more. The answer to that argument came strongly from his hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak, as I said earlier.

The Confederation of British Industry estimates that road congestion costs us £20 billion. Not many years ago social costing justified putting more money into the railway system. What is so terrible in this country is that we do not judge rail and road investment in the same way. We make rail investment require an 8 per cent. return. For roads, we estimate how many accidents are likely to happen and the time that can be saved and justify millions of pounds of expenditure. A social cost approach for rail is essential.

Mr. Parkinson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State shakes his head. In a letter to *The Guardian* his hon. Friend the Minister said that there was no difference between the assessment for road and rail investment. I was surprised to hear that remark. It has always been generally accepted that there is a difference. I heard a speech in Manchester. Major-General Lennox Napier, the chairman of TCCC, the passenger consultative body, has always made it clear that the cuts in the public service obligation have affected the quality of services. That is what the passengers say and what the body set up to make the judgment says. He went on to make another point on cost-benefit analysis. He said:

"I find myself an inspector of public enquiries on roads."

He does both things:

"I find myself presented with a cost-benefit analysis for road building which measures all the costs and all the benefits which accrue to society at large as a result of public investment over a 30-year period."

I am surprised that until now no equivalent cost-benefit analysis has been applied to rail investment. The cost-benefit analysis system should be applied in determining investment and investments should be made in British Rail.

I should like the Secretary of State to tell us who is right in that argument. Are his hon. Friends right? Is there a difference? If there is a difference, as most of us believe and most of the authorities have always said, would he

[Mr. Prescott]

reconsider his position so that we can have a fair comparison when judging the investment criteria of the two Departments?

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No, I have a problem with time. In the last debate I took an awfully long time.

On subsidies, it is clear that there is a link between subsidies and the quality of service. I have given the authority for saying that and quoted my own direct experience. The Secretary of State argues, "Why should we subsidise services that are overcrowded?" We have a pricing policy which seems to be geared to driving people off the trains and on to our congested roads. We know the consequences and cost to the economy of congestion. We know the environmental cost of exhaust emissions of more people going by car. It must be desirable to subsidise rail services. Network South East will soon be the only urban rail network in Europe and North America which operates without any public subsidy.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Hear, hear.

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman says, "Hear, hear." I note that he is from a midlands constituency. There is not much hear-hearing from people in the Network South East area.

It is generally accepted that our fares are too high. In railway transportation it is not possible to secure all the operating and investment costs from the fare box and it is nonsense to attempt to do so. No other country has achieved that. Investment is absolutely crucial. There has been chronic underfunding throughout the 1980s. In both Labour and Tory Governments the Treasury's influence was such that the Government took a short-term view of long-term investment.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): So the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

Mr. Prescott: I have said it constantly. The Minister should look at the record. The last bulge in investment was in 1955. In various Governments, the Treasury has taken the view that investment could be put off and trains could be made to last longer. Now we have the bunching of investment. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Investment is crucial and necessary but it means that we did not have a sustained level of investment in British Rail over a long period. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is bunching. We are investing today because of a bunching of investment requirements. I cannot argue with the fact that there is an investment programme. I fully accept it. It is hard to deny that a £3·5 billion investment programme is going on. *[Interruption.]* Of course there is investment. The engines and coaches are 25 and 30 years old. They cannot go any longer. Investment has to be made. Before Conservative Members start cheering I shall tell them the problem with the programme. Does any Conservative Member know of any industry that tries to cover a 30-year replacement programme in a few years and obtain all the money from the fare box? It is nonsense. It is not done anywhere. It puts the penalties on the passengers.

France, Germany and Holland are investing far more in the railway revolution that is sweeping through Europe. Throughout the 1980s, the French have invested heavily in developing the TGV and suburban networks. Some 30 per cent. of the cost of TGV and electrification schemes are met by Government grants. The Governments give capital as well as revenue grants to the railway system. We should recognise that the same is critical for our system.

If we are to have a railway system that is modern and meets the freight requirements of our industry and travelling public we shall have to find more investment for it—and larger sums than those available at present.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): Does the hon. Gentleman talk to his hon. Friends in the Labour finance team?

Mr. Prescott: Yes, I do.

There are different ways and different priorities in financing such measures. We would not follow the crazy road programme that the Government have embarked upon—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is crazy because all that it has done is to transfer the money that has been saved from the public service obligation for railways across to the road programme. The Government have doubled the road programme at the expense of the rail passengers at the very time when we want people to come out of their cars and to use the railway system. That is the craziness of the Government's policy.

At the same time, the Government have ignored passenger accountability. Passengers feel helpless and the quality of the service is declining. I note that the Secretary of State is talking about a "passenger service charter". I am glad to see that he is pinching some of the ideas of the Labour policy document that we sent to the Secretary of State. That is not the first idea that he has pinched from Labour's transport programme and it will not be the last. However, we welcome that because it means an improvement.

If the Secretary of State really wants to help the passengers he will have to do something about the fares and about greater public financial support for the railways. I give him another bit of advice—he should establish an independent body so that passengers can complain about what is happening. We shall set one up under the auspices of a public interest commissioner, who will have the Power to investigate British Rail independently, allow passengers to make complaints, award compensation against British Rail for its failures, and give passengers a real chance to exercise their grievances.

A modern railway system needs additional public financial support, and such a system is absolutely crucial if we are to relieve the congestion that is a major cost to our economy and to do anything about environmental problems. That is not an eastern European solution. It is a good, sensible solution that has been adopted by most western European countries, which have far better transport systems than we have.

7.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on developing a balanced transport policy which recognises the economic importance to the United Kingdom of its rail, road and air network; welcomes the biggest programme of investment in British Rail for 25 years and the massive increase in investment in London Underground which will relieve congestion and meet the increased demand which is the result of the economic success

of the United Kingdom; welcomes the demanding quality of service objectives set by the Government; welcomes the £1 billion which will be spent to ensure Britain's rail infrastructure is in place to service the Channel Tunnel when it opens in 1993; applauds the high priority that the Government gives to all matters of safety on transport; and welcomes its recognition of the importance of the environment in transport policy.'.

We heard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, (Mr. Prescott) at his characteristic worst, full of bluster and wild promises. He may not have read the speech made yesterday by his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in which she said that the Opposition were determined to avoid any commitments to any major public expenditure programmes. She subsequently said that transport was one of a number of priorities—I repeat, "one of".

In the past 24 hours, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has promised to repeal section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, and has said that a Labour Government would underwrite the cross-Channel link. I hope that he cleared that with Sam McCluskie, who will find out today that his favourite son is planning to subsidise the competitors of the ferries and hovercraft on which his members depend for their living—*[Interruption.]* As I said, I hope that the hon. Gentleman cleared that with his friend Sam; otherwise, he might find tomorrow that he is no longer sponsored, which would be a terrible, terrible shock. The hon. Gentleman also made a series of wild remarks, implying that the subsidy under Labour is bound to increase enormously and that it will be centrally funded.

Over and over again, we hear the hon. Gentleman whingeing. It is not for nothing that he is called the prince of whingers in his time. It is not for nothing that he is universally distrusted and, if I may say so, fairly widely disliked. It is not for nothing that neither we nor the country take him seriously.

The hon. Gentleman made a modest claim tonight. He said that it was as a result of the Labour party's efforts that transport has suddenly become an important subject. I shall tell him why transport is an important subject——

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State was not listening.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman should check *Hansard*.

Transport has become an important subject because, under a Conservative Government, this country has enjoyed 10 years of substantial economic growth. On the personal level, the net result is that 5 million more motor cars are now on the roads; two thirds of families in this country now own a family car, and 20 per cent. own more than one.

There has been a huge increase in economic activity, which has resulted in a great increase in the movement of freight and commercial traffic around our country. In London alone, there has been a 30 per cent. increase in the use of light commercial vans. I do not know of any plans—even by the hon. Gentleman—for getting light commercial vehicles on to buses, which seems to be the hon. Gentleman's answer to pretty well everything else. There has also been a huge increase in the number of people travelling by rail, air and road as the country has become more prosperous.

Another factor is that the Government have been determined to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors, who set out on ambitious programmes that they could not sustain, running the country into an economic mess and subsequently slashing all the capital investment programmes on which they had embarked. We were determined that that would not happen. As the country has become more prosperous, so the investment programmes, right across the whole spectrum of the infrastructure, have been improved.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has made great play of the importance of those economic benefits to the whole community. Will he therefore tell me why there is such deep concern in my part of the country, where there is no clear investment programme on either the roads or the railways that would ensure that we in the north-east and in the highlands and islands of Scotland can benefit from 1992? What are his Government's direct plans for Scotland to ensure that we have the road and rail network that we merit?

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Lady knows, roads in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, the train system in Scotland is my responsibility and a substantial investment programme is planned for ScotRail. A huge subsidy is being spent to maintain the rail system. The Government accept the need to maintain that system——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Parkinson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, but I want to get on——

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Secretary of State give way on that very point?

Mr. Parkinson: No, I want to get on with my speech.

As a result of the country's increased prosperity—I am glad that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, started to admit that—there has been a huge increase in investment across the whole spectrum of our infrastructure. Our road programmes are running at a high level. Investment in the Underground, at £400 million per year, is at twice the level when the Labour party controlled it through the Greater London council. Next year, that figure will increase to 3·5 times the amount that was spent in 1984-85. We are also investing the highest amount for over 25 years on the rail network. The investment programme for the past three years represents a 26 per cent. increase over the previous three years and, as I have said, 1989-90 represents a record level of investment in British Rail.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in spite of active representations from an all-party delegation, which included his hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), his right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), several of my hon. Friends, and hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland, British Rail is to go ahead with cutting the last sleeper service between Northern Ireland and south-west Scotland and Euston?

That has tremendous political implications for Northern Ireland and south-west Scotland. The local authorities have come up with some resources to advertise and promote the service, and there is a great possibility that it will be made economic. Will the Secretary of State

[Mr. Foulkes]

intervene personally, look at the case, and talk to the chairman of British Rail to see whether that vital service can be saved? If he does, he will gain a great deal of good will from hon. Members of all parties.

Mr. Parkinson: I am aware of that problem, and the hon. Gentleman knows that the service was withdrawn because it was under-used. That is an operational day-to-day matter for British Rail.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am so glad that InterCity is profitable. However, should it remove one of the last rail links between London and Ireland just because it is the least profitable of British Rail services? British Rail has a duty to keep the main InterCity routes going.

Mr. Parkinson: The service was withdrawn because it was not being used. I have never known what benefit it is to the public to keep a service going when the public do not want to use it. Running empty trains up and down the railway may give some people satisfaction, but I cannot see what good it does the public or the railways.

The Government's policy on transport is straightforward and clear. It is to develop a balanced policy to improve all aspects of our transport arrangements. We have steadily built up two substantial programmes across the spectrum. For example, as a result of the "Roads for Prosperity" White Paper, the Government have recognised the need to improve the national road system. In spite of predictions from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and others about our lack of success in negotiations with the Treasury, this year we won a roads programme of £5·7 billion over the next three years—a 50 per cent. increase in real terms, which gives us a major programme.

Hon. Members talk about the Channel tunnel and getting freight on to rail, but the Channel tunnel will be capable of handling only about 3 per cent. of our exports —97 per cent. of our exports will still have to leave this country by the traditional routes of ports and airports. The road system connecting those ports is a vital part of maintaining Britain's prosperity.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has at last admitted that the Government have approved the biggest ever investment programme for British Rail—£3·7 billion over the next three years—and £2·2 billion for the Underground. Other major public transport investment will be made. We have a record programme for the improvement of airports. Our air traffic control system will have £600 million invested in it to improve the capacity of our airways.

Right across the spectrum, the Government are showing, in a controlled and sensible way, that they recognise the nation's transport problems and are making the investment to deal with them. We differ from the Opposition because we do not believe that strategic planners, drawing up strategic transport plans, are the people to determine the future of our transport system. They have an almost unenviable record of getting it consistently wrong. If the transport system is modernised, the public will be capable of making the choice about which transport method best suits it.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): As my right hon. Friend has discussed road and rail, I shall continue the Scottish symphony. When there were bad floods in Inverness a year or so ago——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: And this year.

Mr. Adley: Let us not discuss the weather in Scotland. When there were floods a year ago and the Inverness rail bridge was washed away, the damage done to the roads in that area was paid for by the taxpayer. However, British Rail was expected to pay from its own revenue for the repair of the railway bridge. Is that a fair and equal comparison between road and rail?

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: I shall not give way, because the hon. Gentleman will have the chance to make his own usual boring say towards the end of the debate. I do not see why I should make way for him now.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker Order. I can hear only one hon. Member at a time.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall deal with the argument about the lack of public contribution to investment. ScotRail receives a subsidy that represents more than 70 per cent. of the costs. The passengers on ScotRail contribute less than 30 per cent. Therefore, the taxpayer is making a substantial contribution to ScotRail.

Mrs. Ewing: What is the answer?

Mr. Parkinson: I have just given the answer, but the hon. Lady did not understand it.

Opposition Members have been making great play about the level of this year's fare increases. The fare increases on British Rail are 8 to 8·5 per cent. and on London Regional Transport they are just over 9 per cent. There is one record that no Government will wrest from the Labour party. In 1975, the Labour Government increased fares by 50 per cent. in a single year. In no year under the Labour Government was any fares increase less than double figures—except, for some reason, the one that took place two months before the 1979 general election. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has suddenly become the great friend of the long-distance commuter, who pays about 40 per cent. of the standard fare to travel at peak hours. He pays less than the cheapest off-peak fare. That was regarded as unsatisfactory by British Rail, and last year it proposed that, over a three-year period, the discount should be reduced—not eliminated—from about 60 to 40 per cent.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because it is unfair to the rest of the travelling public to have heavily subsidised fares for people travelling in peak hours.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, in his normal wide-awake fashion, cottoned on to this two years late. It was announced two years ago, but it took him by surprise when the second stage was announced this week.

The long-distance commuter, of whom there are 18,000, will still receive a substantial discount, but it will be smaller. His fares increase this year will be about 13·75 per cent. Another advantage for long-distance commuters is that they can choose when to pay the increase. Most of them, having more sense than the hon. Gentleman, trade in their season tickets a day before the fares go up, and

travel for an extra year at the lower rate. If the hon. Gentleman has no group to worry about than that one, he is a lucky man.

Through the whole of the hon. Gentleman's argument runs the theme that fares should not have gone up. That would have meant that British Rail's losses would be increased, because it does not make a profit. If the fares had not gone up but the expenses had, the losses would have gone up, and therefore the taxpayers' contribution would have gone up because there are only two sources of revenue. The hon. Gentleman backs every wage claim that is made, and wages represent 60 per cent. of the expenditure.

I shall quote a remark made by a more enlightened Labour Transport Secretary who had some experience of Government and running an organisation. The following statement was issued by the Labour Government in a Command Paper in 1977:

"subsidies transfer the cost of a service from the traveller to the taxpayer or the ratepayer, and the traveller is often a taxpayer or ratepayer himself. To use subsidies to disguise from people the cost of the services they are paying for is pointless, and to subsidise richer people at the expense of poorer is perverse."

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South) *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: Who was it?

Mr. Parkinson: It was the Labour Government. If the hon. Gentleman knew anything about government, he would know that White Papers are issued in the name of the Government collectively. That was presumably the voice of the Labour Government. At the time, the hon. Gentleman was scrubbing around on the Back Benches, and many people think that he was at his best in those days.

Mr. Snape: The right hon. Gentleman should not be so personal.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman devoted his speech to attacking my professional qualifications. I do not know what his are, if he has any. None of us knows what he did before he came here.

Increasing British Rail's losses, increasing its subsidy at the taxpayers' expense or cutting investment would not be a sensible way forward. British Rail's services need to be improved, and the farepayers should make a contribution. There should be massive investment programmes. They are in place and they are being sustained. They will produce a better service, because British Rail will have better equipment at its disposal. We have set it service objectives that are designed to ensure that the passenger has a better deal—better punctuality, more cleanliness and more regular services.

I found it objectionable that the hon. Gentleman should complain about the decline in British Rail's standards and its record last year. In the four previous years, British Rail had a record of improved punctuality and service.

Mr. Prescott: No.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, look at the figures.

Mr. Prescott: The figures are fiddled.

Mr. Parkinson: There was no fiddle. The hon. Gentleman should try to remember what happened in 1989, when there was an unnecessary, mindless and wasteful strike that ruined British Rail's reputation, cost British Rail £70 million and put at risk investment and jobs. The hon. Gentleman tacitly supported that strike throughout. The hon. Gentleman complains about an effect, the cause of which he supported.

Mr. Prescott: So did the arbitration.

Mr. Snape: So did the public.

Mr. Parkinson: We listened to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East with no surprise but with a growing marvel at his nerve. He represented a Government who presided over British Rail's decline, who increased its losses, reduced its investment and saw the number of passengers go down.

Mr. Prescott: Not true.

Mr. Parkinson: Check the figures. They are there for all to see. British Rail's investment programme was slashed, and many believed that British Rail was in a state of terminal decline.

It is under a Conservative Government that investment has gone in, performance standards have been set, new equipment has been bought, new signalling systems installed and stations modernised and lengthened. We shall preside over an improvement in a system over whose decline the Labour Government presided and which many believe they sponsored. I invite the House to reject the Opposition's insolent, ill-informed and aggressive motion, and to support the Government's amendment.

8.3 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on initiating the debate, which comes at a particularly opportune time to consider the bleak future facing Britain's rail passengers and railway workers. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent exposure of the failure of the Government's transport policies in general and railway policy in particular.

The Government's amendment is a huge joke to any regular traveller. The Government want to be congratulated on developing a balanced transport policy, but what they have developed is balanced chaos in our rail, road and air networks. Passengers are crammed in like sardines on London Regional Transport's Underground and on many British Rail routes, paying ever-increasing fares which are arguably the dearest in the world, and worrying more and more about safety on trains and platforms—especially on platforms which are unmanned in order to save money.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): When the hon. Gentleman speaks about overcrowding on the London Underground, should he not take into account the fact that we have the largest number of people in work in our history and we cannot have that without a massive increase in the number of passengers? That is what is causing the overcrowding, not a reduction in the number of trains or inactivity by LRT. It is congested because many more people are travelling.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly valid point, but the Government are doing nothing to cope with the problem—quite the reverse.

Congestion on our roads is bringing many of our city centres and many lengths of our motorway system to a

[Mr. Marshall]

grinding halt, at a cost of billions of pounds. Perhaps the Secretary of State will say how many billions of pounds congestion on our roads costs the nation.

We also have overcrowded airports. Heathrow has insufficient terminal capacity to meet the demand and the delays caused by air traffic control problems which resulted from a lack of investment in air travel control infrastructure between 1979 and 1987. I defy the Secretary of State to deny that that is the case. He cannot do so.

Mr. Bermingham: The Secretary of State would not give way to me, but my hon. Friend has given me the opportunity to intervene while he is still here. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Secretary of State, who talks of balance, shows no balance when considering the charges for the Mersey tunnel? Apparently, the Humber bridge's debts are to be written off by the Government because they must not fall on the local community charge payers, many of whom live in Tory constituencies. However, the cost of the Mersey tunnel will fall on the Merseyside community charge payers at a cost of £8 per head per year. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Secretary of State shows a complete lack of balance?

Mr. Marshall: Of course. I would go even further and say that there is an unanswerable case for the removal of charges on all estuarial crossings and toll bridges in Britain. I look forward to the day when such tolls are removed.

The present investment programme in British Rail is welcome, but the tragedy is that there was no such programme between 1979 and 1987. There was nothing like the accelerated programme of the past two years. During those previous years, many of today's and tomorrow's problems were created as a result of the Government's deliberate lack of investment.

Sir David Mitchell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that during the years to which he is referring British Rail was given consent for the biggest investment programme since steam gave way to diesel? Can he deny that? If that is true, does it not make nonsense of the point that he is trying to make?

Mr. Marshall: No, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point. The Government underinvested in public transport, particularly in the railways, during those years. It is only now, because of the huge public concern about transport safety and the realisation that votes may be lost on transport issues, that the Government are committing those resources and additional investment to the railways.

The public expenditure White Paper shows that the growth in passengers on LRT has almost completely tailed off over the past three years. That growth was largely generated by travelcards, sales of which have now evened off.

On 7 June 1989 the chairman and chief executive of LRT and his chief officials appeared before the Select Committee on Transport, which I have the privilege to chair. The Committee was astonished to be told that the Underground in central London was so near to an intolerable level of overcrowding that fares would have to be increased to curb growth in passenger demand.

That is the exact opposite of what public transport should be about. It was also made clear to the Committee that there could be no major expansion of capacity until well into the mid-1990s or late 1990s. If that is not an abject admission of the failure of the policies of the past 10 years, I do not know what is. The Committee was so concerned about the position that it took the unusual step of publishing a report after that single sitting.

When the Secretary of State appeared before the Select Committee recently, he was very dismissive of road pricing, which could take some cars off the road and compel people to use public transport. The right hon. Gentleman felt that that was a highly unattractive option. Why is a policy of pricing people off public transport, such as London Underground proposes to cope with overcrowding, seen as an attractive option? Such a policy can only lead to people being forced to use already overcrowded roads. Why should one option be unattractive to the Secretary of State but a comparable policy, apparently attractive to LRT's chairman, be deemed attractive?

Mr. Parkinson: It is not part of Government policy to drive people either off the roads on to the Underground, or off the Underground on to the roads. If the hon. Gentleman will study Underground fares, he will see that that is the case, because they have not been increased in real terms for 10 years. They have on British Rail but not on the Underground. I repeat, it is no part of our policy to price people off the Underground.

Mr. Marshall: I do not agree with the Secretary of State, and nor does my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Secretary of State was the person who appointed the new head of London Regional Transport——

Mr. Parkinson: Not me.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The right hon. Gentleman's Department made that appointment. That chairman then told the Select Committee that LRT could not cope with the increase in the number of passengers and would price them off the Underground. When he was asked to reveal with which financial theory such a policy accorded, he was unable to answer, so we assumed that the source of that policy was the Department.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point much more succintly than I could have done. I invite the Secretary of State and other Government Members to read the Committee's second report of last year.

Following that meeting of the Select Committee, on 12 June, in a parliamentary reply the former Secretary of State said that he would have to hear convincing arguments from LRT before agreeing to pricing the public off the Underground. Is that the present Secretary of State's policy? Does it apply also to British Rail? In some ways the right hon. Gentleman answered those questions with his earlier intervention. Perhaps the Secretary of State or the Minister for Public Transport, when he winds up, will give an example of what he considers to be a convincing argument. Is it not the case that there will be a 33 per cent. cut in InterCity's subsidy by 1992-93, and that consultants considering public transport alternatives to

new roads in London were instructed by the Department's officials to assume a massive 46 per cent. real increase in fares by the year 2001? A report to that effect appears in this month's *Railway Gazette International*. How does that figure compare with the increased cost of private car use, which is estimated at only 9 per cent. by the year 2000? Is the increase linked to the removal of public service obligation subsidy completely? Will the Secretary of State come clean and tell the House what are his intentions?

The Secretary of State's policy is to allow InterCity to operate as a private company, which means that it could take certain business decisions that were very much against the public interest—such as doubling long-distance commuter fares. Even if half InterCity's passengers were lost, revenues would be maintained while rolling stock levels would be reduced. Would the Government stand aside and allow that to happen? I would not put it past them.

I return to the scandalous withdrawal of the Stranraer-London sleeper services to which my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) referred earlier—as did the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who was apparently brashly dismissed by the Secretary of State. Despite all-party opposition from Members of Parliament representing constituences in south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland, no one in British Rail seems to give a damn what happens. Local authorities and other interested organisations are willing to commit themselves financially to helping the services, yet they are still to be withdrawn. Does that signal the beginning of the end of sleeper services between London and Aberdeen, Inverness and Oban, and perhaps even between Edinburgh and Glasgow? Will the Secretary of State agree not to withdraw those sleeper services and personally to examine the Stranraer service—and not hide behind the argument that that matter is entirely for InterCity to decide?

Everyone knows that the Government are not very popular in Scotland because of their policies. Perhaps the Secretary of State can build up a little good will by giving a categorical assurance that no more Scottish services will be withdrawn, especially in rural areas. Will he consider the electrification of the east coast line north of Edinburgh to Aberdeen? Can he guarantee that Channel tunnel passengers from Scotland will have direct inter-line facilities in London, without having to change stations, from the day the Channel tunnel comes into operation? There is a strong suspicion that Scotland will not benefit, and nor will other areas, and that not all the necessary infrastructure will be in place when the tunnel opens. There is no such suspicion attached to the French operation. I for one am not in the least reassured by the Secretary of State's promise that everything will be all right on the night. I do not believe that we will be ready for the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Most railway workers do a first-class job in all kinds of weather, working long and unsocial hours for low pay. Last year, they had to fight very hard for an 8·8 per cent. pay increase, yet the salary of British Rail's new chairman will increase from £92,000 to £200,000 per annum. Any Government, regardless of their policies, must acknowledge that the best way of improving services is to provide more financial support for infrastructure, and to pay railway workers decent wages and provide them with good working conditions.

The nation needs a properly planned, co-ordinated and integrated transport system. I make no apology for reiterating a longstanding trade union and Labour party transport argument. The nation needs a system that will take into account economic, environmental and social benefits for users and non-users alike. The Government will not provide such a system, but the next Labour Government will.

8.18 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): One would have more respect for the criticisms made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and by his hon. Friends if they at least acknowledged some of the achievements of our transport system over recent years. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State acknowledged that many improvements need to be made, but one must acknowledge also those that have already been made.

If I may say so in her absence, the intervention of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) could not have been more wide of the mark. Roads in Scotland, of course, are the ultimate responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I remind the hon. Member for Moray that the part of Scotland that I represent as well as the hon. Lady has seen road dualling between Perth and Aberdeen nearly completed, but she made no mention of that. In the last nine months, my right hon. Friend has committed himself to major improvements to the road between Aberdeen and Inverness, in the hon. Lady's own constituency.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I would rather not give way, as this is a short debate and I want to finish fairly quickly.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to investment in British Rail, and to its continuation. Investment has increased in recent years.

I want to concentrate on the concern in my part of Scotland about current plans to finish the electrification of the east coast line at Edinburgh and not to continue it to Aberdeen. The hon. Member for Shettleston mentioned this.

We certainly appreciate that some £400 million has been invested in the east coast route. It has been the biggest single investment that British Rail has carried out in its electrification programme, and we are grateful for it, but it is only logical that it should be continued beyond Edinburgh to Aberdeen. I ask my right hon. Friend to do all that he can to ensure that it is completed.

I know that I am talking about a further investment of some £80 million, but when one compares that with the hundreds of millions spent on the Channel tunnel, and the £200 million or more which is projected for the Heathrow link, it is no wonder that there is anxiety in our part of Scotland.

People in areas north of Edinburgh are worried that British Rail has said that electrification is not justified. We welcome British Rail's commitment to consider the matter again.

Why are we so concerned? The people in the north of Scotland want to take advantage of the Channel tunnel, as do other areas, and we want to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the integrated European market after 1992.

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

Under the present arrangements, the east coast main line is part of the integrated United Kingdom InterCity network. If electrification ends at Edinburgh, locomotives will have to be changed, and that makes many people think, rightly or wrongly, that the area north of Edinburgh will become peripheral. We will not share in the advantages offered by the improved journey time from London to Edinburgh. That journey is to be cut by 35 minutes, but the journey to Aberdeen, after allowing for the change of locomotives, will increase by 20 to 30 minutes. We do not count that as progress. We ask for our share in the 35-minute improvement in journey time that Edinburgh will get.

Freightliner's terminals are being closed in Scotland, and four British Rail area manager's offices are closing. Therefore, my right hon. Friend should not be surprised at the kind of fears that I have expressed. They are genuine fears, and we do not want to see the north of Scotland become peripheral.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No, I would rather not give way, because of the time.

The Grampian region has a population of more than half a million. Tayside has 400,000 and Fife some 350,000, so we are not talking about peripheral areas. They have a large population and it is growing, which is a reverse of the national trend in Scotland. It is also an area of high economic and industrial activity. My right hon. Friend used to be at the Department of Energy, and he should not need persuading about the importance of that part of Scotland because of North sea oil.

Would the investment be justified? British Rail says that its figures show that it would not, but the figures are only a little short of viability. I welcome the fact that they are going to re-examine the figures, and I hope that something positive will result.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that this should be costed in socio-economic terms and not just economic terms. We want a full cost-benefit analysis, showing the benefit to travellers, the time saved, the reduced congestion on roads and other economic and social benefits to the local areas served by the line. I understand that that is how road investment studies are carried out, and how investment in harbours and ports is assessed. We ask for similar treatment for this line. The issue has real relevance in regional development terms, particularly if the whole of the United Kingdom is to benefit from the Channel tunnel.

I remind my right hon. Friend that this kind of project is appropriate for external funding. Some 40 per cent. of the line goes through assisted areas. The inquiries that have been made of the European development fund show that it could be used. One of its purposes is to correct regional imbalance. Therefore, a considerable amount of funding could come from Europe, and I hope that advantage will be taken of that.

More recently, a number of individuals and bodies have come up with the suggestion of private funding. Some of my hon. Friends have criticised the amount of money that Scotland gets. However, people in Scotland are prepared to put money into a project such as this, and the chairman of British Rail is considering proposals at the moment.

I ask my right hon. Friend to keep pressing British Rail about the project, and to facilitate it in every way that he can. We want an integrated transport system. The Scottish Office has improved roads in north-east Scotland beyond recognition in the past 10 years under the Conservative Government. Aberdeen airport is one of the busiest airports in Britain, and a lot of money and investment has been put into it. We want choice and competition in transport services, so we want the rail system to be improved, not hindered, so that it shares in the competition and offers choice to the user. That makes sense for regional development.

I ask my right hon. Friend and the House not to forget that the area concerned services the generation of all the revenues from the North sea. We simply ask for a little of it back.

8.26 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): St. Valentine's day is an appropriate day to discuss rail services. I am certain that the majority of the British public, and those who travel on British Rail and London Underground, have a love-hate relationship with the managements of those companies, and would rather put them in the stocks.

The public know that the management are not the real culprits because their hands are tied, and they have no alternative but to do what the Government order. They know that profit and loss has to take priority over quality and service.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Fearn: I shall give way in a moment.

The recent astronomical fares increases are symptomatic of the Government's attitude towards anything that can be even remotely considered a public service. The ideology is to apply market forces, but in this case I do not think that that is going to work. Britain needs a comprehensive public transport system to meet the economic and trade needs of the 1990s, and the social and environmental needs of today and beyond.

On Monday, during questions, the Secretary of State chose to give my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) a tongue-in-cheek response to his question about the need for an integrated transport system. Is the Minister aware that we are probably the only country in Europe that ignores the social and environmental public interest aspects of our public transport system, and probably the only country that does not view public transport as a public service, but thinks that its profitability, when it is run as a commercial organisation, is the only evidence that it is operating in the best public interest?

The Secretary of State also said in his response that his Department was pursuing a balanced policy, with record levels of investment to improve all aspects of the transport system. He made it sound as though the Government had performed a great service, and that we should give them a pat on the back.

Yet we know that the share of total capital invested in the railways today which comes from the Treasury is minimal. We also know that, in France, capital investment plans announced this year show that they are investing in

their railways at well over twice the rate of investment in Britain, and theirs is already a well-funded system. The cost of travelling on French railways will be cheaper. The French have seen the opportunities of 1992 and of the Channel tunnel, and have reached out to grasp them. We have not done that; our transport policy will hang around our necks like a millstone for the rest of time.

What is required is planning, along with co-ordination, investment and financial support. Part of our policy should be a recognition that—properly developed and fully exploited, and with the dedicated reserved routes that they control—the railways can carry far more passengers and goods than the roads, using much less space, ensuring greater safety and causing less environmental pollution.

What the system does not need is a massive fares increase, which will deter passengers and return them to the roads. In September 1978, the price of a standard return ticket from London to Brighton was £5·65; in September 1989, it was £16·20. Following the latest increase, the fare is 200 per cent. higher than it was when the present Government came to power.

Hon. Members will want to know how inflation affects those calculations. Rail fares are rising faster than the inflation rate: the rise in the retail prices index over the same period was only 115 per cent.—which, of course, is nothing to be proud of. Passengers are being priced off the rails. Our roads are becoming more congested, with all the social, economic and environmental disadvantages that that creates. It is madness to build more roads in the mistaken belief that they will relieve congestion: the more roads that are built, the more cars there will be to fill them. It is nonsense for us to pursue policies that will inevitably bring our major towns to a halt.

London Regional Transport's declared policy is to deter passengers, at least during peak hours. British Rail claims that it has never been part of its policy to turn passengers away, but the current fares increases will do just that. Today's press reports that British Rail is to make further cuts in services, and to shorten trains on Network SouthEast and the rural provincial lines, seem to confirm that its policy is to reduce capacity rather than increase it.

Both groups point to the increased number of people they transport to dispute that fact, and to justify claims that services have been improved. The number of passengers has undoubtedly increased over the years, but that is probably due less to efforts to improve services than to the nature of today's society. More people are on the move: as communities break up, they travel further to work, do the shopping and engage in leisure activities.

Many people have moved further afield to be able to afford their own homes. They have been hit hardest, especially in the present climate of high interest rates. The recent fares increases are the final blow, and many people may have to consider moving again or even leaving the home ownership market altogether. Moreover, those on low incomes who cannot afford to buy cars increasingly cannot afford to travel on public transport either. They are in danger of becoming isolated from the services they need, and of being unable to participate in the life around them.

I referred earlier to the policy of encouraging off-peak travel. Of course, if LRT's attempts were entirely successful, the "off-peak" period would become the new rush hour. More to the point, there is a limit to the amount of off-peak travelling that is possible: flexible hours may have some advantages, but they too are limited—not only from a business point of view, but because they can be very destructive to family life. As a frequent traveller on British Rail and London Underground, I am always rather sceptical when I hear talk of "off-peak hours", because the trains are always crowded when I travel on them, whatever the time.

I have not said much about the quality of service on the railways. Certainly the astronomical price of tickets should warrant excellent service, but more often than not it does not approach such a standard. Trains are cancelled, run late, do not contain the advertised buffet car and are poorly maintained, and in some cases passengers have no idea what is happening.

On my latest trip from the north, my train was an hour and a half late. When I questioned a member of staff, he said that the driver was ill and had not turned up in time. When I asked another member of staff who happened to be passing—admittedly he was on the catering side—he said that the train had not come out of the siding in time. Later, someone on one of the platforms said that the delay was definitely due to a landslide in Scotland. As it happened, none of the excuses was correct.

Even when efforts are made to inform passengers, it is virtually impossible to hear, because the tannoy system does not work.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Clearly a good deal of creativity is involved in the production of so many good excuses. If we privatised the railway service and gave it its head, it would improve considerably, as does any service in which British industry and enterprise are involved.

Mr. Fearn: The hon. Gentleman has a point, but I think that the number of excuses would be reduced only if staff were paid a proper rate for the job. If British Rail had more employees, the service would be better. The problems are all symptomatic of a system that has been cut to the bone in the interests of cost efficiency, and that is not a good way in which to run a public transport system.

I have mentioned the Secretary of State's reference to his Department's balanced policy. Last Monday, at Transport Question Time, he said that in the next three years the Government's roads programme would amount to £5·7 billion, and the rail, Underground and other public transport programmes to £6 billion. Does he really consider that a good, balanced policy? Spending on more roads has been justified through cost-benefit assessments, but no form of rail investment has been seen to bring such benefits.

I note that it is now part of British Rail's objectives to undertake cost-benefit analysis to enable Government to justify capital grant for investment. I also understand that the payment of capital grant for non-user benefits has, in theory, been Government policy since 1987, but that policy has not been followed through in practice.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The hon. Gentleman's constituency and mine adjoin each other and we have common problems, caused mainly by traffic flow. Bypasses are needed to relieve the pressure on the villages in the area. A bypass has already been built in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, on the edge of Southport, adjacent to the new hospital that owes its existence to this forward-thinking Government. In the villages, however, and in and around Ormskirk and Southport, the public are asking for the traffic flow to be relieved. Surely it is only right for the Government to give that a high priority.

Mr. Fearn: The hon. Gentleman and I agree on that, and we are both working towards the new road system leading to Southport. If the Minister had agreed to open the Burscough Curves, a flow of traffic from Scotland and the north would have opened up the north-west, and I hope that that will still be a rider. We know that the local authorities must get together, but Government money is needed as well.

When does the Minister expect the first capital grant for non-user benefit to be made under the new objective? How does that fit in with the requirement for British Rail to operate in a commercial manner to ensure a return on investment of at least 8 per cent.? It is clear that transport costs should be reduced. To achieve this, we must invest in our railways.

Investment in the railways could have a proportionately greater effect than investment in roads, and it could have greater environmental and social benefits. Other nations in Europe have seen that. Other nations have invested at a far greater rate than has Britain. Proportionately, they have invested more public money. It is time that we did the same. If we are to compete, if we are to benefit from 1992 and from the Channel tunnel, we must invest in our infrastructure. The railways and London Underground are part of that infrastructure.

8.40 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): The only thing more depressing than the simplistic motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition was the somewhat negative speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)—a characteristic performance with nothing but dubious criticism. The hon. Gentleman tried to scale the heights, but did not quite get there. We heard nothing constuctive. Nor—and this is more important—did the hon. Gentleman's speech tell us anything precise about what the Labour party proposes to do about rail transport, or about where the money to pay for the very vague ideas spluttered out would come from. I remind the hon. Gentleman that in 1984 another politician—Fritz Mondale—went round the country criticising his political opponents but failing to come up with any detailed, constructive proposals of his own. People turned to him and said, "Where's the beef?" I say to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, "Where's the beef, Giovanni?" The British electorate want to know the precise details of the policy. We do not want simplistic solutions and flowery expressions in an attempt to con the electorate.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his admirable speech, not everything that British Rail is doing is now completely up to scratch. There is a good reason for that. Our railways were neglected in the late 1960s and the 1970s. There was under-investment and gross over-subsidisation. Opposition Members call for the investment of more taxpayers' money. That would not improve the service one iota; it would lead to inefficiency. The use of taxpayers' money leads to lethargy and to a total refusal to meet the demands or satisfy the needs of the customer. That is what British Rail has been suffering from, and that is why, until recently, British Rail was not providing anything like as good a service as its customers deserve and should have been getting.

Mr. Adley: Does that apply to West Germany as well?

Mr. Burns: My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) raises the question of West Germany.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Yes, tell us about West Germany.

Mr. Burns: Once again the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) seeks to intervene from a sedentary position. Many people regard the hon. Gentleman as the unthinking man's Alf Garnett. If he listened a little more in quiet, he might learn something and increase his knowledge of the subject.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, I would say that it is too easy, too glib, to make comparisons between subsidisation in Britain and subsidisation in Europe. The railway debts that the British Government have written off have not been written off in Europe. That is why the subsidisation figures there are far higher than they are in this country.

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Burns: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. Other hon. Members want to speak, and I am pushed for time.

I would point out to my right hon. Friend that Chelmsford is one of the largest commuter towns in the south of England. I, too, have been a commuter, and I can say that the service lacks a number of elements. For example, the cleanliness of trains, despite the target, is not good enough. Neither is time-keeping.

Mr. Prescott: Here come the complaints.

Mr. Burns: Not at all. Before the hon. Gentleman gets carried away I shall explain that, despite those criticisms, there is investment pouring into British Rail and it is being reflected in the service. But because there is so much catching up to do, as a consequence of neglect in the 1970s, it is not possible to do everything overnight.

Those lines in which there has been investment have seen the benefits of remarkably improved service. The Liverpool Street to Chelmsford line is not so good as it should be, but one can see that the investment there is beginning to bear fruit. New and additional trains are being introduced. Outdated rolling stock is being replaced with new carriages. More than £1 billion is being invested in Liverpool Street station. Of course, because of the building work, that station has been a nightmare for commuters in the last three years. The rebuilding is extensive, and when the station is up and running it will be a showpiece for London and will bring benefits for commuters.

Within the last three years there has been a major rebuilding programme at Chelmsford station. My constituents will be delighted at my right hon. Friend's announcement at Question Time on Monday that a new signalling programme on the Shenfield to Chelmsford to Colchester line, costing more than £19 million, is to start early next year. That will bring real benefits to commuters and to the line when it is in operation in 1993.

The crux of the matter is investment. What is needed is investment. That is why I welcome the fact that since 1983 the Government and BR have invested more than £3 billion in British Rail. *[Interruption.]* The Government and BR have invested more than £3 billion in British Rail, and during the next three years more than £3·7 billion will

be invested to improve the service. That is the way forward. That is the way in which we will get a better service. And we shall continue.

My constituents accept that the fare increases that they have had to put up with over a number of years have been above the rate of inflation. But they are saying "Thank God we did not have the 50 per cent. increase in fares that was experienced during the time of the last Labour Government." Thank God, as a result of some of the increases in fares, they have seen improvements in the service. I remind the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East that they were less than amused when their fares went up again this month to pay for the strike last year that the hon. Gentleman endorsed and encouraged. That is the answer on fares.

Perhaps the most powerful argument against the whole case for subsidisation comes from the Labour party consultation paper of 1977, which said:

"Social, environmental and economic considerations do not seem to justify the large subsidy which railway users now receive, bearing in mind in particular that the generality of railway subsidies are regressive in effect."

That is the truth of the matter. That is why it is right that there should not be further subsidisation just to cushion inefficiency. We cannot have a system of meddling and blanket subsidies; that benefits the rich far more than the poor. What we need is more investment. It is time that that was recognised by the Opposition. We should not con the electorate with subsidies. We should provide real benefit. We should improve the service through investment. That is the way in which British Rail is proceeding.

In conclusion, I say to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East that the motion that he and his hon. Friends have asked the House to support should be rejected. It shows that the Opposition have learnt nothing, and that they propose to do nothing in the future if they ever get into power. The House should reject the motion and treat it with the contempt that it so richly deserves.

8.49 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Nothing delights me more than to hear a Conservative Member of Parliament say, with great fervour, that we must never allow the rich to subsidise the poor. From a party that has just introduced the poll tax, the effrontery is so amazing we can only sit and gawp. Almost every other European country has spent more on state assistance to its national railways than we have. We spend 0·22 per cent. of our GDP on state assistance to our railways. Luxembourg, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and even little Portugal, with its rundown system, spend more on their railways.

We are told that British Rail is responding to the performance target set for it by the Government and that it will be able to introduce a much better service. The reality is quite different. Using 1989-90 prices, when the Conservative party took power in 1979 investment in British Rail was £518 million. In 1988-89, that figure has risen to £600 million. We are not talking about a tremendously impressive increase in investment. The Government decided, for dogmatic reasons, that they would not invest in British Rail and that they would reduce the passenger service grant. That led to considerable discomfort for passengers, although fares increased and services grew much worse.

I spoke last week to a member of the French Assembly who had been asked to produce a detailed report on transport for 1992. Shortly before that, I spoke to members of the German Parliament about their transport plans. A French Government transport official says:

"For us the TGV is an Airbus on rails. It is competitive with air up to 500 kilometres. It gets cars off the road and it is clean."

If other nations are prepared to spend more money on improving their services, why do we suffer from constantly increasing fares and constantly declining services? The reason is simple. The Government boast that they have allowed British Rail to increase its investment, but they have never said that they expect all that investment to be provided directly by passengers, through increased fares. They never refer to the fact that people who have had to move out of city centres to find somewhere to live have already had to bear considerable fare increases.

We desperately need a Government who are prepared to face up to reality. The Government's transport policy takes no account of the fact that our road system is incapable of carrying all passengers and freight and that it has become bogged down to such an extent that even industry, when it is realistic, can put a figure on what the Government's policy is costing it. If asked, industry would make it plain to the Government that it wants a rail system that will provide a good alternative to our overcrowded roads.

London's transport system is almost breaking down. Crisis management has led to the stopping of escalators on London Underground and people cannot get to the platforms. Passengers find it difficult to go from place to place at particular times of the day. They are forced to endure conditions on London Underground that are unacceptable in this day and age.

The Government should not perpetuate their confidence trick by saying that they are investing more in the system when what they really mean is that they are prepared to allow British Rail to borrow more money, provided that passengers will put up with lower standards of service and higher fares. The Government say that they are committed to improving the transport system. The reality is quite the reverse. The passenger is paying, in every sense of the word. If Conservative Members of Parliament do not accept that fact, at the next general election they will be shown clearly what their constituents think of the Government's commitment, or lack of it, to a public transport system.

8.56 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I intend to speak briefly about the railway line problems in my constituency and then to compare the United Kingdom network with those that are developing rapidly in Europe. The comparison is not favourable to this country.

There are three railway lines in Sevenoaks. Year after year the Uckfield line has been unreliable and has continued to lose passengers. Electrification is essential if the line is to provide the service that passengers can reasonably expect. The north-west Kent lines run from Maidstone to Swanley, and the high-speed Channel tunnel link will feed into those lines. We shall debate that matter in more detail on another occasion. However, those lines, which run into south-west London, are already overloaded. British Rail has said that its Channel tunnel

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

link services will not be detrimental to existing services. All of us who represent constituents in that area have difficulty believing that, but we shall hold British Rail to it.

I also have in my constituency the Sevenoaks to Orpington line which runs from Tonbridge and Hastings into London. The service there, although better than on the other two, still leaves much to be desired in punctuality, reliability and, above all, cleanliness.

I do not argue that just throwing money at the problem will solve it. Good management by British Rail is the key, but there is also an essential need for a strategy and for increased funding. I have a specific question for my right hon. and hon. Friends on management. Am I correct in understanding that the new chairman of British Rail, Mr. Bob Reid, will not take up his job fully until September or October and that there will be an interregnum between the departure of Sir Bob Reid and the taking of full control by his successor? If true, that is extremely disturbing in that all the consultation on the detail of the high-speed link, before the legislation is deposited in Parliament, will take place between British Rail and Trafalgar House when there is no full-time chairman in post. It is extraordinary that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could not arrange for Mr. Robert Reid to take over the job when his predecessor leaves in the spring. I cannot believe that Shell, with its strength of management, could not have done without its current chief for a further three months.

I shall concentrate on the unfavourable comparison between the British Rail network and the European network of the future. On which European railway lines have my right hon. and hon. Friends travelled during the past six months? What is their impression of them, and how did they view Britain's rail network as of now and, more importantly, as of the next decade in comparison with the networks of France, West Germany, Italy and Switzerland?

I recently had the opportunity, with my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and others from both sides of the House, to travel on the newest TGV line from Brittany to Paris. We saw new marshalling yards, new rolling stock, and brand-new and extremely efficient train sets, as they are described. The track out of Paris follows an old route unused since the first world war, but not sold off; it was kept with an eye to the future. The line has been well barriered for noise and a large part of it is in a cut-and-cover tunnel. Landscaping has been carried out over the top to a very high standard, with local authorities being involved in the project.

Mr. Adley: I support everything my hon. Friend has said. Will he join me and, I am sure, other hon. Members in pleading yet again with the Government to stop immediately the policy of successive Governments of selling off redundant railway track? There may be a case for closing some services but there can never be a case for destroying part of our transport heritage.

Mr. Wolfson: I thank my hon. Friend for his comment. I cannot go as far as he does about never selling unused track because there may be places where, taking even the longest view, there would appear to be no future use for it. However, the example I have described makes strongly the case that he is arguing.

The line from Paris has been superbly landscaped. New houses have been built alongside it, enhancing the environment, and the value of houses on each side of the track has increased considerably. Suburbs that were previously regarded as being on the wrong side of the track are now attractive. The improvement is the result of a long-term strategy and long-term planning for the railways.

The speed, design, quality and performance of the new train are better than those of the newest trains in Britain. There is no vibration or noise when one moves from one coach to another. I take up the point of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that train will be the way to travel in Europe for distances between, say, 200 and 1,000 km rather than making the change from bus to plane to bus. No less a person than Lord Young of Graffham, when Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said off the cuff that Europe will travel by train in the future, not as now by plane. At that time he was spearheading the campaign to bring Britain up to date with the opportunities of 1992. Unless we build a rail infrastructure to meet that challenge, we shall not meet it effectively.

Sir David Mitchell: My hon. Friend refers to the scope for travel within the continent and to journeys between 200 and 1,000 km as the major front for rail travel in future. Does he accept that journeys of those distances, which exist throughout the continent, can make a railway network pay in a way that could never be achieved with the shorter distances in Britain?

Mr. Wolfson: My hon. Friend makes the point that it may be easier to do that on the continent, but in the Standing Committee considering the Channel Tunnel Bill, he argued that the Channel tunnel provided British Rail with the greatest opportunity for more than 100 years. I agree with him that the Channel tunnel will link us into the long-distance network, but the Government need to demonstrate a greater commitment and give a higher priority to the railways than they have in the past. Funding is required to build an infrastructure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) pleaded for national support, as well as arguing that support would come from the private sector, for his area of Scotland as part of a regional development policy. That is exactly what the French have done in building the TGV for the Atlantic coast. They took the view that Brittany and the south-west of France needed the stimulus of a high-grade modern rail service, from which growth will follow. That argument applies exactly to the case that my right hon. Friend was making for Scotland. It is no surprise that a number of hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies have spoken tonight. They have said they want the benefits of the Channel tunnel in Scotland. In Kent we are concerned about having too much growth, because it is not needed in all parts of the county. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) is in a different position. He could do with the stimulus—*[Laughter.]* I do not wish to be misunderstood. My hon. Friend's constituency will benefit from the stimulus. An effective rail link is crucial to bring the benefits of the Channel tunnel to the midlands, the north and, above all, to Scotland.

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): Not with £600 million investment.

Mr. Wolfson: I do not suggest that when the Labour party was in government it had a satisfactory record of investment in the railways. It did not. I certainly cannot support the Opposition's motion today as I have no confidence that they would be able to deliver.

I look to the Government to provide a larger proportion of public investment, as capital subsidy and as continuing subsidy to running costs if we are to get the full benefits of the rail system that I believe this country deserves.

Finally, I wish to refer to the political relevance of all this. It is of real concern to rail travellers throughout Britain when they are travelling in cattle truck conditions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the perfectly sensible point that lines had closed and the sleeper service was suspended because they were not being used effectively. He did not say that some lines are used so effectively that people travel in cattle truck conditions. After 10 years of Conservative government, people expect the service to be better, whatever the Government's capital investment in British Rail. My concern is for the British economy in the future. I am not satisfied that our stategy is correct. It is flawed and I shall therefore abstain in the vote.

9.10 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak after the Secretary of State. I have never heard so much codswallop about transport policy. He said that everything in the transport industry on the rail side was hunky-dory. Has he forgotten the simple facts throughout 10 years of Conservative Government? We have had worsening services on all railway routes, lack of investment and one of the most major strikes ever to confront the industry; and recently we heard that railway lines three times the length of the Channel tunnel were to be put underground in Kent because the work infringed on some of the constituents of Conservative Members.

The Secretary of State said that the Government were spending more than any other Government. He had the audacity to accuse the Labour Government of not investing in the railways. The Labour Government invested in people—80,000 more rail workers were employed to serve the community which needed rail links, but they have been left languishing in the dole queues, at the cost of services.

A few Conservative Members are smiling. If they are in any doubt about what happens, they should have the courage of the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and ask people whether they are happy about the fares increases forced upon them. Some have to pay more than some of our constituents in the east midlands, the north and Scotland earn in a week from their part-time jobs, the only ones that they can get.

It gives me great pleasure to follow the ridiculous speech by the Secretary of State and to commend the Opposition amendment, which refers to the excellent argument that is always used in transport debates. The amendment states:

"problems can only be solved by adopting a co-ordinated approach to transport policy".

The argument is not simply about rail services but about the co-ordinated approach that all our constituents are supposed to want.

The debate gives me an opportunity to raise an important local matter involving industrial relations. Yet again, because of the Government's policy, services have been disrupted in my constituency and the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Severe problems have arisen because of legislation to end the so-called monopoly of the bus companies that service the railway network, by selling the public services to the private sector.

Amazing problems have been caused because of a new monopoly being created in the bus industry. In my area, the East Midlands Motor Services Co. supplies bus services to railway stations. In my case, the nearest railway station is 15 miles away. Eight hundred constituents are facing the most horrific circumstances because of the policy of selling off companies. That cannot be allowed to happen. It is not right for the Government to talk about freedom of expression in eastern Europe without acknowledging that people who adopt democratic practices in their workplaces—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) wishes to speak, he may do so when I conclude my speech, or he could do what he has done earlier in the debate, and pop up and down during other hon. Members' contributions.

The Government cannot argue about freedom and democracy in eastern Europe without recognising that, when transport workers follow legislative requirements to conduct ballots and so on, a new employer will often say, "If you carry out the results of ballots, you will be sacked on the spot." There have already been two such occasions. Already, in the East Midlands Motor Services Co. trade union representatives have been sacked simply because they wanted to maintain services.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The case that my hon. Friend is discussing also involves rail and road transport connections. The trade union concerned is the National Union of Railwaymen. That demonstrates that the workers know something about the integrated nature of the services. Problems were initially created by the dismissal of Dave Edinbrough, who is one of my constituents and lives at Tupton, near the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Dave Edinbrough was sacked merely for involving himself in trade union activities. He is a good trade unionist and a good worker. The company took action to get rid of him. That has exacerbated the situation and led to further problems and the dismissal of other trade unionists.

Mr. Meale: I agree with my hon. Friend. Among other things, Dave Edinbrough was accused of telling bus drivers to report safety faults that were a danger to the travelling public. It is a disgrace. He was required by law to do that. The amendment

"applauds the high priority that the Government gives to all matters of safety on transport".

Government legislation allowed private monopolies suddenly to take over from public monopolies. At least with public monopolies the public's health and safety were protected.

I regret that the Secretary of State is not in his place —I trust that he will return before the end of the debate —because I wish to pay tribute to him over what happened in that case. When the company was privatised, there was another company in the wings wishing to buy it, and the right hon. Gentleman stepped in and sorted the issue out.

[Mr. Meale]

But unfortunately the management buy-out team then sold the company to a new entrepreneur, a Mr. Suter, who is taking steps against the work force, who are anxious to maintain a high level of service.

Guarantees were given in Tory legislation that workers in a public company that was privatised would receive shares in the firm and would then be able to purchase additional shares. Despite repeated attempts by the workers to buy into their firm, the present and previous owners have prevented them from doing so. I trust that the Minister will investigate the case, because it seems that the present and previous owners are in breach of the law.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have the impression that Tory Members feel that my hon. Friend should not be discussing the issue that he has raised and the way in which the company in general, and Mr. Suter in particular, are trying to destroy trade union participation in what used to be called the East Midlands Motor Services Co. but what is now known as Stagecoach.

My hon. Friend is drawing attention to the fact that, when there are no railways and we have only a bus monopoly—in this case, a bus monopoly 100 miles wide stretching from the east coast to the west coast—not only do fares go up but, in this case, the company sacked two leading directors and managers with 28 years' service.

Now the bus drivers are being threatened into not reporting defects on buses. They are frightened to death of losing their jobs. That is what can happen when the railways shut, and Tory Members should understand it.

Mr. Meale: I agree with my hon. Friend. Tory Members who think that this issue should not be debated at this stage should reflect that the nearest railway network stations for many of our constituents are 10 or 15 miles away. The only way——

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise simply to point out that, if the matter which the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) is raising is of such importance to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), perhaps the latter should have been in the Chamber for the whole of the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Let us get on.

Mr. Meale: Thank you for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In any event, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has been present for most of the debate. When he has not been present, he has been flitting back and forth delivering messages to my hon. Friends and me regarding the sort of issues that should be raised.

We have every right to raise these issues because the communities of north Derbyshire, Bolsover, Mansfield and Ashfield rely on bus services to reach the rail network, and I congratulate the Secretary of State—who I regret is still not in his place—on intervening and trying to get a rail network in the area.

Mr. Harry Barnes: My hon. Friend need not apologise for raising this matter, because in addition to the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and others, the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister and other leading Conservative Members welcomes what is being done by the Government in terms of the rail-road network. We are dealing with that very point.

Mr. Meale: Yet again, I agree with every sentiment that my hon. Friend has expressed.

The Front Bench spokesmen and the Ministers are looking at the clock. They wish to put express views before the Division. I ask the Minister to take note of some of the points that I have raised tonight about events in the company to which I referred, which have been caused by legislation enacted by his Government and the guarantees that were given. I do not apologise for doing so. Conservative Members come to the House to represent the people who give them the greatest support. I come here to fight for my class, and I am pleased to do so.

9.25 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The speech that we have just heard was rather sad. Perhaps the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) would have done better if he had reminded the House that Barbara Castle closed the railway lines in his constituency. It was my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport who took the historic decision not to close the Settle to Carlisle line. That was a landmark in terms of railway closure policy. It is one of the few things on which I intend to congratulate my hon. Friend.

The Opposition motion is long on words and short on memory, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out. However, the Government amendment describes a public transport scenario which I do not recognise. The Government's policy on railways fails to recognise their proper role in a modern industrialised nation.

The Labour policy, as described in the motion, sounds good, but experience teaches us that Labour economic policies lead to a failing economy, reductions in public expenditure and, so often, the abandonment of many well-meant plans.

The question of investment and subsidy has been raised. In a press release sent out by his Department two days ago, my hon. Friend the Minister said that the revitalised economy had led to a dramatic increase in rail travel. There has been welcome economic growth as a result of the Government's policies. That has led to more cars on the road and, in turn, to more congestion. My conclusion is that we need more support for the railway system, particularly at its pressure points and in those areas where the railway is the only sane way of coping with the movement of large numbers of people in and out of cities in peak hours. Separation as between investment and subsidy may be a finely drawn argument for book-keepers but it does not seem to me the only way for politicians to grapple with the serious transport problems that we face.

We must give credit to the Government for enabling British Rail to invest its own money in the east coast main line, the electrification of East Anglian services, and the Windsor link in Manchester. I shall not weary the House by repeating all the examples. There has been a great deal of investment, not of the Government's money but mainly of British Rail's money, which it has earned from its customers, in the "new" railway, but as the Government have cut the public service obligation grant we have found

that much of the existing railway is seriously and sadly declining into the dirt, delays and other faults that Opposition Members have highlighted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) referred to the recent visit to France by Conservative and Opposition Members. The French have a completely different attitude to their railways. A 30 per cent. grant is available to the SNCF from the French Government. To summarise the position succinctly, I can do no better than refer to an article in the *Glasgow Herald* today by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who was with us on the trip. Referring to the cancellation of the 6.15 am express service from Victoria to Gatwick, he said:

"It was a fitting start to a day devoted to comparing and contrasting British and French railways; not just the quality of rolling-stock or services, but the whole national philosophy which underlies them. It is a short, sharp educational experience which I commend to anyone who is concerned about the future quality of life in our own country."

Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport replies, he will answer on behalf of himself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the question that was posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks: "When did any Ministers last travel on any French, West German, Italian or Swiss trains and what were their impressions of that experience?"

Many of my hon. Friends do not like the frequent comparisons with France. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) got quite irate and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State got very irate when I mentioned West Germany. Although my right hon. Friend has given up attacking my figures, in response to my question on Monday about the levels of investment in the German railways, he said:

"I have not met any German transport Minister who is proud of the subsidy. They think that it is an outrage that the German taxpayer is forking out £3 billion a year to subsidise the railways."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 9.]

I do not know my right hon. Friend's source for that, but I have with me a press release that I received recently from the German embassy. It is headed:

"Railway system on the right lines for 1992".

It states:

"The railways need more public subsidy—and they will get it."

I do not know whether the person who wrote that on behalf of the German Government ever talks to the person whom my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was quoting when he said that the Minister concerned objected to the subsidy that the West Germans have in their railway system. The press release also states:

"In 1989 alone, 3,000 new personnel are being taken on",

and refers to the fact that

"Promoting competitiveness of the railway system by making sure that other means of transport do not acquire artificial advantage by back-door subsidies"

is also part of the West German transport policy. We are not talking about a Socialist Valhalla. We are talking about the West German Christian Democratic Government.

I must therefore ask my hon. Friends, some of whom blanch at the words "subsidies" and "public investment", which comes first—economic progress or infrastructure investment? One reason why the West Germans have such a successful economy is that they are investing millions and millions of pounds in their transport infrastructure. Deutsche Bundesbahn receives a subsidy to encourage heavy lorries in transit across West Germany to move on to the "rolende landstrasse", which I have written in capitals in my notes for the benefit of *Hansard*. Like the SNCF, the Deutsche Bundesbahn has a "social tariff structure", which means a subsidy to keep fares down.

Mr. Roger King: We are stopping the subsidy.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend says that we are stopping the subsidy, but we are also stopping the trains and overcrowding them. There is a direct equation. I recognise that with his road interests my hon. Friend likes to advocate such a policy, but it does not appeal to me.

I take up another point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford. In the information kindly provided by the Government in the Whips' Office for this debate, we are told that accurate comparisons are impossible, given the differences in networks, accounting methods and organisation. However, the next paragraph states that huge amounts of BR debt have been written off, amounting to more than £1·5 billion in cash terms since 1962.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford kindly gave way to me in his speech to allow me to ask him his view of the West German subsidy. I think that the record will show that he said that the West Germans have not written off their railway's debts. However, I must advise him that British Rail has written off £1·5 billion and that Deutsche Bundesbahn has written off £4·2 billion. I am sorry to confuse my hon. Friends with some of the facts and I apologise if those facts interfere with their political prejudices.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State has previously chided me on the question of Government investment in the railways. My hon. Friends rightly welcome all the investment that is going into our railways, but they should be aware that in 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986 and 1987 British Rail had absolutely no recourse to borrowing from the national loans fund and in 1984 and 1988 it had little recourse to the fund. The investment money has come from British Rail's own resources.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Mr. Adley: I shall continue with my speech as I do not want to go on indefinitely.

In the United States, that great paradise of private enterprise, in 1987 Amtrak took 65 per cent. of its revenue from fares. In 1990, the figure is planned to be 70 per cent. British Rail's figures for the two years 1987 and 1990 are 75 per cent. and 82 per cent., and on InterCity 89 per cent. and more than 100 per cent. However, the passenger journeys completed by Amtrak in 1987 were 20 million, while the figure for British Rail was 727·2 million. By any stretch of the imagination, this country's record with its nationalised railway system is infinitely better than anything in the United States.

Before some of my hon. Friends clamour for privatisation, I suggest that they ask themselves what the following railway systems, which include the best passenger railways in the world, have in common—I refer to the West German, French, Italian and Swiss railways. The answer is, of course, that they are all nationalised. Which country has the worst passenger railway system of the industrialised nations? The answer is probably the United States. If I were setting an A-level paper, I would ask what conclusions could be drawn from that.

[Mr. Adley]

The sad fact is that public transport and party politics make uneasy bedfellows. I am also sorry to say to some of my hon. Friends—

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Is my hon. Friend winding-up?

Mr. Adley: If I am going on too long, I will finish by commending to the House the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her advocacy of Victorian values. Can any hon. Member imagine what public transport in any of our cities would be like if our Victorian and Edwardian forebears had not built the railway lines and underground systems that we enjoy in this country?

Sir David Mitchell: That was private enterprise.

Mr. Adley: It was indeed. The construction that has taken place on new underground railway lines in London in the past 15 or 16 years, however, has been restricted to certain sections of the Jubilee line. London's congestion problems can be solved only by new underground railways. The first priority is the Paddington-Liverpool Street line, the second is the Chelsea-Hackney line and the third, which the Government have chosen, is the Jubilee line extension.

The internal combustion engine once threatened the railway systems of the industrialised world with extinction. That very internal combustion engine is now choking the nation to death. The railway is the last means of civilised transport open to man. Until all parties in the House swallow their political dogma, eradicate prejudices and follow the French and German example, misery will remain our lot.

9.37 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): In the last few minutes of this debate I shall quote the western region of the Transport Users Consultative Committee which is chaired by the Conservative leader of Bristol city council. That organisation is known for its support of the Government's policies. It describes the railways in the south-west as follows: the Cotswold line as the "railway of denial"; the Falmouth line as the "railway of dilapidation"; the Gloucester-Bristol line as the "railway of decimation"; and the Swindon-Bristol line as the "railway of deprivation".

This evening's debate has been about the lack of investment. According to *Hansard*, since 1981 there has been a 60 per cent. reduction in investment in real terms by the Government. The debate has been about the way that our European counterparts consistently invest in the railway. We have discussed overcrowding and its safety problems, and congested roads and the environmental difficulties that they bring. We have discussed the problems that transport users face. How much longer do we need to discuss them before the Government invest properly in our rail network?

9.39 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The debate, albeit truncated, has been interesting in some ways. Most Conservative Members appear to have swallowed the Department of Transport's propaganda that investment in our railway system has never been higher. It took the hon. Members for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) to point out that that investment is paid for almost entirely by the passengers out of higher fares.

Mr. Parkinson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Snape: I will come to the Secretary of State's speech, but he provokes me to comment now. I have for some time been seeking detailed information about who pays for investment in our railway network. So far, my questions having been shuffled between the Treasury and the Department of Transport, of the £3·7 billion of investment about which the right hon. Gentleman boasted tonight, we have been able to isolate only £100 million that has come from the Government. The right hon. Gentleman boasted about his accountancy prowess. He or the Minister for Public Transport will be able to tell us what percentage of that £3·7 billion came from the Government.

Over and over again hon. Members on both sides of the House, but particularly Conservative Members, have asked the Secretary of State how many journeys he has made on railways in other parts of the world.

Mr. David Marshall: Or Britain.

Mr. Snape: Some of us are more concerned that he should make one or two journeys in the United Kingdom to see the squalor that many passengers have to put up with daily. Conservative Members say "Come off it," but the amendment that the Government have had the temerity to table bears no resemblance to the reality of daily life for commuters or for long-distance passengers on our railway network.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) talked about his problems in getting to and from Manchester yesterday. I do not want to provide anecdotal evidence about how bad some of our railway journeys are. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must agree, at least privately, that the delays on InterCity, on other provincial services and on Network SouthEast have never been so great. Perhaps because some of my hon. Friends recall that I used to work in the railways industry, I receive many of their complaints. I have never received so many complaints about the railway system as I have under the Secretary of State's stewardship, and he has been there for only five minutes.

However, let us be fair. The Secretary of State, accountant to the last, has done something about punctuality on British Rail. He has moved the goalposts of a five-minute late arrival to a 10-minute late arrival.

Mr. Parkinson: It is the other way round.

Mr. Snape: That shows how much the right hon. Gentleman knows about the playing field about which he talks. He has moved the goalposts.

Before the right hon. Gentleman shouts too loudly, let me say that we were all a little concerned about his display earlier. His red face looming over the Dispatch Box is a pretty terrifying sight. I was not sure at one stage whether it was indignation, claret or a faulty sun lamp that made the right hon. Gentleman look like that, but whatever it was, it was worrying.

The Government's amendment insults the intelligence of the House. It certainly insults the intelligence of the hon. Members for Sevenoaks and for Christchurch because

they do not believe it. Does the Secretary of State appreciate the contribution of those much scoffed-at people who operate British Rail's services? The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) made a contribution —I had better be kind about it—apparently based more on enthusiasm than on ignorance. He accused Opposition Members of supporting every railway dispute. Having spent some years working for the pretty rotten wages that British Rail traditionally pays, I had a lot of sympathy for the railway staff in their dispute last year. I remind the House that every opinion poll showed that the British public did so, too, as did those who eventually sat in arbitration on that claim.

I say to the hon. Member for Chelmsford and to others that if railway staff continue to be paid as inadequately as they are now, and if we insist on that staff working the kind of hours that they do now, the circumstances that surrounded the Clapham junction accident will recur.

Mr. Burns *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but if he reads the contributions to the inquiry of Mr. Stanley Hall, the British Rail board's director of safety, he will find that Mr. Hall commented that if staff are forced to work 12 hours a day, six months at a time, to pay their mortgages—anyone with the Abbey National will be even worse off from tomorrow—one must expect that their contribution to safety standards will inevitably slip.

The amendment does not recognise that problem, nor does it acknowledge that the railway network is being run into the ground. The days are past when engineers decided rolling stock standards and railway operations. It is the accountants who run the railways these days.

The Secretary of State talks about ideology. The ideology of privatisation for the sake of it ensured that the Sprinter multiple diesel units ordered as the flagship of British Rail's provincial services are running so late that the next timetable is being completely recast. The ideology of insistence on privatisation meant that the earliest Sprinters had their electronic door controls set outside the train, so they let in water. That meant that the whole fleet had to be returned to the makers for repair. The ideology of privatisation gave us Pacer trains that break down all over the network, and whose replacement gear boxes must be obtained from Germany. We did not get the gearboxes from a nationalised industry. The Secretary of State never knows what is going on.

Mr. Parkinson *rose*——

Mr. Snape: The right hon. Gentleman would not give way to me, so I certainly shall not give way to him.

The fact that those trains exhibit all the quality and reliability of the average Skoda is a direct tribute to the Secretary of State and his system of operation.

Mr. Roger King *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I am certainly not giving way to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) either. This is a serious debate.

The amendment mentions ensuring that

"Britain's rail infrastructure is in place to service the Channel Tunnel".

Mr. Roger King: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to mislead the House? He knows better than anyone else that when the modernisation programme of the mid-1950s was brought forward by a nationalised system, none of the rolling stock worked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a point of argument, not a point of order.

Mr. Snape: The Minister for Public Transport will have to pay for that puerile intervention by the hon. Member for Northfield; that must be a matter between the two of them.

The amendment mentions the infrastructure that will be needed for Channel tunnel services. Day after day, we hear Conservative Members ask what contribution will be made, where the infrastructure is, and what will happen to their constituents when the tunnel opens. Only the right hon. Gentleman knows where he drew up the amendment.

The Secretary of State spoke earlier of safety. He sometimes accuses the Opposition of exploiting that subject, but arising directly from the Hidden report on the Clapham junction inquiry will be a great deal of expenditure, to say the least. The introduction of automatic train protection will be extremely expensive and will require additional staff to install and maintain it. The installation of black boxes in cabs, particularly on Network SouthEast, will be extremely expensive, but we are told that Network SouthEast must break even within the next two or three years. Is the right hon. Gentleman going to provide any public money for those much-needed safety measures? We are eagerly waiting for some replies, but they are not usually forthcoming and I do not suppose that they will be tonight.

For all the torrents of abuse that we got from the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box earlier, his speech was very thin on content, like most of his speeches. *The Daily Telegraph* sums up the right hon. Gentleman pretty well. Its editorial of 29 December sums up the right hon. Gentleman, the Government's approach to the railway system, and his future prospects, saying:

"Mr. Parkinson has taken a course that will damage the environment, increase costs to business and inconvenience the public. It is a pitifully myopic approach to our desperate transport problems, and ill becomes a Government that wants to help business expand."

The article concludes:

"Ultimate blame, though, lies with Mr. Parkinson. He must start thinking realistically about transport needs, even if he has to spend"——

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) read it earlier.

Mr. Snape: Not this bit—

"even if he has to spend taxpayers' money to satisfy them."

That is from *The Daily Telegraph*—from Max Hastings. It continues:

"Failure will lead to chaos, and chaos cannot be an option."

That is what our motion is about tonight.

I hope that Conservative Members who spoke so bravely about the railway system and its needs will vote in the Opposition Lobby tonight. Tomorrow's opinion polls, the voters in the Mid-Staffordshire by-election and the electorate, including commuters who are temporarily represented by Conservative Members, will decide that they are fed up with public squalor and fed up with the right hon. Gentleman.

9.52 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I shall begin uncontroversially, I hope, by saying what a pleasure it was to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) making a characteristically fair speech. He paid tribute to the biggest single electrification which has occurred—on the east coast main line. I know that he is right, and that British Rail is in discussion with groups such as CREATE about electrifying the railway line north of Edinburgh. I remind him that British Rail is going to put 90 mph diesels with air conditioning—I am not sure whether that is necessary in Scotland—on that line. The InterCity 125s are the fastest diesels in the world. None the less, I shall draw his remarks to the attention of British Rail.

I notice my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in his place. I am sure that we all sympathise with his constituents, whose railway line has been cut off by floods, and we look forward to that service being restored.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) made a realistic speech, as well he might have, because he knows that there has been £100 million worth of investment at Liverpool Street and in the new station at Chelmsford. He has seen the work going on. He also knows that, since 1987, 428 new coaches costing about £150 million have been approved for the Anglia and Great Eastern Services. Therefore, despite the complaints that he has made on behalf of his constituents, he knows that the investment is going in.

I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) was less fair. He might have mentioned the fact that the Uckfield line has just been resignalled, saving his constituents 10 minutes on their journey time. He also might have mentioned the fact that we have ordered 676 coaches for the inner suburban services in Kent—that has been approved or agreed in principle—that platform lengthening is under way and more orders for the outer suburban services will come through shortly. Mentioning those facts would have given a fairer impression of what is going on.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): When my hon. Friend next speaks to the chairman of British Rail, will he convey to him that commuters on the north Kent line would have been much happier if the fares had increased after the promises had been fulfilled, rather than now?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has been a lion roaring on behalf of his constituents. He has been to see me and I know how seriously he takes the matter.

In reply to the hon. Members for Southport (Mr. Fearn) and for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), and my hon. Friends the Members for Sevenoaks and for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who talked about foreign comparisons, I must point out that the subsidy per route kilometre in the last figures we have was £49,000 in the United Kingdom and £47,000 in France, which is less. I have always said to my hon. Friends that what matters is not subsidy but investment. Let me give the figures for that. Last year we invested £67,000 per km, while France invested £49,000.

I was asked whether we would use cost-benefit analysis. It was used to justify the Thameslink services, the Manchester Metrolink and the Jubilee line, which will do so much to open up docklands, a new area of London.

There was great rejoicing at part of the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Although he will deny it, I believe that this is the first time that he has acknowledged that investment is at a record level. Before tonight I had the impression that he had the greatest difficulty distinguishing between subsidy and investment, but he has now put on record his recognition of the facts. I am sorry that he was unable to convince the hon. Members for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), who still seem to doubt the truth.

I was also asked what was our commitment to investment in the railway. I am pleased to be able to announce an increase of £220 million in British Rail's external finance limit for 1989-90. This year's EFL goes up from £415 million—after taking account of grants from the European Community—to £635 million. That large increase will enable BR to press ahead with its investment programme, including plans for the Channel tunnel rail services and the new trains for those services which we authorised in December.

Investment in British Rail will be £3·7 billion over the next three years. The chairman of British Rail has described that as being about as much as "we can physically manage". It will be financed not just by passengers but by asset sales, the higher revenues that are available, huge amounts of borrowing made available by the Government at preferential rates from the national loans fund and some very small reductions in grant. Today 60 per cent. of the provincial sector's costs are met by the taxpayer, and the passenger pays only 40p in the pound.

On the London Underground, the enormous increases in investment are directly attributable to an increase in Government grant: it will increase by 115 per cent. over the next three years. The result—if we take LRT and Network SouthEast together—will be a rise in subsidy for public transport in the south-east from £387 million at today's prices to £669 million in 1992-93. Investment in London Underground has doubled over the past five years, since we wrested control from the GLC, and it will double again over the next three years.

No wonder the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to the role of the Treasury under various Governments. Let me quote from the Labour Government's consultation document of 1976:

> "For the time being, the decision to stabilise rail investment at present levels should form a basic input to railway planning. This level is lower than that envisaged in . . . 1973 . . . But the 1973 programme was criticised in the Socialist Commentary Report as being too high . . . In our present . . . circumstances".

said the Labour Government,

> "we . . . cannot afford more than this."

Although rail fares had doubled in the previous two years, said Labour,

> "in the present situation . . . further increases in fares must form part of the long-term strategy. There can be no question of a general increase in Government subsidy".

That was the Labour party in office. That would be the Labour party again. The fact is that the Labour party has no place in this debate. If it had remained in power the railways would not have the opportunities that they have today. Opportunities derive from economic prosperity. I

admit that, under Labour's failing economic policies, congestion might be less severe than it is today. But congestion is also the product of economic success. Under this Government the problem of congestion can be tackled by vast new——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 259.

Division No. 75] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on developing a balanced transport policy which recognises the economic importance to the United Kingdom of its rail, road and air network; welcomes the biggest programme of investment in British Rail for 25 years and the massive increase in investment in London Underground which will relieve congestion and meet the increased demand which is the result of the economic success of the United Kingdom; welcomes the demanding quality of service objectives set by the Government; welcomes the £1 billion which will be spent to ensure Britain's rail infrastructure is in place to service the Channel Tunnel when it opens in 1993; applauds the high priority that the Government gives to all matters of safety on transport; and welcomes its recognition of the importance of the environment in transport policy.

Tobacco (Sale to Children)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the massive problem of illegal tobacco sales to children. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to announce initiatives to deal with that scandal. Hon. Members in all parts of the House are concerned about it, as witnessed by the fact that despite the usual exodus at this time of night a number of hon. Members have remained in the Chamber.

I have a particular interest in the subject because the legislation which is supposed to ban sales of cigarettes and all tobacco to children, the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986, began as a private Member's Bill which I introduced. It had two objectives: first, to include products such as Skoal Bandits in the legal definition of tobacco—I pay tribute to the Government for banning that product altogether—and, secondly, to clarify and strengthen the legislation supposed to have banned tobacco sales to children since 1933. The 1986 legislation swept away the condition which used to allow any retailer to justify tobacco sales to children on the ground that he thought that the tobacco was intended for use by an adult. It also gave the courts a mandatory duty to deal with cigarette vending machines used by youngsters.

My Bill received universal support at that time, including a very strong speech on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), the present Minister for Health. Having passed the Bill, we were entitled to expect the legislation to lead to action to deter the pushers who supply cigarettes to children. Unfortunately, virtually nothing has been done to enforce the law and the evil trade is continuing on a massive scale.

I have repeatedly asked Ministers what they are doing about enforcement of the 1986 Act, but the total lack of action over four years shows that the legislation has been effectively smothered by a tobacco industry smokescreen. The industry claims to be spending £1 million per year advertising the fact that children should not buy cigarettes, but at the same time it is cheerfully reaping the profits from £70 million worth of trade with those very children.

Of course, catching them young is a long-term investment for an industry which is killing off its older customers at a rate of 300 per day, or 110,000 per year. The tobacco industry needs to attract 300 new customers per day just to replace its own victims, and since we know that 75 per cent. of adult smokers are hooked by the time they are 18 it really has to catch them young—and its £100 million budget for advertising and sports sponsorship is targeted accordingly.

The industry is running rings around the Government's voluntary restrictions on tobacco advertising. We all know that sports sponsorship is getting the cigarette sales pitch across in an increasingly insiduous manner, even on the BBC's television coverage of snooker, horse racing and motor sports. An advertising executive for Marlborough is quoted as having said in relation to that company's sponsorship of motor racing:

"What we wanted was to promote a particular image of adventure, courage and virility."

Yet there is supposed to be an agreement to avoid those very suggestions and implications in tobacco advertising.

The trade, and the advertising that promotes it, is a national scandal and it is prolonging the agony and the costs which arise from tobacco-related diseases. The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Donald Acheson, recently confirmed that smoking is

"by far the most important cause of ill health and premature death, and hence of expenditure on health services."

It is all starting in the corner shops, off licences, supermarkets and service stations which are supplying cigarettes to youngsters without let or hindrance; or even shame, sometimes even in the form of a single cigarette with a match at a price to suit the budget of a school child's pocket money—12p per time.

In England alone it is reckoned that about 500,000 15-year-olds are smokers, 300,000 of them regular smokers. The teeny-smoker trade is worth a cool £700 million per year to the tobacco barons, but there were just 29 prosecutions in 1988, none of which achieved the maximum fine of £400. The situation in Scotland is probably even worse, but we do not have adequate statistics from the Scottish Office.

The Government have failed to lift a finger to enforce the 1986 Act. An Act which was passed without dissent in the House just four years ago might as well be a dead letter. Nobody is being deterred, and that poisonous trade is proceeding with impunity. The tobacco industry is treating the will of Parliament with contempt and, far worse, it is conspiring to wreck the health of another generation of young people.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Home Robertson: Briefly.

Mr. Foulkes: I always do as my landowner colleague tells me. Does my hon. Friend agree that so many of the tobacco industry's customers die every day as a result of smoking that it has to recruit new smokers? That is why the industry has to have an aggressive campaign to get young people to take up smoking. That is the important commercial message from the industry.

Mr. Home Robertson: I made the point that the industry needs to recruit 300 new smokers per day just to replace those whom it kills.

The House will know that a large number of parents are determined to protect their children from tobacco addiction and are joining the recently launched Parents Against Tobacco campaign to confront the tobacco barons with a healthy dose of people power—and not before time. Parents Against Tobacco has attracted strong support from people in every walk of life in every part of the United Kingdom, including at least 160 Members of Parliament. The campaign seeks to mobilise public opinion and to activate public authorities to confront the menace of long-term tobacco addiction leading to bad health and premature death for many of our children. I speak as a father of two young children and as one who is very worried about that threat.

Parents Against Tobacco surveyed 212 shops and found that 109 sold cigarettes to children under 16. In London, the campaign surveyed 50 shops and found that 36 sold cigarettes to a boy of 10. Local newspapers have been taking up the initiative, and a newspaper in Rugby reported last week that an 11-year-old girl in school

[Mr. Home Robertson]

uniform was sold cigarettes in 11 of the 12 shops into which she went. The evidence is overwhelming. It appears that half the tobacco retailers blatantly flout the 1986 Act.

Parents Against Tobacco has also been investigating the reason why the law is not enforced. A survey of 110 local authorities found that 104 had never taken action under the 1986 Act. Many said that they did not know about the Act and many said that they did not think that it was their responsibility to do anything about it. I understand that they have not received any Government circular to clarify the position.

Nevertheless, some local authorities have taken local initiatives. My attention has been drawn particularly to the work in Liverpool, Somerset and Enfield and in Hereford and Worcester county. In Liverpool, illegal sales fell by 50 per cent. following an active survey of retailers and the prosecution of some offenders. I have been alarmed to hear that Hereford and Worcester county council's campaign has run into difficulties because the courts insist that photographic evidence of the apparent age of a child is not enough to secure prosecution and the council is rightly reluctant to make children appear in court. I should be grateful if the Minister or the Attorney-General would write to me with some advice on that narrow point about court procedure. Overall, there seems to be intolerable confusion, inconsistency and even perversity in the enforcement of the legislation by the various authorities.

What about the police? Parents Against Tobacco wrote to chief constables, most of whom said that they had insufficient resources or that they could not give the problem the priority that it deserved. I put it to the Minister that it is up to the Government to take active steps to get the 1986 Act enforced. Local authority trading standards departments are probably the most appropriate bodies to take on the job. They certainly have the best knowledge of the retail trade in their local areas, and those councils which have made it their business to apply the law have made a pretty good job of it. We need clear guidance from Ministers as to who should enforce the legislation and how they should go about it.

Experience shows that one or two prosecutions against blatant offenders in each area can concentrate the minds of all offending retailers, so we should be able to reduce the scandalous scale of this illegal trade quite quickly. The Minister must accept that the law is useless unless it is enforced effectively and fairly in every part of the country. It may be necessary to amend the law again, to make it easier to enforce it. The maximum fine for this serious crime of endangering young people should be increased from £400 to at least £1,000. We may also need clearer legislation to deal with vending machines.

We could also help responsible tobacconists—I freely acknowledge that there are many—by providing independent official advertisements proclaiming the prohibition on sales to children and by providing official leaflets to explain the law to youngsters in shops. The tobacco industry's own self-righteous advertising campaign reeks of hypocrisy. The cost of that campaign is just one seventieth of gross takings in tobacco sales to children and no one could take its integrity seriously.

We can pass laws until we are blue in the face, but it is futile to do so if the Executive refuses to do anything to enforce them. That is what happened in the case of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986. We have polling evidence that 95 per cent. of our people want that Act enforced effectively and strictly. I hope that the Minister will deal with that point today.

There is no need to repeat all the evidence that tobacco is dirty and dangerous and that children should be protected against nicotine addiction. There is ample evidence that laws to protect children from this menace are being cynically circumvented by the tobacco industry and flagrantly broken by thousands of retailers. I welcome the initiative of Parents Against Tobacco to campaign on this issue. Several Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have also endorsed the objectives of the campaign. With all respect to the Minister, it is not good enough for Ministers to issue well-meaning statements—they must support their words with action, starting with action to deter traders who are supplying £70 million worth of cigarettes per year to our children. I ask the Minister to take this opportunity to announce specific Government initiatives to enforce the 1986 Act. There is far more to be done, but let us start by clamping down on a trade which is already supposed to be illegal.

10.26 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I am grateful to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) for selecting this important matter for debate and for allowing me briefly to intervene. I speak as the chairman of the parliamentary wing of Parents Against Tobacco—the local shop steward. I am delighted to see my hon. Friends the Members for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and for Hexham (Mr. Amos) and several Opposition Members with whose constituencies, sadly, I am not familiar.

The position seems clear. Parliament has decided that it is a criminal offence for a retailer to sell cigarettes to a child under 16. That legislation has wide support. Parents whom I know, whether they be smokers or non-smokers, do not want their children to start smoking. There is a degree of unanimity. We have on the statute book legislation that is widely supported but, as the hon. Member for East Lothian said, it is frequently flouted.

I raise three simple matters with my hon. Friend the Minister. First, I have written to the Home Secretary on behalf of the parliamentary branch of Parents Against Tobacco, asking for a meeting with him. I very much hope that the answer will be in the affirmative.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Minister will have seen the PAT manifesto—in particular, the legislation that we propose to introduce at the end of this year if the Government do not do so themselves. We should like an initial response from the Government to the legislative measure that we have outlined.

The third matter arises from a statement that the Lord Chancellor made yesterday about the use of hearsay evidence from children. That matter is highly relevant to the debate because of the difficulties of getting children into court to give evidence—their reluctance to appear as witnesses and the reluctance of their parents to let them so appear. The Lord Chancellor is proposing to change the rules about the use of hearsay evidence from children. It would be helpful to know whether it is of relevance in bringing prosecutions in the circumstances that were mentioned by the hon. Member for East Lothian.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on securing this Adjournment debate. It is no surprise that he should choose such an important subject, given his long and active interest in these matters and his success in piloting through the House the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986.

Selling cigarettes to those who are under age shows a deeply irresponsible disregard for the law, for the best interests of the retail trade and for the health of young people. We therefore stand firmly alongside the hon. Member in condemning those retailers who do.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are looking for a positive response from the Government tonight, giving their moral support to the movement, which already has 160 hon. Members behind it, and, hopefully, promising a sympathetic hearing for the legislation that we are determined to introduce.

The sale of cigarettes to children under the age of 16 has been illegal since the passing of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, and this was extended to a complete ban on all products containing tobacco by the hon. Gentleman's Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986. It is for the police and the local authorities' trading standards officers to enforce the law in this area.

Mr. Home Robertson: Which of them?

Mr. Lloyd: Both of them. Both have powers, duties and responsibilities, and I fully accept the hon. Gentleman's contention, to put it at its best, that they are unevenly applied throughout the country. Our overriding objective —and, I am sure, that of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends—is to see fewer youngsters taking up the habit of smoking, not least because, as he said, 110,000 smoking-related deaths occur in the United Kingdom each year. Surveys show that 75 per cent. of regular smokers start their habit while teenagers.

But there are some encouraging signs, and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not mention them, although I expect he is aware of them. Evidence from the latest survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys shows that smoking among under-16s is going down. In 1984, 13 per cent. of young people aged 11 to 15 smoked regularly. In 1986 the figure was 10 per cent. and in 1988 it was 8 per cent.

It is worth noting that, for the first time, the 1988 study used a biochemical test to determine whether the children had actually been smoking—a sort of lie detector—and it is proposed to continue that technique in future, for it will clearly add to the reliability of the data.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the Minister divide the statistics between boys and girls? Do they show that girls are not smoking any less, which is a worrying factor?

Mr. Lloyd: It is clear from the statistics—I am speaking from memory, and I will confirm the position to the hon. Gentleman if I am wrong—that girls have in the past smoked less than boys; but the proportion is changing because the number of boys smoking is dropping quite rapidly, but the same, alas, cannot be said for girls.

The data that we are getting have the basic reliable method of which I spoke, which tells whether the youngster has smoked within the previous seven days. To build on the welcome trend last year, the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority jointly launched a £2 million a year campaign aimed at reducing still further the proportion of teenagers who smoke. The target is an additional one third cut by 1994. Health education to reduce the number of illegal sales to children will be one of the chief means of realising that objective.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister said that the Department of Health had allocated some additional funds to discourage youngsters from taking up smoking. From my point of view and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), that is of limited comfort because none of that money is going to Scotland. It would be useful if the Minister's hon. Friends in the Scottish Office showed the same motivation as is shown by his hon. Friends in the Department of Health, although I appreciate that he cannot answer for them.

Mr. Lloyd: That is correct, but I will pass on to my colleagues in the Scottish Office what the hon. Gentleman said.

A further key aim is to stimulate action in schools and among parents to prevent shops selling cigarettes to children. That action is complemented by the tobacco industry's £1 million a year campaign—which the hon. Gentleman mentioned somewhat disparagingly—to inform retailers about the law. Although it is only part of the exercise, it is a welcome part.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) made some telling points and the Government, and particularly the Home Secretary, will want to take them into acount when we produce the further proposals for legislation that we are developing. He mentioned in particular Parents Against Tobacco. That campaign was launched just six weeks ago, and has similar objectives to the Government's. The arrival of the campaign is both timely and welcome. The Government look forward to the powerful reinforcement that it will bring. We shall consider carefully the proposals that it puts forward.

Well-targeted local influence and pressure brought to bear on traders who would flout the law are likely to be particularly persuasive. Actual enforcement of the law is a matter, as far as the police are concerned, for chief officers, who must decide the priority to place on illegal tobacco sales and have regard to other demands on their forces.

As I mentioned earlier, the law can and should be enforced by local authorities' trading standards officers. That is why the chairman of the Health Education Authority wrote in 1988 to all local authorities urging them to encourage trading standards officers to enforce the law and to use the councils' powers of prosecution.

Well-judged consumer campaigns, or perhaps, to be correct, non-consumer campaigns, should have a powerful deterrent effect on irresponsible traders, as will—this goes to the heart of what the hon. Member for East Lothian said—the grass root reminders to local authorities of their powers and their duty to use them.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the law. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health have seen to it that the ministerial group on crime prevention has considered options for strengthening the legislation on this matter.

[Mr. Lloyd]

They are satisfied that improvement is possible, and they are developing specific proposals to put before Parliament as soon as a suitable opportunity arises.

Mr. Foulkes: When?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member for East Lothian will be pleased to hear that among them will be a proposal designed to clarify and strengthen the responsibility of retailers.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked when we shall bring forward proposals. It will be as soon as we have a legislative vehicle to which they can reasonably be attached.

We have an emerging partnership between volunteers in the community, the enforcement agencies, the law and the industry.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister is being genuinely helpful. Does he accept that, as long as two separate bodies —the police and the local authorities—have overlapping duties and other competing priorities, we shall have the problem that each says that it is up to the other to deal with the problem? Will the Government please give a steer? I suggest that life would be a lot easier if a circular went round local authorities stating that the Government intend that the work should be done by trading standards authorities.

Mr. Lloyd: The trading standards authorities have the powers. As I said, they have been reminded of that during the past 18 months. There is ample scope for local groups organised by Parents Against Tobacco to remind the local authorities. There will be scope when the law is amended to remind the local authorities and the police what the new law is and what their duties are. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman does not mean that he would like one or other authority to have a responsibility. Clearly, both should have a role. There may be scope to state more clearly what emphasis each should adopt.

As I said, there is scope for a partnership between the community, the enforcement agencies, the law and the industry. That is precisely the sort of collaboration which we have advocated and developed in crime prevention during the past six years. It is proving remarkably successful.

I recognise that the number of hon. Members present shows that the matter is of wide and compelling interest. I hope that hon. Members will be encouraged, as I have been, to learn that the strategic approach to eliminating the illegal sale of tobacco to children takes as its model proven and recently tested techniques.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is just in time.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister said that he hoped that the law could be changed when a legislative opportunity became available, but he did not say whether the Government intend to find such a legislative opportunity. If a private Member of any party were to introduce a Bill that would give that legislative opportunity, would the Government give that Bill a fair wind through the House?

That is an important point because, as my hon. Friend has said, it is clear that there are breaches of the law again and again. For about 90 per cent. of the time, the law is being broken. Therefore, I repeat: if the Government believe that a legislative opportunity should be sought to change that position, and if they are not willing to introduce such a Bill, if a private Member of any party were to do so, would the Government give it a fair wind?

Mr. Lloyd: I thought that it was perfectly clear from what I have said that, not only are the Government developing proposals, but we are looking for an early opportunity to put those proposals into effect.

Mr. Foulkes: When?

Mr. Lloyd: If a private Member comes up with a Bill that coincides with some or all of those objectives, of course the Government would not be a dog in the manger and give it other than their support. However, I am not sure that our proposals, which are not yet ready but which are in the process of evolution, would necessarily be successfully put on the statute book by the private Members' process, especially at this stage in the Parliament. I can certainly make it plain to the hon. Gentleman in the remaining minutes of the debate that it is our intention to produce proposals on this matter and to see them on the statute book.

Mr. Foulkes: Is it the Government's intention to do it this Session? The Government do not have many Sessions left.

Mr. Lloyd: I doubt whether we should be able to bring forward anything in this Session, for two reasons. First, we are well into it and the legislative programme is well advanced; secondly, the changes that we are looking to make have still not yet been finalised.

As I have said, I am grateful to the hon. Member for East Lothian for bringing this issue to the attention of the House tonight and for giving me the opportunity of bringing him and the House up to date with the Government's thinking on this matter because all of us agree—in government and in all parties—that this extremely important matter should be dealt with.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
(By Order)
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 22 February.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Monday 26 February at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As the 16 Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them as a single group.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL
[Lords] (By Order)

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

PENZANCE SOUTH PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

TEES AND HARTLEPOOL PORT AUTHORITY BILL
(By Order)

VENTNOR HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL
(By Order)

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

MIDLAND METRO BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (No. 2) BILL
(By Order)

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HUMBERSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 22 February.

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
(By Order)
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Poverty Action Group

1. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss taxation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): I have not met them as a Treasury Minister.

Mr. Jones: When the Chancellor meets representatives of the group, I hope that he will have some good news for them on child benefit which, as he knows, is the best way to give support to families on low incomes. I hope that he will raise child benefit in line with inflation because, as he knows, it has been eroded since 1987 when his Government's manifesto commitment was to "pay it as now". Surely that should not mean to pay it as it was paid in monetary terms, but that it should be uprated in line with inflation. I hope that the Chancellor will take that point on board in his next Budget and put that right.

Mr. Major: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his views. As he knows, we have a statutory obligation to review child benefit every year before the public expenditure round, and that has occurred. On the point about the freeze on child benefit in the past two years, the hon. Gentleman knows that there has been a compensating increase in income support and family credit, precisely to meet the point about low pay to which he referred.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: When considering the answer that he has just given, will my right hon. Friend bear it in mind that quite a number of his colleagues, let alone Opposition Members, feel strongly that child benefit is the only income of some women, who appreciate its being uprated whenever possible?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reminder. As she knows, child benefit was introduced by the present Government and at present costs £4¼ billion, all of which is paid to the wife.

Mrs. Beckett: Surely all that the Chancellor needs to say when he meets the Child Poverty Action Group is that, as the social security Minister who gave the pledge in the manifesto about child benefit, he feels morally bound to uprate it in line with inflation?

Mr. Major: It is always a pleasure to have advice from the hon. Lady, although it may be that I do not get quite as much advice from her as her right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Nevertheless, I am pleased with the advice that she has given and shall certainly bear it in mind if I meet Miss Fran Bennett and her colleagues.

Manufacturing Productivity

2. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the growth during the 1980s of manufacturing productivity in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other major industrial countries.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): The average growth of output per person employed in United Kingdom manufacturing industry between 1980 and 1988 was 5·3 per cent., contrasted with 3·4 per cent. for the other Group of Seven economies.

Mr. Wood: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging response. Is not it also true that productivity in British industry has risen substantially above that in Japan? Does my hon. Friend agree that extra investment in new manufacturing industry, such as is happening in Stevenage, where over £600 million is being spent by Glaxo, British Aerospace and other companies, is the answer, to ensure that we have good manufacturing prospects?

Mr. Ryder: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's latter point. On his first point, manufacturing productivity growth in Britain over the past decade has been higher than that of any other leading western nation, including the United States and Japan.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Minister tell the whole story about productivity in manufacturing? Why does not he also say that during the past 10 years of this Tory Government, more than 900,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Great Britain, many of them in the north and the west midlands? Will he also say that in West Germany there is a balance of payments surplus, equivalent to £50 billion, while Britain is running a balance of payments deficit of £20 billion? There is the contrast.

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman may not know that manufacturing employment has been falling in every leading western nation for the past decade and more. Furthermore, manufacturing unemployment did not start rising in 1979, when this Conservative Government came to office, or in 1970 when the previous Conservative Government came to office. Manufacturing employment began to fall in 1966, the year that a Labour Government were re-elected.

Mr. Marlow: What is my hon. Friend's view on bringing about a major increase in the productivity of East German manufacturing industry, by British taxpayers providing vast amounts of money through the European Community budget to improve East German manufacturing industry?

Mr. Ryder: Earlier this week, I attended a meeting of Ecofin in Brussels at which the West German Finance Minister told us about the latest developments in the sphere to which my hon. Friend referred. It is inconceivable that the West German Finance Minister is unaware of my hon. Friend's views.

Tax Evasion

3. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to cut down on tax evasion.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The Government are strongly opposed to tax evasion, which is why we have doubled the number of staff engaged in anti-evasion work. We have increased the penalties, which had not been increased since 1960, implemented the bulk of the Keith committee's recommendations, simplified the tax system and reduced punitive tax rates, which invited avoidance and evasion.

Mr. Ross: Is it not true that according to the latest National Audit Office report, almost £4 billion or 15·5 per cent. of assessed tax revenues were uncollected in 1988? If the tax collection system was as efficient now as it was 10 years ago, we should have an extra £1·5 billion of revenue.

Mr. Lilley: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. If he reads the Treasury's reply to the committee, he will see that the sum of money is notional and that it has been normal for large amounts to be under assessment while assessments are waiting to be fixed. The actual amount that remains uncollected is only about one fifth.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend believe that shifting the burden of taxation from a direct to an indirect basis is altogether helpful, to avoid this problem?

Mr. Lilley: That is certainly one of the factors that enter into the equation. However, I should also lay emphasis on reducing top tax rates. The previous Labour Government, when they had rates of 83 and 98 per cent., collected tax from only 30,000 taxpayers. Now, at the rate of income in real terms at which they would have been paying 83 per cent., 190,000 taxpayers declare their income.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Minister's general commitment is not matched by the detail that he has given the House. According to the performance indicators in the public expenditure documents that we discussed in the House on Tuesday, the Inland Revenue's cost per employee on income tax cases has fallen. If the resources have been saved—I doubt whether they have—will the Government merge the special office and the inquiry branch—a reform which they have been putting off since 1985—in order to clamp down on corporate fraud?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman looks closely at the figures, he will find that there has been a sixfold increase in the amount successfully recovered by the tax evasion unit. That is good news.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend have it in mind to introduce any measures to prevent the Labour party from giving evasive answers about the proposed roof tax?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. One of the worst types of tax evasion is for the Labour party to evade giving the British people details of the taxes that it proposes to impose on them. We should like to see an end to the evasion of many questions on the roof tax. Is the Inland Revenue to be invited to hand over details of individuals' taxation to local authorities? Will individuals see their tax burden rise with every increase in the capital value of their house?

Manufacturing Investment

4. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of manufacturing investment in each of the last two quarters.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Manufacturing investment was £3,163 million and £2,784 million at 1985 prices in the third and fourth

quarters of 1989 respectively. Manufacturing investment reached a record level in 1989, after six years of growth averaging 8 per cent.

Mr. Marshall: Notwithstanding the Minister's answer, does he accept that the Government have an appalling investment record? The share of manufacturing investment in GDP fell by one quarter between 1978 and 1988. Does not that prove the Government's utter contempt for the nation's manufacturing prospects and their preference to grab what they can from the sinking ship?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman says notwithstanding my answer, as if somehow he did not want to hear the facts in it. The facts are that between 1983 and 1989 investment grew by 8 per cent. on average, but under the previous Labour Government manufacturing investment grew by 1½ per cent. per annum. Manufacturing investment is now 7¼ per cent. above the level in 1979. It grew by 5½ per cent. last year and it is now at a record level. It may surprise Opposition Members to hear that manufacturing output in the 1980s grew faster in Britain than in Germany.

Mr. Burt: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to calculate the effect of the strike at Ford on manufacturing investment? Does he agree that it behoves all parties in the House that want to see manufacturing investment to support companies such as Ford, which want to invest in Britain, not those who are striking and so putting at risk future investment in Britain?

Mr. Lamont: Two factors are important for manufacturing investment. One is increased profitability and the other is improved industrial relations. Both have improved enormously under the Government and in the teeth of opposition from the Labour party.

Mr. Strang: What effect are interest rates that are much higher than those of any of our European competitors having on investment intentions? Is falling manufacturing investment consistent with an on-going economic miracle? When does the Chief Secretary expect interest rates to start falling?

Mr. Lamont: It is expected that manufacturing will continue to grow faster than non-oil GDP. Obviously, investment will, to some extent, be affected by interest rates, but it is important that we should reduce demand of which investment is part. The fact remains that in recent years we have had extremely strong investment growth, including strong manufacturing investment growth.

Personal Savings

5. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to promote personal savings and investment.

Mr. Major: There have been a range of measures to encourage savings and investment in recent years.

Mr. French: Has my right hon. Friend been able to assess the popularity of personal equity plans following the improvements made to that scheme by his distinguished predecessor? Notwithstanding present high mortgage commitments, are not more and more people investing in PEPs?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend has taken a great interest in the personal equity plan schemes. He will be delighted to know that the number of plans taken up and the amount invested are now running at higher levels than at any time.

Dr. Marek: As so often, the right hon. Gentleman talks about savings for those who are basically rich enough to afford advice on how to save. What does he intend to do for the ordinary saver, the person who is being crucified by the present high mortgage rates?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman may conceivably not have noticed it or remembered it, but independent taxation comes into force from 1 April this year, which will be of considerable help to the married woman saver.

Interest Rates

6. **Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about interest rates and their effect on the economy.

Mr. Major: I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people in the House and outside it admire the way in which he has tackled his job in the few short weeks that he has been Chancellor of the Exchequer? Does he further accept that many of us hope that the belief that the pound and interest rates ought to be tied to the deutschmark has been buried? Because of the Germans' headlong and precipitant flight to a new fatherland, their inflation is likely to be very high. If Germany's interest rates increase 1 per cent., may we have an assurance that our interest rates need not follow, because British industry could not sustain such a rise or compete with it?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the first part of his question. As to the second part, I shall continue to judge interest rate levels against what I think is right for the country's counter-inflation policy.

Mr. Beith: Does the Chancellor realise that yesterday's announcement by one building society of increased mortgage rates spells personal tragedy for many people as well as great pressure on wage negotiations in the coming year? Can the Chancellor give the other building societies any hope of a reduction in interest rates while he refuses to make a clear commitment to Britain's early entry into the exchange rate mechanism, or should all building societies increase their interest rates in anticipation that base rates will remain high?

Mr. Major: It would be very attractive to be able to stand here and say that I foresee an early reduction in interest rates. However, I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that it would be unwise to make such a commitment until I am certain both that it would be right in terms of beating inflation and that once we bring interest rates down, we can safely keep them down.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, and I am sure that he will have strong support from Conservative Members in making sure that the campaign against inflation is maintained for as long as it need be. Will my right hon. Friend emphasise that an

increase in mortgage rates is not the same as an increase in the rate of inflation? In that respect in particular, the retail prices index is a very unsatisfactory measure of inflationary conditions. When the RPI falls below the real rate of inflation, as it will over the next two years with falling interest rates, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to introduce a more realistic official inflation indicator and be prepared to adjust the annual uprating of benefits accordingly?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend is right to say that the retail prices index as presently constituted is an inaccurate measure of the underlying rate of inflation in the British economy. He will be aware that few countries in the world include mortgage repayments in their retail prices index, as we do. I take note of my right hon. Friend's other comments.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: The Government have said frequently that if their economic policy is not hurting, it is not working. Is not the real problem that the Government's policy is hurting manufacturing industry, investment and home owners? When will the Government open their eyes to the possibility of an alternative approach, such as credit control which, although not perfect, can be of some help?

Mr. Major: The most damaging thing for industry and for the economy as a whole is inflation. Our monetary policy is there specifically to bear down on inflation. If we had not used monetary policy successfully in recent years, I doubt whether there would have been the dramatic reduction in unemployment which all right hon. and hon. Members welcome, and which today's announcement shows is continuing.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although the battle against inflation must take priority, the burden of it is being borne excessively by small businesses and home owners? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes it is. While I accept that my right hon. Friend cannot anticipate his Budget, will he, with his usual sensitivity, take that into consideration? After all, the need for the battle was not the fault of small businesses and home owners, but that of the Government.

Mr. Major: I understand the concern felt by my hon. Friend, who is a powerful and consistent proponent of lower interest rates. I entirely sympathise with the difficulties that many home owners in particular face at present. I have to bear in mind as an overriding objective the necessity to ensure that we have the right economic conditions for bringing down inflation and for ensuring that it is kept down. I must keep that in the forefront of my mind and policy, and I propose to do so.

Privatisation

7. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates privatisation revenue will be in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimate of net privatisation proceeds in 1989-90 is £4¼ billion.

Mrs. Wise: Is not the Minister aware that, at the time of the previous Budget statement, the expected revenue was £5 billion? Can the shortfall be accounted for by the selling-off of water at far below its real value, and will that shortfall be a factor that will prevent the Chancellor from raising tax thresholds in accordance with the Rooker-Wise amendments?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Lady is not correct. Water was sold at a good price, and I was glad to see that 85 per cent. of employees in the water companies participated in the sale. On the hon. Lady's second point, a Labour Government who deprived themselves of a continuing flow of privatisation proceeds would have a black hole that they would be unable to fill without higher borrowing or higher taxation of the sort that she alludes to.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: While the £4,500 million received in the present financial year is a welcome by-product of the privatisation programme, will my hon. Friend confirm that the political purpose of the programme is to release businesses from political control into the healthy private sector, where every privatised industry has performed wonders for the economy of the United Kingdom and for its staff?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. We have privatised some 29 major companies, and virtually every company has increased its turnover, profits and investment and improved its industrial relations as a result. That is good for the company and good for the taxpayer because companies end up paying higher taxes —as British Telecom does—than they used to provide in dividends to the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Mullin: What shall we live on when there is nothing left to privatise?

Mr. Lilley: Should a Labour Government be elected, the problem that the hon. Gentleman envisages would come sooner. What would a Labour Government do without the proceeds of privatisation from day one? I should be interested to hear the answer to that question.

It is clear that we have increased the flow of tax revenues to the Government from those companies, because they are now more profitable, which is an on-going benefit to the country, and we have reduced the debt of the nation, which is an on-going benefit to the Exchequer as well.

Social Charter

8. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest assessment of the effect on the United Kingdom's long-term economic performance of the proposed European social charter.

Mr. Ryder: It would raise costs, and cost jobs.

Mr. Fishburn: Does my hon. Friend accept that the best social charter that the country can have is plentiful and, ideally, full employment in the most modern and competitive industries?

Mr. Ryder: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. As he knows, Britain has created more jobs during the past six years than any other country in the European Community.

Mr. Chris Smith: Was not the Minister really saying in his first answer that Britain under the Tories can survive only by bad employment practices and cheap labour? Have not the other 11 countries of the European Community, with which, I remind the Minister, we have 70

per cent. of our trade deficit, realised that completely the opposite is the case, and that a good employment record is a recipe for economic success?

Mr. Ryder: If the social charter went through as it stands, the first people to suffer and to lose jobs would be women and the unskilled. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman's slogan in Islington at the next election will be, "Back the social charter and create unemployment."

Mr. Carrington: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in view of events in eastern Europe and the potential reunification of Germany in particular, the social charter has now become an outdated irrelevance?

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), the former Secretary of State for Employment, said when he held that post that hundreds of thousands of British jobs would be at risk if the social charter went through. We need no lessons on unemployment problems in this country, because our unemployment is two thirds of the European average.

Public Expenditure

9. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the public spending planning total for 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The public expenditure planning total for 1990-91 has been set at £179 billion.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that the Minister will confirm that we have an historically low level of public spending. How then can he justify the present position? Owing to our current balance of payments deficit, one item on which spending will be cut in real terms is export promotion services.

Mr. Lamont: In fact exports are doing extraordinarily well: the latest figures show that they are up 15 per cent. on the previous year. If exports are to increase, what matters most is the competitiveness of British industry, and we are determined to achieve that.

Mr. Yeo: Has there ever been a period in British history when, at the same time, public expenditure has risen substantially in real terms, the proportion of gross domestic product gobbled up by the state has fallen and a considerable amount of public debt has been repaid?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. There have been large real-terms increases in specific priority programmes within total general Government expenditure, which at the same time has fallen as a share of GDP. I believe that that is entirely related to the sharp increase in our growth rate —compared with that of our European competitors— during the same period.

Mortgage Arrears

10. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of home-owners with mortgage arrears.

Mr. Major: Around 70,000 mortgages are more than six months in arrears, less than half of 1 per cent. of total home-owners.

Mr. Barnes: I am sure that all hon. Members are meeting more and more constituents whose debts have reached crisis point. Many have become homeless, and the position has been worsened by the increase in mortgage rates. The plight of those people is desperate: they also face increases in transport and heating costs, and the poll tax, which is yet to be imposed in England and Wales. Are not we moving from crisis to catastrophe, and should not those who reside at No. 10 and No. 11 Downing street be evicted, rather than our constituents?

Mr. Major: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern for those who are in difficulties. However, the level of arrears, although a little higher than it was a while ago, is still very low. A vast number of repossessions are predominantly the result of marriage break-up rather than high interest rates.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the figures that he just gave for mortgage arrears account for 0·73 of 1 per cent. of all mortgage holders, and that that proportion is lower than it was at the end of 1985? If that number is in arrears, by definition 99·27 per cent. of people are not.

Mr. Major: I confirm those figures. Of course arrears are difficult and painful for every individual home owner, but it is equally true that they are not running at the critical level implied by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) in his supplementary question.

Mr. Benn: Is the Chancellor aware that—quite apart from the tragedy of repossession—many people who had thought that they were home owners have discovered that they are home buyers? There is a big difference between the two. The Government have no interest in home buyers; they try to persuade home buyers that they are home owners, which they are now discovering that they are not.

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman is clearly unaware that the number of properties repossessed in 1989 —which, I think, underlies his concern—was less than one fifth of 1 per cent. of the number of building society loans. The problem has been there for a long time, and it certainly existed when the right hon. Gentleman was a Minister.

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that more than 2 million more families now own their homes than in 1979? Is not there a strong case for raising the mortgage tax relief threshold from £30,000 to at least £60,000— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has an absolute right to say what he wants to say.

Mr. Dunn: —to take account of the huge increase in the value of homes, especially in the south-east, and in north-west Kent in particular?

Mr. Major: I note my hon. Friend's representations on that matter. He should bear it in mind that owner-occupation has risen from 55 to 65 per cent. in the past decade and that there is still a substantial demand for home ownership to continue, as I believe and expect it will.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Chancellor recollect that in the Conservative party's 1979 manifesto the then level of interest rates and mortgage repayments were said to result

from what was called "Government financial mismanagement"? After 11 years of Conservative Government, with people are suffering the highest mortgage repayments in our history, is that still true? Is it caused by Government financial mismanagement and, if not, what is the reason for all this misery?

Mr. Major: What was said in 1979 was entirely correct —*[Interruption.]*— because for a long time when the Labour party was in Government there were negative interest rates which robbed savers, pushed up inflation and wrecked the economy.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the building societies, which have been lending young people three and four times their income to buy overvalued properties, must take some of the blame? Does he also accept that what is worrying people in my constituency is not just the mortgage rate but a combination of the mortgage rate and the potentially astronomical community charge? Will he take cognisance of that and invite my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to cap Derbyshire county council?

Mr. Major: I shall certainly pass on my hon. Friend's latter remark to the Secretary of State. I agree that people should be prudent in the borrowing that they take on.

Workplace Nurseries

11. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations he has received on tax relief for workplace nurseries.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that I cannot comment on tax matters in the run-up to my right hon. Friend's budget statement.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister join me in congratulating those local authorities and private companies that have established workplace nurseries? Does he accept that the establishment of workplace nurseries has meant that parents, and especially women, have been able to participate to a much greater extent in those industries? Will he consult the Chancellor to see whether he can include in the Budget provisions that will exempt from taxation people who are deemed to be liable for taxation because of the subsidy that they receive for participation in those schemes?

Mr Lilley: On the first part of that supplementary question, I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in welcoming the action of the bodies he mentioned. On the second, I am sure that the Chancellor has noted carefully what he said.

Mr. Key: I congratulate my hon. Friend on supporting workplace nurseries in the public sector. I had the pleasure of opening one for a health authority last September. However, will he have a word with the Leader of the House about the need for workplace nurseries in the Palace of Westminster? I have a problem in that within a few days of each other, both my secretary in the House of Commons and my secretary in the constituency announced that they were pregnant.

Mr. Lilley: I am sure that my hon. Friend will pass on to the ladies concerned our congratulations, as I shall to the public sector bodies that are providing the facilities that they may soon need. I shall also draw to the attention of the Leader of the House my hon. Friend's point and the impending increase in demand.

Private Medical Insurance

12. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much private medical insurance tax relief will cost in a full year.

Mr. Lilley: About £40 million.

Mr. Turner: Is not the Government's conscience troubled when they give away that sort of money to people who are relatively well off and when district health authorities such as mine in Wolverhampton and elsewhere are closing beds and wards, when waiting lists are growing and when the fabric of the buildings is deteriorating? How can the Government justify giving away that sort of money when all those problems exist in our hospitals and in the National Health Service generally?

Mr. Lilley: If the relief on private medical insurance for the elderly is as successful as the Opposition appear to fear, it will pay for itself, because the National Health Service will be relieved of 100 per cent. of the cost of providing treatment for those subsequently cared for by the private sector, whereas the fiscal loss will be either 25 or 40 per cent. of the cost of premiums.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will not tax relief on private medical insurance for the elderly mean shorter NHS waiting lists to everybody's benefit as more pensioners opt for private treatment? Does my hon. Friend agree that it typical of the Opposition to begrudge a little tax relief to pensioners who mean to care for themselves if they possibly can?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point and puts the case cogently for that relief, which I believe will be widely welcomed by pensioners.

Mortgage Interest

13. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of mortgage interest paid by owner occupiers for 1988; and what is the comparative amount for the first three quarters of 1989.

Mr. Ryder: The figures are £22·1 billion and £23·5 billion.

Mr. Cunliffe: Does the Minister agree that those are appalling and indefensible figures? Many of us believe that they are a direct result of the inept, suicidal and disastrous Government economic policies. Will he give some words of relief and wisdom to mortgage payers who are faced with the financial trauma of consistently increasing rates? Does he agree with the present Secretary of State for Employment, the former Minister responsible for housing, who recently made the corny and insulting comment that if one is feeling the pinch because of mortgage interest rates payments one should take in lodgers?

Mr. Ryder: I appreciate that high mortgage rates cause distress to all mortgage payers, and particularly to young married couples. But we have to continue to bear down on inflation. Once inflation is on a sustained downward path, interest rates and mortgage interest rates will follow.

Mr. Raison: Does my hon. Friend agree that the direct effect of putting up mortgage interest tax relief allowance from £30,000 would be to add to the cost of housing? Would not that be a bad thing?

Mr. Ryder: I have heard the representations made by my right hon. Friend and by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) earlier today. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will take those views into account when formulating his Budget by 20 March.

Confederation of British Industry

14. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry over the state of the economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The CBI submitted a paper for the National Economic Development Council's discussion on the outlook for the economy on 10 January.

Mr. Winnick: Is it true that privately the CBI is told that it is all the fault of the previous Chancellor? How much longer can the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) be held responsible for the economic mess when the responsibility clearly falls upon the entire Government, not least the Prime Minister?

Mr. Lamont: The CBI fully supports the Government's policy. The CBI strongly believes that the most important thing is to reduce inflation, and therefore it supports the Government's policy. The hon. Gentleman talks as though the CBI was somehow the friend of the Labour party. He may have noticed that the other day the Director-General of the CBI said that the last decade had been the best 10 years he had ever known for business in this country.

Sir William Clark: Will my right hon. Friend ask the CBI what the state of the economy would be if the Labour promises were put into effect?

Mr. Lamont: I certainly do not need to ask the CBI because we all know what the effect would be. The only trouble is that during the debate on the public expenditure White Paper the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) still refused to answer questions on the cost of Labour's programme and on how much would it put up taxes.

Third World Debt

15. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current policy of the Inland Revenue in relation to the tax treatment of United Kingdom banks which make provision against Third world debt.

Mr. Ryder: The Inland Revenue operates the test laid down by law. This provides tax relief to the extent that the principal is estimated to be irrecoverable.

Mr. Watson: Would it not be appropriate for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to introduce incentives for the banks to cancel outstanding debts to the Third world and thereby assist in the development of those countries to bridge the gap between the developed and the underdeveloped world?

Mr. Ryder: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his Budget representations, but judging from his remarks, I think that he does not quite understand the purpose of the matrix.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that the new bank matrix provides guidelines only? Can he reassure banks that the matrix will not be used as a revenue-raising mechanism? Can he confirm that banks will be able to write off Third world debt strictly on a business basis?

Mr. Ryder: This is a matter for the Inland Revenue, but I should point out to my hon. Friend that the increase in the matrix reflects the concern of the Bank of England over the past few years about the debt problem.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mans: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend consider the plight of community charge payers in Lancashire, where the Socialist-controlled county council's provisional budget represents the equivalent of a 30 per cent. increase in the rates? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this contrasts sharply with the position in the Conservative-controlled borough of Westminster, whose council has recently announced a community charge below £200 and below the Government's estimate? Will she therefore, with the Secretary of State for the Environment, consider community charge capping Lancashire, which is both high spending and incompetent?

The Prime Minister: There is no justification for the kind of increases that my hon. Friend has just mentioned in the case of Lancashire. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it perfectly clear that if authorities continue to budget excessively he will not hesitate to cap them. They should have more consideration for their residents. I am very glad that the Conservative Westminster council has given such an excellent lead with a community charge below £200. Other councils will follow.

Mr. Kinnock: On the subject of capping, can the Prime Minister tell the House what thought she has given to imposing a cap on mortgage rates?

The Prime Minister: About 3 million more people are now able to take out mortgages than in 1979, and there has been a much greater increase in the number of people who own their own homes compared with the position some 10 years ago. That is a very good record.

Mr. Kinnock: Why cannot the Prime Minister stop dodging the question and simply own up to the fact that the all-time record mortgage rates are due entirely to her economic policies?

The Prime Minister: Also due to our economic policy, as the right hon. Gentleman may know if he looks at "Social Trends", published today, is the fact that real

household disposable income increased by 25 per cent. between 1981 and 1988, and that there are now 15 million owner-occupied homes, compared with 11·6 million under Labour. That is due to the excellence of Conservative economic policies.

Mr. Kinnock: Through the use of the word "also", I accept the Prime Minister's confession.

The Prime Minister: Our Chancellors have handled our economic policy excellently, and I note that well over 99 per cent. of an increased number of mortgage holders manage to pay their mortgages very well, and will find home ownership a great benefit—it is a very good investment.

Q2. **Mr. Gorst:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gorst: In the light of the question put to her by the Leader of the Opposition, is it due to the economic policies of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, for the second successive year, the level of manufacturing in this country has gone up? Is that also why our unemployment is almost the lowest in western Europe? Will that eventually make some contribution to reducing interest rates?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend observed, the figures for manufacturing investment last year have just been published. Manufacturing investment in 1988 was an all-time record and last year's figures raised that record to a new high level. That is two years of excellent manufacturing investment.

With regard to the employment figures published today, we have a record number of jobs in this country. Seasonally adjusted unemployment has fallen, which is very good news.

With regard to inflation, as my hon. Friend knows, we always take whatever measures are necessary to keep bearing down on inflation.

Mr. Strang: Will the Prime Minister take time this afternoon to consider the plight of the hundreds of thousands of council tenants whom the Government encouraged to buy their council houses? Is it not time that the Government reconsidered their policy of cutting support for council housing and bringing pressure on council tenants to buy their council houses by forcing up council rents?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, we put through a policy of tenants purchasing their council houses, which was bitterly opposed by the Labour party but from which many people have profited, and they are grateful for that. We shall continue to pursue that policy. In Scotland, as he knows, it has been extended in Scottish Homes. That has been a good bargain for all who have partaken of the opportunity that they have had from the Government.

Q3. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: In a week when Inter-Parliamentary Union delegations have returned from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Romania, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity of assessing the current state of our political, economic and social links with the countries of central and eastern Europe? In particular, will she speculate on how those developments will be regarded in the light of the latest discussions on German reunification?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Government have been active in contacts with and grants to eastern Europe. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office have visited a number of east European countries. We recently had the Polish Prime Minister here, and previously the Hungarian Prime Minister. We hope to have President Havel of Czechoslovakia here soon. We have contributed to the Polish and Hungarian stabilisation funds through the know-how fund and substantially, through the European Community, with extra food and medical equipment for Poland. All that is going very well indeed.

My hon. Friend is aware that we are pledged to support German reunification by longstanding agreements. Our concern has been to have a proper framework in which we can ensure security and stability in Europe, and we succeeded in getting that at the Ottawa conference which has just ended. We have a framework of the four Berlin powers, plus the two Germanys—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: When I am asked questions, I expect to answer them. We shall also—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important matters.

The Prime Minister: We shall also need an appropriate framework in which to discuss the implications for the European Economic Community, particularly in regard to agriculture, trade and financial arrangements.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the Prime Minister aware that the BBC plans a "Panorama" programme with the avowed object of denigrating the Ulster Defence Regiment? Will the Prime Minister undertake to ensure that the Government refute this slander by publishing the true facts about that regiment?

The Prime Minister: I had heard that a programme on the UDR was being prepared. I most earnestly hope that it will not denigrate the UDR. It is a very fine body of men and women whose lives are at risk whether they are on or off duty. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman's fears will not come to pass, but I suggest that he contact the chairman and the director-general of the BBC if he is in any doubt.

Q4. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that for various reasons, including the spreading and contracting

of AIDS, any proposal to reduce the age of consent to homosexual activities is wholly unacceptable and utterly crackers?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that any such proposal would give totally the wrong signal at this time. It would give offence to many people and worry many more and would give us great problems in the future. I would be very much against reducing the age of consent.

Q5. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howells: I am sure that the Prime Minister is aware that 10,000 farmers and farm workers leave the land every year. Will she tell the consumers of this country who will produce their food requirements by the turn of the century and what she intends to do about this very serious problem?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we are not short of food in the European Community and we are not short of food from America and a number of other places. Indeed, one of our problems has been the surplus of food; hence the need for quotas for milk, and so on. If there is a prospect of East Germany coming into the Community or being reunited with West Germany, that also will be a great producing area which will add to, not diminish, supplies. Also, many of the eastern European countries are only too anxious to send their supplies to us, which could pose problems. I do not think that the problem that the hon. Gentleman outlines will arise by the turn of the century.

Q6. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister agree with Norman Shrapnel that too much silence is much more ominous than too much noise in a parliamentary democracy? Why, then, does she fear an inquiry into the Colin Wallace affair?

The Prime Minister: I have already replied on that matter, as have my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. I have nothing further to add to what we have said.

Q7. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fishburn: Uncertainty has hung over the future of the English National Opera and the English National Ballet, of which I am a governor. Will my right hon. Friend send her best wishes to both those national companies for continued artistic excellence, supported by generous Government grants, good management and a high level of private sponsorship?

The Prime Minister: I gladly join my hon. Friend in sending best wishes to those two most excellent organisations, the English National Opera and the English National Ballet. I am delighted that they are out of financial difficulty. In the arts in Britain we have excellent private sponsorship, owing to the prosperity and generosity of industry, and a high level of Government support. In the coming years we shall put it up by some 22 per cent. to ensure that that high level is maintained and that London remains the most distinguished centre in the world.

Q8. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: Now that the Government have agreed to pay 100 per cent. compensation for the victims of mad cow disease, will the Prime Minister agree to introduce a similar scheme of compensation for the millions of victims of her poll tax?

The Prime Minister: If I may answer the serious part of the hon. Gentleman's question, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced 100 per cent. compensation for mad cow disease. We are expecting an increasing amount of the disease because of the long incubation period. My right hon. Friend thought, under those circumstances, that it was better to go from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. compensation.

The community charge is the best and fairest way of paying for local authorities spending. It is far better than the Opposition's alternative of a roof tax, which is quite ridiculous.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY—Opposition day (8th allotted day, 1st part). Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate on a motion in the name of the Scottish National party entitled "The dispute in the ambulance service".

Motion on the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY—Opposition day (9th allotted day). Until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate described as "How Privatisation Has Pushed Up Electricity Prices And Set Back Environmental Improvements". I am considering the propriety of having such narrative descriptions of debates. I shall seek to do something about it.

Afterwards, there will be a debate on the more compactly described subject, "The Royal Shakespeare Company", both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Clergy (Ordination) Measure. [HON. MEMBERS: "What time?"] After 10 o'clock, presumably.

WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock, debate on Procedure motions. Details will be given in the *Offical Report*.

Remaining stages of the Government Trading Bill.

Money and Ways and Means resolutions relating to the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill.

Ways and Means resolution relating to the Social Security Bill.

THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on East-West relations on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY—Remaining stages of the Landlord and Tenant Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

[Wednesday 21 February, Procedure motions: Public Petitions, New Writs, Private Members' Motions.]

Dr. Cunningham: May I, on behalf of the whole House, thank the Leader of the House for his prompt response to the requests last week for a debate on the changes taking place in Europe? I am sure that that debate will be widely welcomed, and I thank the Leader of the House for his prompt action in that regard.

Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure us that, when we debate the procedure motions next week, the Government will not begin by taking up the time, as they did on a previous occasion, thus preventing proper time for a full discussion of the issues? Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure us that we shall reach a conclusion on these matters when they come before the House next week? If he can be positive in his response, that would also be welcomed.

Does the Leader of the House recall his right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury saying on Tuesday during the debate on the Government's public expenditure plans that Government economic policy was creating a "virtuous circle"? Does he think that people today, receiving the news of their increased mortgage payments, will regard that as an accurate statement about the impact of Government economic policy?

As we understand that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—the chairman of the Conservative party—in the face of this news and today's opinion polls, has had to be locked up in a darkened room at Tory central office, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to come to the House next week to make a statement on the mortgage rates and their implications for millions of families? I am sure that Conservative Members, too, would like an explanation for their constituents, so will he tell us how high mortgage rates will be allowed to go under the Government? Is it not clear that the damage that is being done to people by the worst record of a Government on mortgage rates this century ought to be brought to an end?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will begin by dealing with the point on which the hon. Gentleman concentrated last. As to parliamentary discussion of the matter, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary and other Treasury Ministers have been answering questions about that this very afternoon, following the full debate last Tuesday. If the Opposition wish to debate it in their own time, there will be other opportunities, apart from the opportunity presented by the Budget statement. On the substance of the matter, the hon. Gentleman must appreciate that if inflation is to be brought effectively under control, high interest rates are a necessary part of that policy and need to be sustained until success is secured.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): When is it going to happen, Geoff?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That question will recur no doubt on subsequent occasions.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for his appreciation of the early debate on East-West relations.

I acknowledge the question that the hon. Gentleman put about the procedure motions. I cannot give an undertaking that there will be no other business taking up part of the time. Obviously I shall do my best to avoid it, but it is my intention to bring the matter to a conclusion in next week's debate.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Can my right hon. and learned Friend find an opportunity during the coming week to tell the House what steps will be taken to improve the performance of microphones in the Chamber so that disorderly remarks can be heard as well by you, Sir, as by anybody else?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Many aspects of the quality of the acoustic equipment of the Chamber are under almost continuous consideration by the Select Committee on Televising the Proceedings of the House under my chairmanship. The task is to provide a system of amplification that will ensure as effective hearing as possible of the hon. Member currently addressing the House without that system overamplifying such background noise as may from time to time be heard. The

impact of any intervention depends on where that hon. Member happens to be in relation to the microphone currently under the command of the hon. Member who is addressing the House.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Will the Leader of the House consider once again the national shortage of teachers, the low morale of the profession and the increasing workload arising from the national curriculum? If we cannot have an early debate under that head, will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend to make a statement to the House on the restoration of the negotiating rights of teachers and to improve the financial offer this year for teachers to restore confidence in the profession and to attract qualified people into it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will understand that the Government have recently announced their reaction to the report of the interim advisory committee, which provides for full implementation of that report in the course of the year. Following that announcement, there will have to be further consultation on the revised draft of the relevant document. Because the Government propose to stage the award, the order giving effect to the new document will be subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses. That will provide an opportunity for debate.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend request our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House next week to substantiate or deny the rumour that over 100 local authorities are to be capped for the purposes of the community charge? Will he accept that that will give much relief to many colleagues whose constituents labour under the rule of Socialist-controlled county councils? It will enable the councils to cut their cloth accordingly and will relieve the householders of the fear that they will have to pay very high community charges.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will understand that, notwithstanding the press reports that have been published on the matter, decisions about capping cannot be made until authorities have set their budgets. The statutory deadline for that is 1 March for precepting authorities and 11 March for charging authorities. However, the Government have made it clear and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear earlier this afternoon that if authorities budget prudently and sensibly, they will have nothing to fear from capping. But if they insist on budgeting excessively, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will not hesitate to cap them and require them to reduce their excessive budgets.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Police Complaints Authority report on the disturbances at Wapping is published today. In view of the serious matters that are described in that report, will the Leader of the House arrange for either the Home Secretary or the Attorney-General to make an early statement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot undertake to do that, but I shall certainly draw the right hon. Gentleman's understandable interest in the report to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friends. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will answer questions in the House on the matter on Monday.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Has my right hon. and learned Friend had an opportunity to read the recent debate on the King's Cross Railways Bill or the proceedings of the Committee on that Bill? Has he noted the extraordinary statement by the Chairman of that Committee that its entire business has been dominated by the inability to provide a shorthand writer service at a time that would suit the Committee? Does not that underline the inappropriateness of that procedure for handling matters of that scale? Could we please have an early debate on the matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I confess that I have not yet had the opportunity to study the passages to which my hon. Friend referred. I acknowledge that the burden of work placed on the House by the present volume of private business is a factor which we need to take into account in the course of the consideration that I am undertaking with colleagues about the right way to react to those problems.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House provide for an early statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland on the great gas robbery? By that I mean the proposal to take Scottish gas from the central North sea and pipe it to Tayside for processing and development, including the generation of 3,000 MW of cheap electricity which will undermine the competitive position of Scottish industry. We should like to know why the hydro-electric board, which is still a public corporation in Scotland, with a social responsibility, is engaged in a plan with British Steel which will destroy the Scottish steel industry. Why does the Secretary of State, not content with selling off and selling out Scottish industry, now intend to give it away?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member has tried to deal with such a wide range of topics that it is impossible for me to answer all or any of them. I shall bring his fears to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend. I encourage the hon. Gentleman to select one or other of the matters that he has raised as a topic for discussion in his party's time.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Can my right hon. and learned Friend add anything to what he said last week about the prospect of an early debate to allow the Government to make a statement on Kashmir? Does he agree that it is a matter for the international community? Martial law has been imposed in Kashmir and there is a ban on the press. This week we have seen photographs of some ugly demonstrations in New Delhi. Is it not time that we had a Government statement on that important matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot, I am afraid, add to what I told the House last week on that topic. I shall draw the matter once again to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-upon-Trent, South): Did the Leader of the House ever hear anything so silly as the suggestion of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment last week that the solution to the problem of Rottweiler dogs was to put name tags on them? Would anyone in his right mind suggest that name tags should be put on other dangerous animals such as lions and tigers

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

and that they should be allowed to roam loose? As Rottweilers are dangerous animals, can we debate next week the need to ban them completely?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the increasing concern about the behaviour of certain dogs, as expressed by the right hon. Gentleman. As he knows, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989, which was passed only last summer, was intended to bring some remedy to bear on that matter. However, I shall draw the right hon. Gentleman's concern to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider the answer he gave a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster, West (Mr. Hind)? Is there not already sufficient evidence that Labour and Conservative councils alike are hiding a massive increase in spending behind the community charge? Is it not right that hon. Members should have a chance to demonstrate their disapproval by having an early debate rather than waiting until it is too late?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the report or the matter raised by my hon. Friend, for the reasons that I have already explained to the House. The statutory deadlines for budget making are both in March—on 1 March and 11 March. Decisions on capping cannot be made until that time. However, I repeat that, as both my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have already said, as that date approaches authorities should take into account the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will not hesitate to cap authorities to require them to reduce excessive budgets.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware that Labour and Conservative Members from south-west Scotland have been campaigning for the retention of the Stranraer—London sleeper——

Mr. Tony Banks: There are two on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Foulkes: Not that kind of sleeper.

Is the Leader of the House further aware that in yesterday's debate on transport, the Secretary of State for Transport clearly knew absolutely nothing about the facts of that service? Indeed, he was dismissive of the questions raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and myself. In the light of that, will the Leader of the House ensure that there is an early meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee to debate Scottish transport, and especially the rail service and its deterioration in Scotland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: What I can do, although it scarcely seems necessary, is to ensure that the points raised by the hon. Gentleman and by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) are considered not only by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My right hon. and learned Friend is a distinguished former Member for a Merseyside constituency and will therefore be well aware of the horror that is shared by all sections of society and all parties at the Department of Transport's refusal to try to deal with the capital debt of the Mersey tunnels while dealing, apparently, with the debt of that grotesque political structure, the Humber bridge. That is not right. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will find the time for a debate on this urgent issue, which has economic, social and political implications.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the topic raised by my hon. Friend, except to confirm from my own recollection that there is more enthusiasm on Merseyside for the Mersey tunnels than for the Humber bridge. I shall bring that fact and the point raised by my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the crisis facing many district health authorities as they face yet more cuts in their budgets? My district health authority, for example, is faced with the loss of another 80 beds and the closure of the occupational therapy department and the children's ward.

Referring to the treatment of children, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look at early-day motion 539?

[That this House believes the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill has crucial implications for the future of in vitro fertilisation techniques, diagnosis and treatment of serious congenital disease, advance in knowledge of the causes and treatment of serious congenital disease, advance in knowledge of the causes and treatments for infertility, miscarriage and contraception; further believes that this important Bill deserves serious and detailed consideration on its own merits; therefore declares its intention to resist efforts of anti-abortion hon. Members to introduce the separate and controversial issue of abortion into this Bill, in particular by the moving of amendments to lower the abortion time limit below 20 weeks as the medical and ethical arguments about late term abortions are quite different from those surrounding the treatment of embryos in the 14 days after fertilisation, and believes that this essential debate on embryo research must not be allowed to be distorted and overshadowed by the inevitably heightened emotion which would follow from the introduction of abortion amendments.]

There is a printing error, because the motion should read "below 28 weeks" and not "below 20 weeks", which has been printed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of the hon. Lady's point about early-day motion 539, which will no doubt be corrected if necessary. In answer to her first point, the fact is that, under this Government, there has been a massive increase—a threefold increase in money terms and a 40 per cent. increase in real terms—in the resources devoted to the National Health Service. The reforms under consideration in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill which is now in Committee are designed to promote even more efficient use of those resources to tackle the distributional problems that she has in mind.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My right hon. and learned Friend is well aware of the work of the parliamentary commissioner and the Select Committee

covering the commissioner. The matter has been raised with him by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck). However, his knowledge is not always shared by all hon. Members. Therefore, would my right hon. and learned Friend consider an early debate on the parliamentary commissioner reports?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend knows, I have discussed this matter with the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner and was pressed on the matter by our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck). The response that I gave then, and subsequently, is that, if a report focuses sufficiently closely on an issue, it can be debated in the House. So far, no need has been felt for a regular report on the work of that Select Committee.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Can we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Scotland or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about the serious position facing the work force of the clothing manufacturing company, James Seddon (UK) Ltd., which earlier this week went into receivership, thereby jeopardising about 2,000 jobs throughout the United Kingdom, including about 250 in Denny and 400 in Falkirk? The two factories are both in my constituency. Will the Leader of the House consult the Secretary of State for Scotland about taking urgent Government action to save those jobs?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member is certainly entitled to raise that matter. However, I cannot do more at this stage than promise to bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): When might we have an opportunity to debate the criminal justice system, and law and order? As my right hon. and learned Friend will know, an important Government White Paper on this matter was published last week. There is considerable interest in the report of the Home Affairs Committee into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and about matters affecting our current inquiry into the Crown prosecution service and both matters should be discussed by the House. Contrary to some of the rumours circulating in the press about the state of the Crown prosecution service, those Committee members who visited Manchester and north Wales this week found the morale of its staff extremely buoyant and discovered that the service was working well.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving the House that information. There was a debate on a private Member's motion on legal services on Monday of this week, when matters affecting the Crown prosecution service were discussed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. As I have told the House, I also hope for a suitable opportunity for a debate on criminal justice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose*—

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We have been getting up and down.

Mr. Speaker: They are both young.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am the good-looking one, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Leader of the House accept that there are a number of Scottish matters, such as the future of the steel industry, the fishing industry and sleepers to England, that are of concern north of the border? Is he aware that those subjects would be best scrutinised by the Select Committee procedure? Does he accept that the absence of a departmental Select Committee on Scottish Affairs prejudices the scrutiny of the conduct of matters in the Scottish Office? Will he arrange a statement next week to announce an early constitution of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have already told the House, I cannot add anything to what I went out of my way to say in the debate on the Loyal Address. The matter was also the subject of discussion in the previous debate on 20 December 1989.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange an urgent statement on the consequences of the recent storms? The floods and gales that have swept southern England over the past couple of months have brought consequences which are far more severe for most people than those resulting from the great gales of 1987. There are right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House whose constituents, like mine, are still wading up to their waists in water, are without electricity, sewerage and other services. Even this afternoon the portals of the home of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) are being lapped by water, and after 40 years in this place not even he is able to turn the tide.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a point of real concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. I saw some of the damage when I visited the west country at the end of last week. I shall bring my hon. Friend's specific concern to the attention of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Did the Leader of the House read the recent article in *The Observer*, which suggested that thousands of waste disposal tips in Britain, including many in my constituency, could be a threat to the health of people living in their vicinity? Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate in order to ascertain the truth of the report, in order to put our constituents' minds at rest?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I did indeed see the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, although it is probably already in his mind.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): I listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend said earlier about a community charge capping debate. I realise that he cannot single out particular authorities at this stage, but this is a burning topical issue. With three weeks still to go, my constituents hope that some councils may yet cut waste, mend their ways and revise their estimates. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will concede the request for such a debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's question reinforces the point made by other hon. Members on both sides of the House. Her Majesty's Government hope that all councils that have not yet completed their deliberations on these matters will take into account what the Prime Minister and I have said.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the Leader of the House urgently consider a serious problem? Is he aware that some of the newly privatised water companies believe that they have no obligation to provide water supplies for fire-fighting services? Will the Leader of the House accept that that could be serious, and will he introduce, if necessary, amending legislation, since it is obvious that the Water Act 1989 must be defective in that respect? Will he also accept that this is a fine demonstration of the dominance that the commercial motive now has in British society?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not aware of the validity of the point made by the hon. Gentleman, but I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I emphasise the central point that the whole purpose and structure of the legislation providing for the privatisation of the water industry was to enhance the supervisory effectiveness of authorities acting in the public interest. That was the object of the exercise.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some private Bills are relatively uncontroversial but are of great importance to the localities they affect, and that a considerable backlog of those Bills is now building up? Can he say how quickly that backlog will be tackled and what procedures are to be introduced for streamlining the passage of such Bills through the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There are two aspects to that question. One is the management of Bills currently before the House; in relation to that, my hon. Friend will have noticed that the Chairman of Ways and Means has been nominating time for the consideration of such measures quite frequently, and is continuing to do so. On the wider longer-term question, as I have already said, I am considering with colleagues how we can best reform private Bill procedures in the light of the report from the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure, and I hope to be able to give the House some news about that before too long.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Leader of the House will be aware that Mr. Stevens's inquiry into alleged collusion between police, Army and loyalist paramilitary groupings in the North of Ireland is very much a litmus test of the Government's commitment to a security service there that will act at all times within the law. Will the Leader of the House try to arrange a debate on that issue in the near future so that the relevant Minister can assure the House that this time there will be no conspiracies of silence, that there will be full co-operation, that no road blocks will be put in Mr. Stevens's way, and so that the House can express its wish that, for the first time in 20 years, an inquiry in the North of Ireland will establish the truth rather than evade it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously I cannot accept the implications or framework of the hon. Gentleman's observations, but I shall certainly bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, emphasising the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to the matter.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an early debate on the Labour party's proposals for a roof tax, so that we can bring to the attention of the British public the problems that they will face not only with a tax based on the value of a person's house but with local income tax? Such a debate could draw attention also to what would happen if there was ever a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer at Westminster ripping off taxpayers, and another 400 "chancellors of the exchequer" in town halls ripping them off a second time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend makes an important and valid point, and although he made it effectively enough, I shall see whether I can find an opportunity for him to amplify it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Leader of the House aware that, in June, the International Whaling Commission will be reconsidering the ban on commercial whaling? Great pressure is building up from Japan, Norway and Iceland to lessen the moratorium on commercial whaling. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman carefully consider arranging an early debate, in which the views of the Government and of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House on the future of the commercial whaling ban could be expressed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government take that matter very seriously and have adopted a robust attitude throughout. We shall continue to do so.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, ultimately, politics is about making choices and not simply registering a protest? Given that a large number of councils have announced community charge increases well above the rate of inflation, will he arrange for an early debate on local government finance? The House would then be able to compare what electors are being asked to pay in community charge this year with the amount that would have been demanded if certain councils had kept their spending down to the rate of inflation—and with what they would have to pay under the Opposition's iniquitous roof tax and local income tax proposals.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important matter, which should now be under consideration in town and county halls throughout the country and by prospective electors in local elections. There is a choice to be made between higher and lower expenditure levels, just as there is a choice to be made between high-spending Labour authorities and prudent Conservative authorities.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange as a matter of urgency for the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement on a report produced by the Ministry of Defence police about the dangers of withdrawing MOD police from Bishopton Royal Ordnance factory? The report concludes that such action would be dangerous and foolhardy, and could possibly prompt terrorist and criminal attacks on that factory. Will the right hon. and

learned Gentleman arrange such a debate to alleviate the fears of my constituents, who are terribly worried that the MOD police might be withdrawn?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already undertaken to draw that matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and I do so again.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Apparently, recently a report was issued about women going back to work. We are always having reports about women this, women that, and women the other. I do not know whether they do any good. If they do, I wonder whether we could have a debate on the problems faced by men—who do not live so long, get their pensions later, have specific medical problems, and are sometimes driven to drink by women. I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend would care to enhance his reputation still further by doing for men that which his wife has done for women—or would he not dare?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always grateful for tributes to my wife or to myself from my hon. Friend. Perhaps he will note that the Equal Opportunities Commission, of which I know he is a fervent admirer, has produced a report making the very proposals that he has made for improving the lot of our sex.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorely tempted to reply to that last question, but I will not.

I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 538.

[That this House is alarmed at the proposals of HTV Production Services to make 112 redundancies as a result of the group's decision to apply for a publishing contractor franchise in the next round of ITV franchise changes arising out of the Broadcasting Bill; notes that this decision puts all jobs in production in the industry at threat, damages the links between HTV and the local community in Bristol, damages the existence of local programme making and effectively establishes the profitable right to broadcast adverts; and therefore calls on the Government to take note of HTV's proposals and ensure that the new franchise is allocated on the basis of quality production of programmes.]

I understand that consideration of the Bill has gone beyond that section where an amendment could have been moved, and I ask the Leader of the House to speak to his colleagues and to ensure that the necessary amendment is tabled in Committee or on Report so that no franchise is given under the new broadcasting arrangements on the basis of publishing alone, so as to protect the quality of programmes produced by companies.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I obviously cannot answer the hon. Lady in detail. HTV is an existing franchise holder. If it wishes to continue to contract under the new Broadcasting Bill, it will have to fulfil the programming requirements set out in the Bill. The staffing needed to achieve that level of service is a matter for the management, and the hon. Lady will have to find opportunities to raise her question when the matter comes to the floor of the House, as no doubt it will.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Could the House have an early opportunity to debate local authority housing in London? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that five Labour-controlled London authorities have collectively failed to collect £58 million of rent? That must have serious implications for housing the homeless, and for the community charge for people who live in those local authorities.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely share my hon. Friend's view about the grave impact of the matter to which he has drawn the House's attention. The House will be grateful to him for having done that. I cannot promise the prospect of an early debate on that subject.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Has the Leader of the House seen the message of my late colleague, Mr. Harold McCusker, to his constituents, in which he apologised for having asked them to have hope that this House would grant them equal citizenship. Could the Leader of the House find time next week to manifest the will of the Ulster people and the House, that the people of Northern Ireland be treated as equal citizens with their fellows in the kingdom?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I join the hon. Gentleman in expressing our distress at the recent death of his hon. Friend. I have not studied the particular text to which he referred. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has said many times, he is always willing to discuss any proposals put forward by the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Following the Adjournment debate last night on the subject of the campaign by Parents against Tobacco, will my right hon. and learned Friend give an opportunity for more of these supporters of that cause in the House to have their say, and to raise the question of the non-enforcement of the law which prohibits the sale of tobacco to young people? There is also the issue of inadequate fines—25p for smoking on London Underground. Will he drop a hint or two to the Chancellor about pricing policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not yet had the opportunity to study the text of last night's debate. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and our other colleagues in the Administration will be studying it carefully.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can we have a debate on this somewhat remarkable report, which seems to have been well hidden away—the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the House of Commons Refreshment Department? The report was published last July, and shows that the Refreshment Department has nearly £2 million in reserve, and that, in the year 1988-89, it made nearly £500,000 profit. At the same time, people are working in the Refreshment Department for little more than £100 per week. I raised this matter with the Leader of the House last week. What is going to be done to raise the wages of people working in the Refreshment Department? We do not want cheap labour, so can they be paid properly?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member will understand that the terms and conditions of employment of people in the Refreshment Department are set in accordance with the ordinary prevailing rates. The level of money accumulated in that account is a consequence of the changes in arrangements for managing the Department. He will remember that some years ago there was a problem of chronic loss because of the proportion of expenditure borne by the Department and more widely by the

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Exchequer. The matter will be considered in due course by the House of Commons Commission and the relevant Sub Committee.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): May I take up an earlier question? My constituency was probably the worst affected by the recent flooding. Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to speed up an inquiry into whether the Bellwin scheme is applicable, or whether new legislation will have to be introduced to help those whose houses and property have been badly damaged through no fault of their own?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Bellwin scheme was activated in the first instance on 26 January this year. It was subsequently extended on the sixth of this month. Details of the arrangements were sent to all the local authorities affected by the scheme, but I shall bring my hon. Friend's specific concern to my right hon. Friend's attention in case there is anything further to be said.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): When those of us who are inerested in textiles attended a debate on 12 January—which was a Friday, by the way—to discuss the multi-fibre arrangement, all who spoke, regardless of party, emphasised the need to continue protecting the textile industry. What was the point? The Secretary of State came to the Dispatch Box yesterday and made off-the-cuff remarks which appeared to dismiss any possibility of the MFA's continuing. Surely, if he wants to make such statements, he should come to the House—preferably next week—and allow us to point out the difficulties that will arise for hundreds of thousands of textile and clothing workers throughout the country.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot answer for any construction that the hon. Gentleman may or may not have placed on what my right hon. Friend said yesterday, but he will know from the fact that we arranged for that debate to take place that we are paying some attention to the matter.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to hold an early debate on eastern Europe. In view of the problems faced by the hosiery, knitwear and textiles industry—not least the difficulties about renewing the MFA, which I fervently hope will happen—will he consider arranging a debate specifically about trade with eastern Europe? Sooner or later we shall have to consider how to help those countries, if we are going to help them. We certainly do not want cheap hosiery, knitwear and textiles to flood into Britain, as that would cause further damage to an industry which is already suffering considerably.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that aspect of the position. Plainly, if the countries of eastern and central Europe are able to begin to improve their economic performance after years of being held back by Communist domination, problems will be posed for the rest of the world trading economy, including this country's economy. I believe, however, that those issues will fall within the scope of next Thursday's debate.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): As I am sure the Leader of the House is aware, if the Social Security Bill completes its passage, it will not immediately apply to Northern Ireland. As it contains provisions for additional finance for carers, the extension of mobility allowance to the deaf and the blind and the extension of attendance allowance to the terminally ill, will he assure the House that immediately after its passage the Northern Ireland order on social security will be presented and debated so that the people of Northern Ireland can benefit from those provisions straight away?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I will bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): May I support the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) for a debate on the losses on the Humber bridge, which have so far amounted to £342 million? As the defeated Conservative candidate in the Hull, North by-election of January 1966, when Mrs. Barbara Castle—then Transport Minister—promised a Humber bridge, I find it hard to believe that it was worth £342 million of public money to keep me out of this place, and that for only four years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the House would have done best to have both the presence of my hon. Friend and the retention of the money.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Following the tragedy at Donnington Park race course and at Hillsborough, and last week's semi-disaster at the Astoria concert hall, may we please have a debate on crowd safety before there are any more tragedies, so that we can discuss why the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive are not in charge and able to impose some discipline on gatherings of young people, which are inviting tragedy again?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise a debate on such a wide-ranging topic as that suggested by the hon. and learned Gentleman. He could, of course, always seek an opportunity by way of a debate on the adjournment of the House.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 349—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am sure that a copy of it would be handed to him if we were to wait—about Curry's and Dixon's repair policy?

[That this House deplores the policy of Dixons and Currys of charging £10 call-out fees to repair goods still under guarantee; congratulates the Consumers Association and others who have condemned this policy; and calls upon the Government to introduce legislation along the lines of the National Consumer Council's Consumer Guarantee.]

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman join the Consumers' Association in condemning that practice? Will he ask the Minister for consumer affairs to make a statement in the House and to support the Consumer Guarantees Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise a debate on that matter. Nor am I sufficiently well informed to comment on it—nor would it be wise to do so—but I shall draw the matter to the attention of my hon. Friend who is responsible for consumer affairs.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman, in his role as deputy Prime Minister, arrange for Government time to be provided for the Bill sponsored by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to repeal the law of blasphemy? Does he recognise that such a debate would enable the Government to invite the Law Commission to recommend whether any new public order laws should be introduced to replace the law of blasphemy? It would also enable the Government to call on Salman Rushdie to stop the paperback version of "The Satanic Verses" being published, which would bring an end to all protests against the book and isolate the tiny minority of men of violence who support violence and odious death threats against Mr. Rushdie.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I obviously support the general denunciation by the hon. Gentleman of threats of death in those or any other circumstances. I cannot venture to comment on the other complicated but important matters he raised, which I shall bring to the attention of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that yesterday, in the Oslo commission, Britain was isolated 13-1 on the issue of North sea dumping? He will be aware that Denmark is considering taking Britain to the International Court of Justice for failing to stop dumping, as agreed, in the North sea.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman appreciate that we need an urgent debate in the House to stop Britain dumping in the North sea and, indeed, to initiate action to clear up the effects of dumping, about which fishermen have protested this week, having found their nets full of condoms, sanitary towels, syringes and all kinds of rubbish that is dumped into the North sea by the countries surrounding it? We need an urgent debate to discuss how Britain can clean up its act and work with others to clean up the North sea.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That was a prolonged intervention by the hon. Gentleman, in which he failed to remind the House that the Oslo commission countries welcomed the restatement of the United Kingdom's commitment to ending the sea disposal of industrial wastes. Our attitude was there fully explained and showed the Government's recognition of the importance of the subject. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's particular concern to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): When the Leader of the House is discussing with the Secretary of State for Transport the recent decision over the Mersey tunnels' finances, will he draw to his attention the fact that the people of Merseyside are outraged at the prospect of having to pay £8 a head additional poll tax to bear those costs? Will he also point out that they are equally outraged over the fact that refinancing arrangements have been agreed for the Humber bridge but not for Merseyside?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously I cannot comment on detailed questions, but I shall bring the particular point to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Following the Government's refusal to refer the GEC takeover of Ferranti to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and bearing in mind the implications of that decision for some Ferranti workers who may now have to face the dole, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement to the House so that those of us with Ferranti factories in or near our constituencies will have a chance to question him on that decision?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that it would be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to make a statement about that matter now, although I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's concern to his attention.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about a debate or a statement on the high interest rates and the way in which they are affecting mortgages? Will he also bear in mind the fact that such a debate will enable us to ask the Chancellor whether he will allow banks additional tax relief to cover Third-world debts, which will mean that 8 million mortgage payers will have to pay more while the four top clearing banks will be making money hand over fist? Money for the Third world should not go to the top four banks in Britain; it should be used for relief for Third-world countries.

Mr. Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has linked a number of matters together in a very artificial fashion. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will take account of all the relevant matters when formulating his economic policy.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to debate the secret decision taken by the Government to station the new American nuclear bomber, the F15E, in Bentwaters in Suffolk? Will he ensure that the hon. Member for Epson and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, attends that debate, because on 6 February he misled the House when he gave an answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) that no decision had been taken, but gave me a reply stating that construction would be taking place at Bentwaters, meaning that the F15E will go there? Not only did the Minister mislead the House, but he broke American security, because that is classified information according to the American security budget. Will the Leader of the House consider prosecuting the Minister under the Official Secrets Act 1989?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is no part of my function to comment on a contribution that borders on a speech rather than a request or question relating to the business of the House next week. No doubt in due course there will be an opportunity to debate such matters when the House debates the Royal Air Force. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will then expound the Government's policy clearly and convincingly.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement to the House on yesterday's announcement that the Barry island resort will not be opening this season because of extensive storm damage? That will result in the loss of 120,000 visitors to the town of Barry and will be a devastating blow to the local

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economy. Will he impress upon his right hon. Friend the need for urgent Government action, because that disaster falls outwith the Bellwin arrangements?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously the House is concerned about any particular example of severe damage as a result of recent storms. However, the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to question my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales about it on Monday afternoon.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): The Leader of the House is aware that more than 100,000 people in Britain suffer from myalgic encephalomyelitis. He will also be aware that a private Bill on that illness was brought to the House some 18 months ago. As enormous amounts of money are being found for research and compensation to farmers because of mad cow disease, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give the House an opportunity to debate ME so that we might get proper levels of research on it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise to find a special opportunity, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The Leader of the House will be aware that the present severe weather has resulted in a great many vessels of the inshore fleet being confined to port. He will be aware also that, with the allocation of quotas for white fish, the price of white fish at the quayside has rocketed. Will he speak to his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about arranging as soon as possible a debate on the crisis in the fishing industry and about ensuring that there are adequate supplies for processors? If something is not done to allocate quotas properly and efficiently, it will be cheaper to buy salmon and chips than to buy cod and chips.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There was a debate on that general topic not many days before the Christmas recess. However, I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Should not we abandon the debate on student loans—the debate that is about to take place—until we have had a chance to discuss the quite disgraceful leaflet on top-up loans that has been produced by the Department of Education and Science? The leaflet is clearly party political propaganda and should have been produced by Conservative central office. It is not something which should involve the expenditure of public funds and the use of civil servants' time. It tells us what we will decide later today in the debate. Does a Russian-type constitution now apply to this country, in that the state and the governing party are considered to be synonymous?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the leaflet will enable the hon. Gentleman to make a better informed contribution than usual to today's debate.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is it really right that on Tuesday evening, on the Church of England Measure, the most delicate matters, which have been considered deeply by the Synod of the Church of England, should be decided by such people as Scots Presbyterians married to Roman Catholics and by other assorted Members of Parliament? Without wishing to open 150 years of contentious history on the disestablishment of the Church, may I ask the Leader of the House whether the Government have any reckoning as to how many hon. Members are practising bona fide members of the Church of England? [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] This is a very serious matter. In all this, what exactly is the role of the Minister of Agriculture in purporting to make statements, which have given great offence to some senior deans and to others who are senior in the Church of England, about policy on which his Ministry does not speak officially? May we have some reflection on that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member's ingenuity can be relied upon to tax my resources more than can that of most hon. Members. My response must be that that debate will take place in accordance with the established procedures of this House in relation to the established Church. The hon. Gentleman may have an opportunity to raise these matters then. He knows as well as I do that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture takes part in such ecclesiastical debates in a non-agricultural capacity.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): After the traumatic two hours that I have just spent, I wonder whether the Leader of the House is aware of the significant problem that faces many people who want rented accommodation. Not just in the south of England, but particularly north of Westminster, there is an acute shortage of affordable accommodation. In view of the recent statement on mortgage interest increases and of the fact that more people will face homelessness, will the Leader of the House agree to an early debate on the situation?

As a result of the increased mortgage interest rate and the lack of accommodation, many thousands of people throughout the length and breadth of this country face a very difficult situation. There will be more homelessness. This is an important issue, which the Leader of the House ought to put on the agenda. I am asking for an early debate on it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that it is more than open to the Opposition to place that item on the Order Paper for an Opposition day debate. He will understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is giving the closest possible attention to the general question of homelessness, as he should be doing.

Mersey Tunnels

4.29 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Department of Transport to give Mersey Travel financial assistance with the funding of the Mersey tunnels."

This matter is specific, because the case for assistance was put to the Minister as long ago as 28 November 1989. It is estimated that, without the assistance that Mersey Travel has asked for, each poll tax payer on Merseyside will pay £10 on their community charge. In addition to the other burdens that they will have to bear, that will be a great burden. The Department's attitude contrasts with the support that was given to the Humber bridge.

The matter is important because it will have dangerous effects on the economies of Liverpool, Birkenhead and Wirral. Traders and shops in central Liverpool and Birkenhead have suffered because of the tolls that have existed for years. Increased tolls will have a bad impact on them.

The matter should be given urgent consideration because, in the immediate future, Mersey Travel must make its budget for 1990-91. The voice of Parliament—several hon. Members have raised this matter today—should be heard before it makes its final decision.

One hopes that we shall have convinced the Government to change their mind, at least partially, after the arguments have been aired. Labour Members asked for a meeting to discuss these issues, but we did not get one. It is therefore important for the House to discuss the matter, so that we can at least have a proper debate before it is finalised.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that be believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the funding of the Mersey tunnels."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. As he knows, I must decide whether his application comes within the Standing Order and, if so, whether a debate should be granted to take precedence over the business set down for today or Monday.

I regret that the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order regarding your reply, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend—I use that phrase advisedly—the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) argued his case persuasively and well, and I do not disagree with your judgment. Perhaps it is not clearly understood, however, that that application was about not only Merseyside and the Mersey tunnel but the fundamental approach to estuarial crossings and the rights of people to have their roads, tunnels and bridges——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Walton asked for a debate under Standing Order No. 20. There are many other ways in which the matter can be brought before the House.

Points of Order

4.33 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday 31 January, I presented a petition to the House calling for a ban on Rottweilers and other breeds of dogs as domestic pets. I told the House that 15,000 signatures had been gathered in support of it. I now recognise that that statement was wrong and that those 15,000 signatures were gathered in support of a separate petition calling for general legislation to control dogs. I wish to set the record straight on that matter.

Mr. Speaker: That is very good of the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that note will be taken of that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions, I mentioned a leaflet on student top-up loans, which we are to debate. The leaflet was available to hon. Members on the board two days ago. It sets out the provisions of the Bill and pre-empts the debate that we are about to have. To cover itself, it says only:

"The provisions of the Bill are open to amendment in Parliament. Some features of the scheme described below may consequently change."

The problem is that there is no opportunity for this to be distributed anywhere until we have had a discussion later today and moved to Third Reading. The Department of Education and Science is just assuming that the position of the Government will be carried and we will lose all the amendments that we have tabled.

On those grounds, I think that there should be a ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that I can give a ruling on that. It is a matter for the House to decide whether to accept or reject an amendment.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the Department on the production of this most excellent leaflet.

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. Member mind doing that during the course of the debate, because it is not a matter of order within the Chamber?

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the guardian of access to this House, would you inquire from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis or the superintendent in charge of the area surrounding the Palace of Westminster about the arrangements that were made at midday and in the early afternoon to close roads along which we can gain access to the House? I understand from radio bulletins that this was caused by hundreds of coaches depositing thousands of students at Battersea park, I believe, so that they could begin a march relating to the matter that we are about to discuss. It seems to me that it is very serious when so many major roads, particularly the Embankment, are closed. This causes severe damage to the economy of London and to the free passage of the citizens of London. Can you inquire into this, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Member alleging that he was prevented from getting to the House, because that is what the Sessional Orders are concerned with? They do not cover the other citizens of our metropolis.

Mr. Tracey: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was indeed diverted on my passage to the House and it caused me considerable inconvenience.

Mr Speaker: I will look into it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Would you also confirm, Mr. Speaker, that it is one of your general duties to see that not only Members of Parliament are able to get to this place but also constituents, when it is necessary for them to come and lobby this place? If 25,000 students have joined together in a demonstration against this Bill on student loans, the only regret I have is that they were diverted the wrong way round the west end of London. They should have finished at Westminster bridge and shut the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. My responsibility is the Sessional Orders, although of course it is a citizen's right to lobby Parliament.

Orders of the Day

Education (Student Loans) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 2

STUDENT LOANS SCHEME ADVISORY COMMITTEE

'.—(1) An Advisory Committee on the Student Loans Scheme ("the Committee") shall be established by the Secretary of State.

(2) the Committee shall be composed of not fewer than 15 nor more than 20 members,

(a) of whom one half shall be appointed by the Secretary of State for persons who appear to him representative of vice-chancellors, polytechnic and college directors, of academic staff, of students and of employers; and

(b) one half of whom shall be other persons appointed by the Secretary of State

(c) provided that, if there is an odd number of members of the Advisory Committee, members appointed under section 2(b) above shall form the majority.

(3) Secretary of State shall make annual reports to the Committee on the operation of the student loans scheme, and shall supply such other information to the Committee as the Committee may reasonably request.

(4) The Committee shall make annual reports on the progress of the student loans scheme, and may make such other reports as are required of it under schedule 2 or as it considers necessary.

(5) Any report under section (4) above shall be laid before each House of Parliament.'—[*Mr. Straw.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 14—*Consultation over certification*—

'Prior to the making of regulations under Schedule 2, paragraph 2, the Secretary of State shall hold consultations with representatives from the institutions which will be required to provide certification and jointly agree a method by which certificates are to be provided.'.

New clause 17

REVIEW COMMITTEE, SCOTLAND

'.—(1) A Review Committee on the operation and effect of the workings of the student loan scheme in Scotland shall be established by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

(2) The Committee shall be appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland and be composed of not fewer than 15 and not more than 21 members—

(a) of whom not more than 10 and not fewer than 7 shall be appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland to represent vice-chancellors of Scottish universities, college principals and directors of centrally funded institutions, Scottish local and regional authorities, directors of education in Scotland, Scottish students and employers;

(b) other persons who shall provide a majority on the Committee of not more than one person.

(3) The Secretary of State for Scotland shall make available to the Committee such information as it deems necessary for the discharge of its duties.

(4) The Committee shall make annual reports on the progress of the student loans scheme in Scotland, including its effects on four-year undergraduate courses, and may make such other reports as it considers necessary.

(5) Any report under section (4) above shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament.'.

Amendment No. 13, in clause 1, page 2, line 18, at end insert:—

'.—( ) Before making regulations under Schedule 2 to this Act shall consult representatives of vice-chancellors, polytechnic directors students, local authority associations, college directors, teaching staff, and any other bodies or individuals he considers relevant.'

Amendment No. 1, in schedule 2, page 3, line 40, at end insert—

'(2) No regulations shall be made under paragraph (1) above until the Student Loans Advisory Committee has considered a draft of such regulations, and has reported its opinions to the Secretary of State and to Parliament upon the general effect of the regulations, in particular on—

(a) whether hardship has been caused by the loss of housing benefit income support: and

(b) the effect on disabled students.'

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to "*Erskine May*", page 458, with regard to the new clauses and amendments that we are about to discuss. I submit that the House may have a unique procedural difficulty. The Report stage of a Bill is conducted on the basis that what is said in Committee remains valid. My point of order concerns the position in which important pledges are given in Committee in perfectly good faith and are subsequently invalidated, but where the selection appears to give no opportunity for hon. Members to remain in order and correct these assurances at Report stage except, I submit, on a point of order.

Although I recognise that the substance is not a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, I refer specifically to the assurances that were given by Opposition Front-Bench Members. To give just one example, the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce)—

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me? I cannot be held responsible for assurances given by Opposition Front-Bench Members. I have been very liberal in my selection of amendments this afternoon.

Mr. Stewart: I am not, of course, criticising your selection of amendments, Mr. Speaker. My point is that pledges were honourably given in Committee by Opposition Front-Bench Members and they have subsequently been invalidated. I do not see how those on the Opposition Front Bench can correct the position unless they either—

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a Government Bill and any pledges given by the Opposition are not material. They are a matter for argument in the course of the discussions.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice. I feel aggrieved about the publication of a leaflet, and I have raised the matter twice in the Chamber. What would be the proper procedure for me to follow to challenge the details in the leaflet?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it has never been the practice of the Chair to give tactical procedural advice. I am sure that many of his hon. Friends who are sitting near him can do that far more ably than I could.

4.40 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on placing more weight on Opposition

[Mr. Jack Straw]

undertakings than on Government undertakings. He is entirely right to do so. New clause 2 would establish a student loans scheme advisory committee to give overall advice on the nature and administration of the student loans scheme. New clause 17 would establish a student loans scheme review committee for Scotland. The other amendments are subsidiary to those main purposes.

The need for continuing advice about the loans scheme to the Secretary of State and for its continual review has never been clearer. The scheme was bad when it left the Floor of the House on 5 December, but after two months in Committee it has emerged much worse. The scheme has far fewer friends even than on 5 December. Since then, the banks have abandoned their involvement—which was central to the scheme's administration—as the now benighted Mr. John Quinton made clear in his note to his colleagues. He circulated it on the day when the Secretary of State told him that the Prime Minister was "fizzing with fury" about the banks' abandonment of the scheme.

The scheme is even more expensive than we expected. The Government have ebbed and flowed in their claims. They have said both that the burden on the taxpayer should be reduced by the introduction of a loan scheme and that they are being exceptionally generous to the students with taxpayers' money. After our interrogation of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), it emerged that the scheme will waste at least £2 billion between now and 2010. The money will disappear into a vast black hole of administrative expenses, defaults and deferrals. It is money that could and should have been targeted on students who are most in need and on the expansion of higher education.

I learnt today, in a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, that his estimate of at least £2 billion does not take account of the significant, but as yet unquantifiable, cost of the interest rate subsidy which is also involved in the scheme. I said to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in Committee that the interest subsidy should be costed and he replied that it would be "hypothetical" to do so. I understand that future predictions are hypotheses, but we need to have written into the arrangements for the scheme accounting conventions that require the cost of the money on which the Student Loans Company will be lending to be brought into the account books of the student loans company. Were it a nationalised industry, that would be the case. A nationalised industry would not borrow money from the Government at nil cost; it would have to pay interest on it, just as British Rail will pay a full rate of interest on the extra £220 million which the Government will generously give it, as the Minister for Public Transport announced last night.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): I know that the Opposition's policy is to take away the student loan and not to replace it, thereby reducing the resources available to students. Is the hon. Gentleman compounding that meanness by suggesting that it is too expensive to offer an interest rate subsidy?

Mr. Straw: As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary knows well, I suggest that we should follow proper accounting conventions so that we know the full cost of the scheme which, as the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), supported by many of his hon. Friends, so eloquently declared on 20 October in this House, involves a transfer of resources from students who most need the resources to those who need them least. The Government have a history, as we find from "Social Trends", published this morning, and from other figures which they refuse to publish, of making poor families and people poorer and of transferring money from those groups and from middle-income families to the best-off in our society. There never was £2 billion for the poorest families, but the Government have been able to find £2 billion for the richest families, and for the moneylenders and administrators of the scheme.

4.45 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I was considering what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said. We made the point to him many times in Committee that he is giving the impression that the Government are like a charitable institution because they are giving a lot of money to the students. In fact, the Government's aim is to give only half as much to the students ultimately and to leave them in dire debt at the end. That is what the scheme really involves.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right, except that he is being characteristically over-generous to the Government. What is clear from the weasel words of Ministers is that they do not intend to stop at 50-50. They intend—they have never denied this or committed themselves to stop at 50-50—the full replacement of the grant system by loans. Does the Secretary of State want to deny that?

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*—

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman may feel that he should be promoted, but he is not yet the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State wants to deny what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has made clear in Committee, I shall be happy to give way now or at any stage during my speech. Everyone should be clear that the Government's intention is to replace the whole of the student grant system by loans.

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose*—

Mr. Pawsey *rose*—

Mr. Straw: I shall give way in a moment.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I do not want to intervene too often as I shall have an opportunity to speak later. However, I must nail that comment. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that what he said is not true. We have made it clear on many occasions that the student grant scheme for maintenance support will continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I realise that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is still on his preamble, but I am sure that he will now rapidly come to the new clauses and the amendments.

Mr. Straw: I am dealing with the central case for the need for advice to be given to the Secretary of State. If, as we suspect—the Secretary of State did not deny it, although he made an intervention just now—the Government's intention is to continue to replace grants by

loans until there are no grants and all loans, that should be considered by—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The Secretary of State must talk to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. In Committee—we can easily turn up the record—we asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary whether he would commit himself categorically to ensuring that once the 50-50 position was reached, that would be the end and the Government would not thereafter reduce the grant and increase the loan. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary was clear about that and said that he would not give such an undertaking.

The Opposition understand that there is no identity of policy between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and the Secretary of State. This is not the first time that it has happened. I shall give way to whichever one of them wants to offer me any truth on the matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I am intervening for the simple reason that the hon. Gentleman keeps getting it wrong. The position is quite clear. We are uprating the grant for next year, as already announced. The grant will then remain frozen and the loan will take over from that part of the grant. There is no intention to remove the grant, and we have made it clear on many occasions that the grant will continue. It is not being abolished and I do not know how many times I have to say that to the hon. Gentleman. He is trying to make a point about the position in the year 2000 and something, when probably neither my hon. Friend nor I will be here. Our position is utterly clear—*[Interruption.]* I was making a point to demonstrate what a ridiculous charge the hon. Gentleman was making. I will not be here then; it is a long way away. We have made our position absolutely clear: the grant for student support continues. I do not know how many times I have to say it.

Mr. Straw: I understand exactly what the Secretary of State is saying. It is an important issue. There will come a point where the cash value of the grant equals the cash value of the loan. Our point to the Under-Secretary of State, which he dodged, is that although that may not happen for a long time, we want to know the Government's intentions. When that point is reached at, say, £2,500, would a Conservative Administration, if still in power, replace the grant by a loan? That was the matter on which the Minister refused to give any undertaking.

The fact that the Secretary of State has admitted that half the real value of the grant will be replaced by a loan illustrates the complete deception of the leaflet to which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred. The leaflet, a piece of Conservative party propaganda paid for by the taxpayer, makes it clear that these are top-up loans, not replacement loans. The Secretary of State is an intelligent man. He must know that that is a piece of deceit because at least half the grant will be replaced by a loan.

I have already said that there are far fewer friends for the scheme now than when we debated it on the Floor of the House on 5 December. The scheme is more expensive. It will penalise significant groups of students, prospective students and graduates. It will penalise those on longer courses, particularly in Scotland. It will penalise medical students and prospective teachers. It will unquestionably harm the access of students or potential students from low-income homes.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I understand that a future Labour Government would double the number of students, reduce the parental contribution and restore the grant to its real 1979 level. Can the hon. Gentleman say whether his party is committed to spending the necessary public money to achieve that?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman should do his homework on our policy rather than making it up as he speaks. I will send him the holy text to study, and in it he will find the answer. Because we will not be wasting money on a loans scheme, there will be cash to pay for the expansion that we believe is necessary in higher education. There is not the cash to pay for the Government's proposed expansion. That is why in Committee the Under-Secretary of State abandoned the solemn pledge of the previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), to double the proportions over 25 years. That, too, was torn up by the Minister.

Because the loans scheme has been shown to be so deficient, the Government are becoming less and less popular, as they are in respect of their education policies generally. The poll in *The Guardian* this morning shows that not only is there a good lead for the Labour party overall but there is a magnificent lead for Labour's education policy, and education is becoming more and more a salient issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again, but I must ask the Front Bench speakers to help the Chair to keep the debate on the rails. The hon. Gentleman has had a good run on his preamble. I am sure that he will now direct his remarks to the new clauses and amendments.

Mr. Straw: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was merely going to extend our gratitude to the Under-Secretary of State because every time he opens his mouth he adds another 0·5 per cent. to Labour's lead on education policies.

The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State have made some very grand claims for the merits of the loans scheme—the Under-Secretary of State with more conviction than the Secretary of State. I learnt only recently that, on coming into office, the Secretary of State, who is an intelligent man, examined the scheme in great detail and decided that it should not go ahead because it was a bucket of rubbish. He tried to secure the agreement of the Prime Minister to abandoning the scheme but failed. The fact that the Secretary of State has distanced himself from the scheme throughout and refused to take part in the Standing Committee shows the truth of that.

Mr. MacGregor: May I tell the hon. Gentleman for the second time that he has got it completely wrong? There is no truth whatever in what he said about my view when I took office. I examined the scheme to make sure that the details were, as I thought, right. I have examined them subsequently to make sure that all the details are right. But I never made any suggestion of the sort that the hon. Gentleman alleged. I hope, therefore, that he will withdraw that remark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am looking forward fervently to the time when we reach the new clauses.

Mr. Straw: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Who is right will emerge when the Cabinet papers and other documents are published in 30 years' time. I suspect that the Secretary

[Mr. Straw]

of State's examination of the details of the scheme was more thorough than he suggests. I know that to have been the case.

As to the virtue of the new clause, it is about establishing an advisory committee to advise the Secretary of State on the merits of the scheme. Had the advisory committee been in place when the Secretary of State was examining the details, he would have been left in no doubt that the scheme should be abandoned.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*—

Mr. Straw: I will not give way because I want to bring my remarks to a close.

We need a continuing examination of the financial implications of the scheme, of its effects on access and of the effect of the withdrawal of social security, which I understand the Secretary of State for Social Services will announce on Monday—after, rather than before, the Bill has been considered in the House. If that is the case, it is reprehensible of the Secretary of State for Education to be party to a decision which cuts student income immediately, in some cases by £300 or £400. It is also reprehensible that that social security decision should be announced after the House has completed discussion of the Bill.

The entire scheme will be operated by regulation. The Secretary of State sought to make a virtue of that. When other schemes are run principally by regulation, as in social security, an advisory committee is established to advise the Government, because it is rightly thought that proposals of such significance in secondary legislation should be scrutinised by a relatively independent committee. That is the principal purpose of the new clause and the similar new clause in respect of Scotland.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*—

Mr. Straw: I am just drawing my remarks to a close.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman has said absolutely nothing so far.

Mr. Straw: I am sorry that the hon. Lady does not like my speech. I have never made a speech here which she has applauded.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The point is that the hon. Gentleman is talking hot air.

Mr. Straw: I do not want to be interrupted any more by the hon. Lady, or I shall never finish my remarks.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Straw: Very well; I give way to the hon. Lady.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: In all the years that I have known the hon. Gentleman he has never drawn attention to the fact that what is proposed is exactly the way in which student grants were introduced in 1962. He has never beefed about it until now.

Mr. Straw: I am not sure what the hon. Lady means.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That is what was proposed in 1962.

Mr. Straw: Ah, that point. The hon. Lady is completely wrong. She is trying to say that there is a parallel between this scheme and the Education Act 1962. There is no parallel. I refer the hon. Lady to my speeches on 20 October and 5 December on precisely that point.

For good or ill, social security schemes are also run by regulations. There is an advisory committee to deal with the important regulations put forward. There should be an advisory committee on regulations in respect of the student loans scheme, which is equally important.

5 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart: One of the new clauses grouped with new clause 2 refers specifically to Scotland. I note in passing that remarkably few representatives of taxpayers will be members of the review committees proposed by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

The House should consider the background to the review committees that would be set up by an incoming Labour Government. The hon. Member for Blackburn did not say much about the merits of the specific committees, but he referred in passing to the essential point about his party's policy on student grants. I refer the House to the pledge given by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce). The hon. Member for Oxford, East said on 16 January, and it was repeated many other times:

"The hon. Gentleman is correct in his understanding of our pledge to reinstate grants, to increase them in line with inflation". —*[Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 16 January 1990; c. 309.]

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that grants would be increased over and above inflation, as resources allowed. The key point in that quotation is that that pledge—which has been repeated by the Member for Blackburn—would not necessarily be implemented by an incoming Labour Government. We have that on the record in the House.

The pledges to which the hon. Member for Blackburn referred were unequivocally withdrawn by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mr. Beckett). In the debate on the public expenditure White Paper earlier this week she told the House:

"What we are promising is an increase for pensioners and an increase in child benefit. Everything else that is regarded as a desirable aim is also listed, quite clearly and specifically, as something that we hope to do as resources allow." —*[Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 179.]

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred to those remarks later in the debate.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East must either withdraw the specific pledge that he made in Committee—not the pledge about increasing grants, but the pledge to reinstate grants and increase them in line with inflation—or he must repudiate what the hon. Member for Derby, South said. There is no third position that the Opposition can take on what their policy would be if the proposed review committees were set up by an incoming Labour Government.

During this important debate, I hope that the Opposition will tell us whether they withdraw the pledge given in Committee or whether they repudiate what the hon. Member for Derby, South said.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The hon. Gentleman was a distinguished and helpful Scottish education Minister and is thoughtful on these matters. What does he say to Sir Ken Fraser, the vice-chancellor of the university of Glasgow, who asks what will happen to the Scottish

four-year course? As the hon. Gentleman knows so much about this, perhaps he will tell us whether he is happy with the present position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I allowed the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) an extended preamble to his speech. I am doing the same for the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). I am sure that in response to that he will address his remarks to the new clauses.

Mr. Stewart: I do not want to strain your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I dealt with the points raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in Committee. A later group of amendments refers specifically to Scotland, and I hope to catch your eye during that debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Opposition have a clear choice. They must either withdraw the pledges made honourably and honestly to the Committee or repudiate what the hon. Member for Derby, South said in the public expenditure debate in the House earlier this week.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the opportunity to debate the review provisions of the scheme. Those of us who served on the Committee know that it was an unusual Committee. First, we debated an idea whose time has not yet come. If it has come, the Government have not yet revealed what it is. Secondly, we debated a scheme which changed every time that we thought that we understood how the Government proposed to work it.

When the Committee first sat, we were told that we were about to have a scheme that could be run by the banks. You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the week before Christmas there was a bit of an explosion and the banks disappeared in a puff of smoke. We began the new year with the fall-back position that the universities would administer the scheme. After much encouragement, the Secretary of State wrote to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

An extraordinary dialogue took place between the Department of Education and Science and the CVCP, partly by letter and partly in the press, about what scheme was on the table. The Secretary of State argued against a scheme that involved national insurance contributions. I have seen the correspondence about that. The CVCP explained that it had not sought to persuade the Secretary of State to adopt that scheme in the first place.

The student loans scheme has had a pregnancy almost as long as that of the Labour party's policy on local government finance. The scheme has had a pregnancy of years.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Two and a half years.

Mr. Hughes: As the hon. Lady says, it has been two and a half years. We still have no idea who will implement the scheme. In that sense, it is unique.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for enabling me to make the position clear. I hope that my letter to *The Times* did so. I had received letters from several vice-chancellors, which said that our scheme should reconsider the repayment of loans through national insurance contributions. One academic has advocated such an arrangement. On one occasion I gave nine good reasons to several vice-chancellors why I thought that such a scheme would not make sense. They suggested that it would be useful if that analysis could be circulated to all vice-chancellors. The hon. Gentleman was good enough to say that he had seen my letter, so he will know that it contains nine good reasons. That was sent out last Friday. If he reads it, he will see from the opening lines that it was on a completely different matter from what the chairman of the CVCP decided to announce last Friday. In a sense, his public announcement—not a letter to me—crossed in the post with my letter to him. It is obvious from the opening paragraph of my letter that it had nothing to do with what he recommended.

Mr. Hughes: I entirely accept that. The Secretary of State will know from my comments in Committee that I, too, do not approve of a national insurance scheme. He argued against it on Second Reading, and the argument has been put forward elsewhere.

As we begin the Report stage, the working of the scheme is not clear. The DES and CVCP disagree. The vice-chancellors have replied to the debate that began before the turn of the year. That debate has been tidied up and everyone is agreed that repayments through national insurance are not on the agenda. The vice-chancellors are still not persuaded that the Government's scheme is right. They argue for a scheme which, collectively, they have decided is better.

The first idea of this hardly substantial Bill—a loan scheme—has been rejected by the banks. The second idea—a loans scheme operated by the universities—has not yet been adopted by the universities. The universities and colleges tell the Secretary of State that they have another scheme that they hope to persuade him to accept. It is not altogether surprising that at this stage there should be an attempt to ask for information and for a mechanism for reviewing a scheme that is still a shell and without content because we are taking at least one if not several substantial steps in the dark.

The group of amendments and new clauses contains those tabled by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and his hon. Friends to which he addressed himself, after the preamble. However, I wish specifically to address new clause 14, which has been tabled by my hon. Friends and myself. I understand that the proposals have been grouped together because they all relate to consultation. Consultation is not something that has been carried out rigorously by the Government so far, and even if it has been carried out, the Government have certainly not listened when people with an interest have replied.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that any scheme such as this, which will take many years to come to fruition, needs to be viewed on a long-term basis and in the light of the possibility that in the next decade or so we may have a Labour Government or even a Social and Liberal Democrat Government. Many of the amendments seek to ensure that there is no hardship to students. In the months that we have been in Committee, we have heard that the Labour party is committed to removing the 25 per cent. uplift that the loans give to students. However, we have now discovered that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has taken away the pledge to increase the base grants—that is, the amount that is below the 25 per cent.—by the rate of inflation. There is, therefore, no pledge from the Labour party to increase the basic grant in line with inflation, and nor is there a pledge to give back

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

social security benefits. Before the hon. Gentleman comes to new clause 14, will he address himself to the way in which the Social and Liberal Democrats view Labour's reduction in what the Government are proposing as an uplift in student benefits?

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will resist the temptation to say things that would be outside the scope of the new clauses and amendments that we are discussing.

Mr. Hughes: I thought that you might say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall certainly answer those parts of the hon. Gentleman's question that properly come within the debate. Indeed, he asked some perfectly proper questions and, having served on the Committee, he will remember our debates.

One crucial issue is the cost of the scheme. It is perfectly proper to ask how much public money any Government will put into funding students after 16 or 18. The Government have tried for many years to address that perfectly proper question, which all parties must answer. I am clearly not going to defend the answers given by the Labour party, which by its own admission—the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has said this regularly—have always been qualified by that famous phrase, "As and when resources allow"——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Under Labour, they never do.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady says, "Under Labour, they never do", and, indeed, under Labour, they often have not. If income tax is to be kept low, which I understand is a new idea, I am sceptical about whether resources will allow very much very soon.

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps I can deal first with the question asked by the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) about the cost of the scheme. My hon. Friends and I are committed—I have given the figures elsewhere, but I shall repeat them—to reinstating the benefits that the Government propose to abolish—although they have not yet done so, as the hon. Gentleman knows—and to reinstating grants at the present level. According to our calculations, the increase in taxation that that would cost on the basis of present figures is 1p in the pound for higher rate taxpayers only. I am prepared to live with that. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman or the Labour party would be, although I hope that both would.

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: Yes, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but please may I finish this point?

One crucial reason for having a body that can advise the Government on the scheme is to ensure that costings can be given regularly, not only to those of us who are spokespeople for education and who are involved in the House, but to the rest of hon. Members. The amount that our education system costs is a matter of public accounts. I give way now to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am not criticising what he is saying about his party's position, but he may have misinterpreted what the Opposition said in Committee. Does he agree that in Committee the Labour party's pledge to reinstate grants and to increase them in line with inflation was unqualified? That unqualified pledge must now be withdrawn in the light of what the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must get back to the subject of advisory committees and consultation.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hughes: The record speaks for itself. The key point is that the Government have made it clear that they are proposing loans instead of increasing grants.

I hope that the debate will not be as partisan as some. The hon. Member for Eastwood was an active member of the Committee and I hope that he and other hon. Members will realise that we are in a somewhat unusual position because a Government who are committed to reducing public expenditure have come to the House with a scheme which will increase public expenditure in the foreseeable future and which only after at least 10 years, and probably after a minimum of 13, but possibly after 20 years or more, will produce a net reduction in public expenditure. I repeat that that has come from a Conservative Government. We must be sceptical of a scheme that comes with such enormous frontloading on the public accounts.

There is a danger in so arranging the financing of higher education that one is doing two things at the same time. First, the Government have produced a scheme that costs the taxpayer more, but simultaneously gives the student less. That is an extraordinary paradox. The student is given less and must make up the rest by loans. That is why we need to be committed to looking at the workings of the scheme from the beginning.

In general, the amendments and new clauses seek to do two things, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House will be well aware. First, they seek specifically to set up an advisory committee that will report regularly on the matters that have been of substantial concern, not just to Opposition politicians, and to students and parents, but to vice-chancellors, principals and people concerned with the academic well-being of our country. The most substantial concern is whether we shall increase or decrease the numbers of people going into higher education. That is an important question because unless we significantly increase those numbers, we as a country will not succeed. That is the crude reality. I accept the difficulty of projecting far ahead, but I know that we need to do everything in our power to increase the numbers entering higher education, and nothing that deters those people should be part of the policy of any Government.

Like other Opposition Members and even some Conservative Members, I feel sincere scepticism about whether replacing a grants scheme with a scheme that will be half-loan and half-grant will do anything other than reduce the prospect of increasing the take-up of higher education, especially among those who do not use it at the moment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does my hon. Friend agree that two groups will suffer most as a result of the student loans proposals? They include people

who come from more deprived backgrounds and who will not wish to have an albatross of debt around their neck, which, in many cases, they will never be able to repay. The advisory committee would also need to consider the position of special groups, such as medical students, who will have incredible debts attached to their courses which, again, they will never be able to repay. Does my hon. Friend agree that that will be a deterrent to people from poorer backgrounds?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend has made a general point, with which I agree and should like to support. However, I shall amplify it in this respect. We need to be seriously concerned about three categories of people. The first group is more often found in constituencies such as those that my hon. Friend and I represent. I refer to young people from working-class backgrounds who face enormous peer group pressure at 16, 17 or 18 to take up a job rather than to go on to college. At the moment, they are in our colleges, polytechnics and universities in only small numbers.

There are also two other groups, who are not particularly found in Liverpool, Mossley Hill, or in Southwark and Bermondsey, but who can be found in any constituency. I refer to people with disabilities, for whom education costs considerably more. At the moment, there is an enormous discrepancy between the amount that they receive for their aids and for the additional costs of meeting their needs, and what those needs actually cost. Under the Government's scheme, they will have to finance that difference by loan. I am talking about students who may be blind, deaf or physically handicapped, who are now often deterred by cost and who will be even more deterred.

Thirdly, there are also, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said, those who decide to do the jobs which, it has been decided, need four, five or six-year courses. That group will include medical students, architects, vets and, most unfortunate of the lot, anyone who happens to be brought up in Scotland and who wants to stay there to go to university, or anybody who, for good reason, decides that the course that he wants to follow is in Scotland. Such students will have to borrow more and repay more. That is why one of the new clauses is related specifically to Scotland and I expect that colleagues from Scotland will speak to it.

I hope that the hon. Member for Eastwood and others will appreciate that there is severe concern that in a country such as Scotland, with only 10 university institutions, it is predicted that one, at least, could be lost because of the transfer of students elsewhere, who currently go to Scottish universities and colleges. I am unwilling to countenance, without a fight, the loss of one of our premier institutions of higher education. Certainly, colleagues from north of the border, of whichever party, should fight hard to retain all the institutions in Scotland, none of which, to my knowledge, has anything but the highest reputation.

There is a clear need for any loans scheme to be monitored. The only way to do so is to have a body of experts who will advise the Secretary of State. If the Under-Secretary of State was right in his predictions in Committee that the scheme will be a great success, he has nothing to fear. Therefore, I hope that he will respond to and welcome the new clause. To his credit, the Under-Secretary made one concession in Committee. The Government have yielded one inch—or perhaps a centimetre. They will have to yield a bit more if the Bill is to get through the other place. They have conceded that there will be an annual report by the Students Loans Company. That is kind and generous.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is very easily pleased because the Students Loans Company is required to do that anyway under the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Hughes: The Government conceded on their original position. However, the hon. Gentleman is right—at the end of the day the Government would have had to agree to that once they had sorted out the type of company that was to administer the scheme.

I hope that the Secretary of State will concede that we need an annual statement on the performance of the scheme. I hope that he will also accept that the people who should have a chance to look at that are hon. Members and Parliament. The way to do so is for an advisory body to produce regular reports, starting soon.

The Government always argue that we must be efficient, make good use of our economic resources and provide good value for money. If the Government believe in that, as I believe they do, I hope that they will accept that a system must be put in place to ensure that the scheme is run efficiently, provides value for money and uses the resources properly. If the scheme does not work and the disadvantaged are not going on to college, the advisory body should advise the Government to drop it. It is no good having an organisation to advise on the scheme if it is unable to say that it is a bad scheme. The cost of a student loans advisory committee would be minuscule in relation to many of the costs that the Government have already incurred in developing the scheme's variants.

Another important point is that the Government must take consultations seriously. The Secretary of State has been in office for about seven months. He does not yet have a reputation for listening to those with an interest in the subject.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Nonsense.

Mr. Hughes: No, it is not nonsense. The Secretary of State tried to coerce the banks. Lloyds originally said no and the others were unhappy. He desperately hoped that they would deliver, but they said no. He is now trying to persuade the vice-chancellors and principals that they are unhappy. They are clearly unhappy—corespondence is evidence of that, whether in *The Times* or direct mail to Elizabeth house. The students and teachers are unhappy. We must consult to find out what would be acceptable to the academic community.

This is why my hon. Friends and I tabled new clause 14. We believe that there should be consultation about certification. Schedule 2(2) to the Bill provides that the Secretary of State may, by regulations, which we shall no doubt see if the Bill becomes an Act, require governing bodies of institutions relevant to the scheme to issue certificates stating who is and who is not an eligible student. However, the mechanism has not been agreed.

As I understand it, only last week—I shall be grateful for confirmation—a letter was sent to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals inviting narrow discussion on that specific point. It had wanted to discuss it before.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): This is interminable.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman says that this is interminable. If the Bill had had some detail in it, we should not have to push for these matters at this stage.

We do not yet know whether agreement has yet been reached over certification. It would be helpful to know whether the universities and polytechnics have agreed to a scheme proposed by the Secretary of State, whether, and how much, they will be paid, and whether they are happy with the way that the Government are proceeding.

The Scottish debate, in substance, will come later. However, I hope that in this debate, given that there is a new clause that relates specifically to Scotland, there will be a sign that the Government intend to look after Scotland's interests by taking proper advice.

None of the new clauses or amendments is wrecking and there is no reason why they should not all be entirely acceptable. I hope that the Government will be less confrontational and more open to reasonable arguments put by the Opposition on behalf of all those who are still grossly unhappy with the scheme.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I was disappointed by the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), because when I saw the new clause on the Notice Paper I thought that I could, in principle, support it. However, the preamble was so long and the amble so short that I was not sure what he was on about. Notwithstanding the inadequate speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn, it seems that the Government would be well advised to look seriously at what I assume is behind this group of amendments.

I was unable to take part in the debate on 5 December, and I did not vote for the Bill. I will not vote for it tonight unless I get some assurance that something will be done along the lines of the new clause. I shall not be so fatuous as to suggest that the new clause in itself is necessarily acceptable. However, I was deeply disturbed when I read that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals had not been consulted in detail. They circulated a paper to hon. Members, dated this week, which says:

"The CVCP wrote to DES a year ago, offering to discuss alternatives. That offer has not been taken up."

Either that is a direct untruth or it is not. If it is true, it is regrettable. When embarking on a change in the structure of student finance, it is important to discuss in detail the mechanism of that new structure with those who will have a key role in its administration.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): I agree.

Mr. Cormack: I am glad that my hon. Friend agrees, and I hope that the Secretary of State agrees, too.

I have always had a high regard for the Secretary of State. I thought that he was an extremely distinguished Minister of Agriculture, who had a well deserved reputation as a man who listened, thought deeply and talked with those who would be affected by the policies over which he was presiding. I hope that, at this late stage, we shall have some real discussions about the scheme. After all, one need not have followed the matter in minute detail to realise that there have been a few problems along the way. The fact that the clearing banks decided that they could not go along with the scheme, and that the Government, who have a justifiably splendid reputation for privatisation, are having to set up a nationalised bank to administer it, is slightly bizarre.

5.30 pm

In the principle behind new clause 2—I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will readily and immediately call me to order if I stray too far—there is the germ of an idea. There is nothing to be lost by having a consultative body of some sort to help with the administration of the scheme. Indeed, there is everything to be gained from it.

I have never been opposed in principle to a loan ingredient, but there are many obvious disadvantages that have to be dealt with. I am bound to say that, in this short and extremely permissive Bill, I am not sure whether those have been adequately dealt with. I am not opposed in principle to such a scheme now, but I want to feel confident that those who aspire to enter higher education will not be deterred. I want to be confident that those who have enjoyed the fruits of higher education will not be penalised in those crucial years of their lives when they marry and settle down and become formative members of society.

I could be the better assured on those points if we had some such committee, perhaps composed of two or three distinguished vice-chancellors and principals, perhaps two or three representatives of the National Students Union, perhaps even the immediate past president, and people who know about higher education. That would be consistent with the spirit of the new clause. *[Interruption.]* Will my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) stop getting excited? She is always excited, but this is the day after Valentine's day. There is the germ of a good idea in new clause 2. I am not tying myself to precise details or numbers, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Blackburn is not either.

We could move forward in a sensible way. Many hon. Members are generalists. We do not have time to acquire detailed knowledge. We are sometimes far too arrogant about the way in which legislation that we pass will affect the lives of people with whom it deals. We should recognise that vice-chancellors and principals, and even those who hold high office in student unions, may know a little more about this matter than some of us do.

To have a body on which such people would sit in order to advise would lend credibility to the scheme. It would make it a much fairer scheme and people would have confidence in it. At the end of the day the Government would get their way because there would be a loan ingredient, a restructuring of finance and proper and continuous consultation with, I hope, regular reports, not just on an annual actuarial basis but detailed reports on how the scheme is working.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): My hon. Friend makes his point with his customary good humour. He is rightly concerned about any scheme that might deter access to higher education. But if he is, as I am sure he is, prepared to go beyond the rather obvious statement that most of us would prefer to be given something for free rather than lent it—that is so obvious it is not worth debating—is it not interesting to look at all the European countries where loans form a much larger proportion of the financing of education than is proposed in this mild measure but where access rates to higher education are significantly greater? Does my hon. Friend not agree that,

if he is seeking, as I am sure we all are, to improve access rates to higher education, the one place that we need not bother to look is at the balance between loans and grants?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that, in responding to that, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) will speak within the confines of the new clauses and the amendments.

Mr. Cormack: I shall seek to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I shall respond briefly by reiterating that, in principle, I am not against a loan ingredient. I was a member of the Select Committee on Education and Science between 1979 and 1983 which looked into the financing of higher education. We received evidence from many people, including Maureen Woodall and other experts on loans. We looked at the matter dispassionately and we did not rule out loans.

But it is obvious to many people—I put it carefully—that there is some disquiet about the present proposal. If we are to engender confidence in these proposals and to carry people along with us, which is what I want to do, the establishment of such a body—I say "such a body" because the new clause has not got it absolutely right—would help in that direction.

That is why, relating my remarks specifically to the new clauses and amendments under discussion, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will earn my support in the Lobby tonight by saying that they are prepared to have wide-ranging consultations with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals such as the committee says have not been held to date, and that they would have as the object of those discussions the establishment of a body along the lines described.

Mr. Worthington: I support the proposal for a review committee for Scotland. Such a body is necessary because the voice of Scotland was not heard on the student loans scheme. The scheme was devised in London and transported to Scotland. The Minister was then shot as the carrier of the bad news. There was no input from Scotland. Therefore, a review committee is essential so that Scottish opinion can be taken into account in future.

I hope that the review committee's terms of reference will be broadened, beyond the proposal for it to consider the student loans scheme, to include the present state of student finance. The financial situation of students is becoming dramatically worse. In Scotland they are already paying 20 per cent. poll tax, and that will soon apply to the rest of the United Kingdom. That cannot be shrugged off.

Their housing benefit is to be lost. In Scotland, 65 per cent. of students do not live at home. They receive grants for living elsewhere, but where will they be living in the autumn? No one seems to care about that. Statistics from Edinburgh show that the loss of benefit will be £500 on average per year. Where will that come from? Students will clearly not be able to stay in their present flats because they will not be able to afford them. Will they have to take out another loan? Who will build new accommodation for them?

The Government have made no commitment to updating allowances for mature students. The Government have simply said that they will consider that in the future, if resources allow. Some Conservative Members will recognise that expression. Surely any Government would give such an undertaking to ensure that we have mature students.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Worthington: No, because I have only a short amount of time left, and I am conscious that other right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There is no time limit.

Mr. Worthington: Then I shall certainly give way to the hon. Lady.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It would have been simpler if the hon. Gentleman had done so to begin with, would it not? At present, mature students have no statutory right to loans, but the Bill will give them one.

Mr. Worthington: I have just checked with my right hon. and hon. Friends, and none of us understands the hon. Lady's point.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Then the hon. Gentleman should have studied the subject in more detail.

Mr. Worthington: I make the point that one group of students who will suffer particularly badly are those who take the gamble of giving up an existing job to return to study, despite the fact that they have families to support and mortgages to pay, and incur a loan. Incidentally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am told that there is now a time limit on speeches and that I must finish within the next two and half seconds.

The recommendations of the Page report, of which many right hon. and hon. Members may be unaware, are of particular significance. It examined the manpower requirements in veterinary surgery, and, unlike the Riley report, which concluded there was a glut of vets, revealed a shortage and the need for recruitment. Page recommended public funding of 400 vets per year, but emphasised that the number trained should be greater than that and that we should encourage colleges to recruit as many vets as they wanted, but recommended that that innovation should be funded by a general levy on all veterinary students at a college of, it was suggested, £500.

As the Government have accepted that recommendation, they are already dishonouring the pledge that a contribution by students to student finance would be a measure of last resort. If the Government have accepted the principle of a £500 levy on all the veterinary students in any one college, who is to say that that practice will not spread to pharmacy and the other medical professions, to the law, accountancy, and so on? Those high-demand occupations will eventually be barred to people of meagre means and will progressively become the enclaves of those from privileged backgrounds.

If this deplorable legislation is passed, at least a review committee could examine the whole question of student finance. If we go the way of the Page report, cut off income benefit, and introduce student loans, students will suffer not a single loss but multiple loss—and the impact on higher education participation rates will be colossal.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): If the Secretary of State does not listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) or to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I hope that he

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

will heed the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). I concur with almost everything that he said. The amendments would get the Secretary of State and the Government off the hook on which they impaled themselves just before Christmas, when the banks announced that they would not participate in the loan scheme. That cut away the ground beneath the Government and the scheme.

The proposed advisory committee would at least give the Government the opportunity to get it right with a certain amount of dignity. I make it clear that I do not believe in student loans, and that view is shared by many in this country. The students themselves were the subject of a very silly attack by the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) who, in a point of order, said that 25,000 students demonstrated in London today. Yes, they hate the scheme—but it does the Government no good to create the impression that students are hated. All right hon. and hon. Members are impeded in their efforts to get here to work every week by London Transport, but if we all raised points of order every time that we were delayed on our travels, we would never get any work done.

5.45 pm

Educational institutions and teachers themselves are also opposed to the scheme. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals made sensible proposals in a submission sent to all right hon. and hon. Members. Presumably, it would be represented on the proposed committee. The new clause is exceedingly generous to the Government. The Secretary of State would have the power to appoint all of its members, as there would be no mandatory representatives from outside bodies. The Secretary of State for Scotland would make the appointments for the Scottish committee.

New clause 2 states that half the committee shall be composed of interested parties such as vice-chancellors, principals, students and teachers, and that the other half shall comprise any other persons whom the Secretary of State determines. How can the Secretary of State grumble at that? He would presumably include on the committee representatives of the banks, economists, and other educationists. They would be able honestly to advise the Secretary of State if they felt that the scheme was detrimental to the task of attracting into higher education the people who will be so desperately needed in the 1990s and in the next century. The Secretary of State could then amend the scheme accordingly. He has everything to gain and nothing to lose by accepting the new clause.

I do not like amendment No. 13 of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, because, although the Government may be prepared to enter into consultations, they do not listen. I prefer the new clause of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn, because it stipulates the type of committee that is to be established. I am sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also supports that proposal.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do support it. But does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, as we have only a shadow Bill with no detail, it would be helpful if we could build in a requirement for consultation with all concerned before the regulations were made? Consultation with universities on the details of the scheme may be all that the Government will accept.

Mr. Oakes: The hon. Gentleman accepts my point, and I accept his.

We have not yet heard from the Secretary of State whether or not he accepts the new clause, or accepts the principle and will embody it in the Bill in another place. I am pessimistic, but one never knows. Having once been an Education Minister myself, I would welcome the establishment of such a committee to get me off the hook, and would grab the opportunity with both hands.

Mr. Flannery: I suggest one possible reason for the Government's rejection of the amendment. After all, they reject practically everything. The Government have their own Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions, which has made a number of progressive proposals. The Government are now busy taking not the slightest notice of that committee's recommendations, and fear that another committee might go beyond the remit that they give it.

Mr. Oakes: My hon. Friend is right. The Government do not like the truth, in education or in any other sphere. Nor do they like independent advice. Even though the new clause comes from the Opposition, it is not a wrecking amendment but is helpful to the Government, education, and students.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has proposed a scheme of graduate tax, but I am not too keen on it. Nevertheless, it would be better than the Government's damn fool scheme. It would be far simpler to administer than the Government's cumbrous scheme. It would be administered by the universities themselves, and it would mean that a certain sum would be paid back in tax, regardless of the course taken.

Several of my hon. Friends with constituencies in Scotland mentioned on Second Reading that Scottish students take four-year bachelor degree courses.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The four-year course is not compulsory. Some 23 per cent. of Scottish students do not take a four-year course.

Mr. Oakes: If 23 per cent. do not take it, then the majority do.

Apart from benefiting Scottish students, a graduate tax as proposed by vice-chancellors and principals would not penalise medical students, whose courses are extremely expensive. Hospital doctors not only have to work 80 or 90 hours a week after they finish their course but get buttons for doing it. The burden of the scheme falls heavily on them, because their course is that much more expensive.

If the clause were accepted in detail—if not in principle—the ideas of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, which were submitted to the Government more than 12 months ago, could be considered. Vice-chancellors are not opposed to student loans. They are trying to help the Government out, and to administer the scheme properly. Those ideas could be explored in more detail with Ministers, so that education, students and teachers would be better protected from the mish-mash scheme before the House.

Once the banks pulled out—to the astonishment of the Prime Minister and the Government—the White Paper and the Bill as it stood fell. The amendments and new

clauses give the Government an opportunity to retrieve the situation, and for that reason I ask the Secretary of State to accept them.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I shall refer in particular to amendment No. 1. I ask the Under-Secretary, who has been dealing with the issue in Committee, whether he has been able to find out exactly how many students will not get an increase in their resources because of the introduction of student loans and the loss of their housing benefit and other social security payments.

In this leaflet, which has been so kindly sent to us—"Top Up Loans for Students—the Government's Proposals"—question 5 asks:

"What will be the total resources available to students?"

The answer is:

"All students will be eligible to apply for additional support from the Access Funds".

The only way in which a large number of students, particularly those in the London area, will have any hope of extra resources is by going cap in hand to the administrators of the access funds to get the money that they will badly need if the student loans scheme is inflicted on them.

In Committee, the Minister did not deny that some students would be worse off. We should like to know how many thousands will be worse off because of the introduction of the scheme.

While talking about those students who will be worse off, there is some reference to the predicament of disabled students in amendment No. 1. There are other amendments that we will come to later that also deal with this subject. Disabled students have many additional costs, and the current allowance they can receive does not cover them. Some students have extra costs running into thousands of pounds a year, and disabled students will not usually be able to earn the sort of money, unfortunately, that able-bodied students can earn. Very often, they will be on the fringe of the level that triggers repayment of loans.

In Committee, the Minister intimated that this problem would be considered—the additional costs that disabled students incur and their disposable income in relation to the level at which repayment of loans is triggered off. We need a commitment from the Minister. Also in Committee, the Minister said that it was difficult to look at individual cases, that that was not usually done under the social security system. I hope that he will be able to tell us this evening about specific arrangements to take account of disabled students.

I hope that we will get good news tonight on both the issues that I have mentioned—students who lose heavily because of loss of housing benefit; and provisions for disabled students—and I look forward to the Minister's response.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In rising to speak briefly in support of this group of amendments, I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues in Plaid Cymru as well as the Scottish National party. It will come as no surprise to the House that I particularly want to concentrate on new clause 17, because it contains aspects which affect Scotland.

Having listened to the debate, and not having had the privilege of other Members who were members of the Standing Committee, I believe that the strength of the argument that is emerging is for genuine consultation, and a facility to monitor how this dreadful legislation will work, assuming that the House does not have the courage to vote down the Government's proposals.

I think that all Opposition Members and many Conservative Members would prefer this legislation to be dropped altogether. Then we could have a sensible debate about alternative student funding.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Lady has observed that, so far, only one Back-Bench Conservative Member has spoken to support the amendment and apparently no Conservative Member wishes to rise to oppose the amendments. Everyone who has spoken, on both sides of the House, appears to support them.

Mrs. Ewing: I think there is an element of collective embarrassment among Conservative Members about the proposed legislation and that that is why so few of them are here—although I see that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is present. When the first White Paper was debated, no member of the Scottish Conservative party was present.

Mr. Jackson: I want to place it on record that my hon. Friends are absent because they are anxious to assist everybody to make progress on this legislation.

Mrs. Ewing: That is one interpretation, and the hon. Gentleman has put it forward with great grace.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It is true that I was not present at that debate, but I have been a consistent supporter of a grant-loan system for 25 years, and I was a member of the Standing Committee and attended throughout.

Mrs. Ewing: I know that the hon. Gentleman is an assiduous attender of any Standing Committee to which he is appointed, since I had the pleasure of serving opposite him on the Committee on the Education Reform Bill in the last Session of Parliament.

I return to the substance of my speech and to new clause 17. I believe that the review committee, as it is described, would provide a real mechanism to consider the issues affecting student support, in areas other than merely the pounds and the pence. We have a responsibility to look at how students are surviving, and we have to look at overall trends in society which affect students. Mention has already been made of the high cost of housing, which affects so many students, for example, in Edinburgh. We have a similar problem in Aberdeen—the oil capital of Europe.

Aberdeen university is used mainly by students from the highlands and islands and Grampian region, who have no alternative but to reside near the university. They cannot lead nine-to-five lives as people can at, for instance, Glasgow university, of which I am a graduate. Housing costs have imposed dreadful pressures on them over the past few years, and they now face the removal of housing benefit. It appears that students will be the only section of society to be denied access to the benefits system. Benefits relating to the short vacations have already been chopped, bit by bit; now other benefits are to be affected as well.

6 pm

A favourite phrase of the Government during debates on student support is "economic costs". They never look at the other side of the coin. Surely we should ensure that our funding for higher education represents a sound investment for the future. It is not merely an "economic

cost"; the benefits of the availability of highly skilled, highly trained and well educated people for the labour market are vital if Scotland—indeed, the United Kingdom as a whole—is to compete in the international community.

As has already been said, 77 per cent. of Scottish students take courses other than the basic three-year master of arts degree course, and many graduates with an ordinary MA return to university to try to achieve honours. In the 1960s and early 1970s, degree improvement courses were made available to many graduates, who could then return to the university of Strathclyde or Glasgow—or some other institution—to take an honours degree course over a two-year period of part-time study, while continuing in employment.

The four-year course is an important aspect of Scottish education. The Scottish Universities Rectors and Presidents Group has written to all Scottish Members, saying:

"The Government has in particular still not answered the specific problem of Scottish students taking four-year as opposed to three-year courses."

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has said that the Committee stage of the Bill failed to deal with any of its concerns. It is incumbent on the Government to tell us what will happen to students who choose to take a four-year course.

I am fed up with listening to the Secretary of State for Scotland reiterate that "nature, quality and content" are more significant factors in the choice of a course than is its length. The length of a course is an intrinsic consideration. How can the Secretary of State square the circle? The four-year course deserves our continuing support, and I hope that the Secretary of State for Education and Science will give a clear undertaking in this regard.

The demographic trend in Scotland suggests that about 30 per cent. fewer people over 17 are going to apply for higher education. That makes it all the more important for those who do apply to have access to it. My main anxiety has always been that the loans system will reduce access for all kinds of students—mature students, women and ethnic minorities.

The Secretary of State will recall my speaking about my own socio-economic background. My father would not have encouraged me to take on a debt while studying at university: that was part of his philosophy, and it is still part of the philosophy of many other people in the poorer socio-economic sections of society. They will suffer most if the scheme is adopted.

It is clear that all Opposition Members support the new clauses and amendments, and I hope that Conservative Members will join us. The amendments will allow us to review the effect of the proposals annually, and, we hope, to remedy the problems.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have always been a strong supporter of the concept of student top-up loans, as I have told the president of the National Union of Students, her predecessor and all my students at successive court meetings in Lancaster, year after year. I said the same at my eve-of-poll meeting in Lancaster university at the time of the last election.

There is, however, a fly in the ointment—only a small fly, but it should be dealt with. The Bill provides for three access funds. I think that a fourth should be established for disabled students. That may prove technically difficult, but, difficult or not, it should be done. Disabled people do not have an easy life.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I support the new clauses and amendments that propose the establishment of an advisory committee on student loans which the Secretary of State must consult and to which he must report about the progress of the scheme before and after its implementation.

It is clear—not only from today's debate, but from the debate that has been raging in the press—that the matter has not been finally resolved. Surely it is in everyone's interests to establish a proper vehicle for dignified discussion and the refinement of the scheme to make it work as well as possible. Many of us fear that at present we have the worst of all possible worlds: the proposed system is complicated, messy and obscure, and we believe that it will prove cumbersome, unresponsive and very expensive.

We have been assured repeatedly that our fears are groundless. An advisory committee would be the right mechanism for monitoring developments: it could emerge with factual information, making it clear to Opposition Members—and some Conservatives—either that their fears are indeed groundless, or that severe problems exist.

Many aspects of current student financial provision leave considerable room for improvement, and the Bill does not begin to deal with some of them. The question of parental contribution has long been acknowledged as a source of great aggravation—not least because as many as 40 per cent. of students do not receive the full amount from their parents, but also because students aged 18 and over find themselves in a position of dependency that is not in keeping with their years and with the maturity expected of them. One of our main anxieties is that the scheme will not only fail to attract more students to higher education, but actually deter them. The Secretary of State would have nothing to fear from an advisory committee, which would establish the facts.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the hon. Lady make it clear whether her party is in favour of grants irrespective of parental income, or whether her preferred system would still contain an element of parental responsibility based on income?

Mrs. Barnes: My party has always been committed to the principle of a graduate tax, and that of a full grant for students with no parental contribution. Students who later, as graduates, earn more than the national average should repay part or all of that grant. I think that that would be a much fairer system.

The narrow catchment area of higher education from various income categories would be a vital issue for the advisory committee, as it concerns not only the young people themselves but the country's economic future. Unless we succeed in raising education standards—keeping on more pupils between the ages of 16 and 19, and encouraging and motivating as many as possible to proceed to higher education—we shall all suffer. That must be the benchmark test for any student finance scheme.

There must be certain benchmarks against which the system can be assessed. We should know, for example, whether it is fair, whether it is simple and straightforward to administer, whether it is affordable, whether it is sustainable, whether it maximises the number of students going into higher education, whether it ensures that there is a good cross-section of students, which is better than

now, whether it will attract more students from lower income groups, whether it attracts more women and whether it gives students the necessary independence and security during their study years. Those questions should be put to a body such as an advisory committee.

I regret that the Government have not further considered the option of a graduate tax, which would have many advantages and would remove many difficulties inherent in the proposed scheme. Students would have independence, and it would eliminate the problem of parental contribution. It would also result in a contribution being made back into the nation's education coffers. The SDP's proposal went partly towards a means-tested maintenance grant for 16 to 19-year-olds, to encourage those from low-income families to stay on in the education system and to be eligible for higher education.

As the Government seem committed to persevere with their proposal, in spite of consistent and pressurised hostility from all quarters, an advisory committee would at least be in a position to monitor the current and future situation to see whether promises for and predictions about the scheme have been fulfilled or have become a mockery.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the debate, not having had the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill.

I wish to make it clear at the outset that, in a sense, I support the idea of Opposition Members for an advisory committee, but I fear that I cannot support them, in view of the way in which the body is proposed in the new clause. Even so, the Secretary of State should consider establishing a monitoring system, and I shall explain why.

I shall support the principle of the Bill on Third Reading because, as I have argued on many occasions, the British higher education system cannot expand properly if we continue with a full maintenance grant system. That system has been geared to a narrow part of the population and particular types of courses. We need greater access to funds to assist all types of students on as wide a range of courses as possible, thereby encouraging youngsters to come into higher education.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman expressed reservations in previous debates on the Bill. The House will be surprised to hear that he is likely to vote for the measure on Third Reading because the academics, the opinions of whom he values and whose advice he takes, are still not persuaded of the merits of the scheme. The Government have not made any concessions to the concerns of the academics during the passage of the Bill. How does the hon. Gentleman explain his previous stance and his present declaration that he thinks that the Bill is now sufficiently well drafted for it to have his support? Nothing has changed.

Dr. Hampson: I am a born optimist who lives in hope. As I wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* a few days ago, I hope that the Secretary of State will, even at this stage, agree that there is a need, for practical if not for philosophical reasons, to give the matter a major rethink.

Mr. Hughes: So why vote for it?

Dr. Hampson: I have no objection to an enabling Bill saying that British higher education should have some form of loan scheme, because I believe that it should. That is why I am being logical in supporting the Bill, even though I join Opposition Members in the request that they are making.

I received a letter dated Tuesday 13 February from a student officer, saying:

"As a member of the Labour Party . . . I thank you for your contribution to the debate, sir"—

referring to my article in *The Daily Telegraph* student supplement—

"which is much appreciated: hopefully this can be a cross-party issue."

I argued in that article that the Labour party has a long history of examining the issue, for understandable and honest reasons. The main one is that there are many low-paid families and pensioners contributing through tax to the increasing benefits of children from already well-off families with considerable incomes, who gain grant aid, and therefore improved life opportunities, whereas many families paying for that through tax do not benefit—and neither do their children—from higher education.

The Labour party has, reasonably, looked at the issue from that standpoint, and Lord Peston, who speaks for the Labour party in the other place, will no doubt feel obliged to point that out when the Bill is in that House. He is one of the most eloquent spokesmen dealing with that aspect of the argument.

6.15 pm

A visible process of monitoring would be an asset to the scheme. After all, Departments can get locked into ideas. I had the privilege of looking at some of the documentation in the Department in 1981-82. It is extraordinary to note the way in which both the argument and proposals today compare with what existed at that time.

Equally, Ministers determine new priorities as they come and go. There is no reason to assume that the imaginative approach needed to maintain a flexible system will be available in the Department. I should rather that it came from outside with outside experts and specialists always looking at the scheme, commissioning research elsewhere and so on, reviewing what is happening in the world and feeding that information into the system for the benefit of Ministers.

I believe that there will come a time when Ministers in the Department of Education and Science will need support as they argue with the Treasury, and it would be useful to have an external, independent body putting publicly the case why certain changes should be made or extra resources provided. That is why the Treasury—and hence the Government—is against any such body, for the nature of such bodies is that they tend always to call for change and increased resources.

Despite all that, I believe that, in the terms of the Bill and the way in which the scheme has been presented, we are seeking a flexible scheme. I give credit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessors for framing a measure that will not lock us into a rigid approach from which it will be hard to move out, to expand and to develop. Even so, it would help to have an instrument to look at certain aspects.

A letter from the National Union of Students says:

"We are fearful that students may be particularly deterred from attending vocational courses which lead to relatively poorly paid professions."

That is an important point. It is also a reason why we need a body with the ability to look at what is happening and to find out whether what is required is reflected in the results.

One of the most important routes to vocational qualifications is the part-time route, and many of us have campaigned for years for further incentives in higher education to enable students to go part time. Such people are, as it were, victims of the narrowing discretionary grants scheme, and that is an argument that I have always put against the mandatory grants scheme because the scheme is limited to full-time rather than part-time students.

Schedule 1(4) says that people will be eligible for loans if they are on higher national certificates. In my experience, the definition of the HNC is that it is part time. Are we, in the drafting of that schedule, allowing, and positively putting an incentive on, students taking HNCs because that way they can get a loan for part-time study, and not university part-time courses?

The balance of the grant and the loan needs to be examined by a monitoring body—*[Interruption.]* I know that certain Opposition Members are anxious to take part in the debate. Because 10 or 12 of them rose to speak when the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) sat down, I thought it ridiculous that there should be such an imbalance in the debate, and I rose to speak. Conservative Members have a contribution to make to the debate.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about what the ultimate balance should be between the grant and the loan. In the light of the arguments about disincentives, we need to examine whether there is a disincentive because we are moving from a totally generous system to a less generous system. That is a perfectly valid argument because nowhere in the world has there been a change from a universal grant system to a part-time, half-and-half system. We need to examine that closely because we may then decide to follow the American pattern. I have always advocated a basic higher education opportunity grant so that families with an income of half the national average would be entitled to a 100 per cent. grant. Surely we should encourage more young people from relatively badly off families to enter higher education, although we may have to make commensurate adjustments at the top of the scale. That is a major argument for having an independent monitoring body to consider that.

We may need to have a body to advise the Government that additional loan schemes are necessary and available. We should not be locked into thinking that the half-and-half top-up system is the only type of loan. Alongside that we could run other loan schemes. We could develop the career development loan scheme which is currently operated by the Department of Employment, so that we could tap the banks' money. The Department of Employment runs a scheme in which students can borrow between £300 and £5,000 for a course lasting from a month to a year. That is ideal for mature students and the concept of continuing education. The Department of Education and Science should be part of the process, in which the Government could help by subsidising the interest rate, but the commercial banks would take the decisions, looking at people who were probably already in work and who had great prospects. Barclays bank, Clydesdale bank and the Co-operative bank are already part of the present scheme. They make commercial judgments to take on students. The Government give assistance on interest rates, but the repayment becomes the responsibility of the student when he or she returns to work.

It would be helpful to have a body to advise the Government on suitable alternative schemes. Why must we always assume that wisdom resides only in the hands and minds of officials in Departments of State? That is a particularly valid reason why we should consider that proposal.

Finally, if the scheme is to be publicly acceptable, the repayments must be fair, so the process of deferrals must be as flexible as possible. The ultimate way of achieving the necessary flexibility would be for the Inland Revenue's computer system to code the scheme, so that repayments could genuinely be geared to income and means and circumstances. Failing that, it will be fundamental to ensure that the deferral and repayment scheme is appropriate to the circumstances of the student. That is a conclusive reason why there has to be an independent monitoring body, even if it is not as stipulated in the new clause. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends seriously to find an alternative that fits the requirements.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate because before coming to the House I was a senior lecturer at the Welsh Agricultural college and was in daily contact with students who had many problems and came from many differgnt backgrounds. The amendments seek to highlight the lack of consultation with interested bodies over the introduction of the Bill and to ensure that the scheme is reviewed by review committees in the future. That is a perfectly reasonable objective.

Many institutions of higher education in Wales are particularly concerned that the Government are asking them to administer a scheme with which they do not agree. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has made it clear that it favours an entirely different scheme. I certainly commend the principles of the alternative scheme. It proposes adequate, certain, simple and socially just measures to achieve fairness for students. The alternative scheme would ensure that all eligible students were entitled to an adequately funded maintenance grant, that grants would not be assessed against parental income nor means-tested and that they should take account of regional differences. Those are worthy objectives that the Government should take into account.

The Government should be obliged to enter into joint agreements with institutions over arrangements for administering the scheme. For example, Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations on the football ID card scheme belatedly changed the Government's mind quite radically. If such consultation and investigation went into this Bill, perhaps we would not be discussing such measures this evening.

Many people in Wales doubt whether the loans scheme will increase the number of people attending higher education institutions. It is much more likely to diminish the numbers, so I am surprised that the Minister will not accept the need for annual reports to evaluate the success —or more likely the failure—of the scheme. Perhaps the Minister could clarify that as I did not have the privilege of being a member of the Committee. What is the Minister afraid of?

Access to higher education in Wales will undoubtedly be reduced. People in Wales have the lowest disposable

incomes in mainland Britain. The University College of Wales was started with the pennies of people who were not wealthy enough to invest in their education system except on a very wide franchise. We are proud of what has been achieved in Wales which has provided access to higher education to students from very modest backgrounds. In 1979 students from classes 3M, 4 and 5 represented 23 per cent. of students, but by 1988 the figure had dropped to 19·9 per cent. The fear is that that percentage will fall still further on the introduction of a loan scheme.

I am also concerned that before student loans are introduced we should have the opportunity fully to discuss the scheme. The Bill is extremely thin. I expect the regulations eventually to be much thicker. The Government have shied away from fully discussing the details and it would be particularly helpful if an advisory body could consider the regulations before they were brought to the House for approval. That is proposed in the amendments.

The Government take the attitude that they have a monopoly of all wisdom, but that is impossible. Amendment No. 13 provides for consultation before and after the regulations are made. I expect the impact of the loan scheme on Welsh institutions to be significant. This week's publication of the Public Accounts Committee report on financial problems at universities mentions the crisis at Cardiff university—the administrative problems there were frankly unacceptable—but none the less highlights the great pressures on higher education. The introduction of loans lingers like another dark cloud over the future of higher education in Wales. There must be advisory bodies for Wales, Scotland and England.

Welsh people, Welsh institutions and students in Wales will not welcome this Bill. It will not increase the numbers of students entering our institutions. In fact, it will be a deterrent, not an incentive. As I said, I am a former lecturer. I participated in a committee that dealt with hardship cases among students in the college in which I lectured. The hardship occurred because of the present Government's erosion of grants. Some students were in great financial difficulty.

The Government could put matters right by restoring grants to the levels that prevailed before they came into office. They should be prepared to consult people at the coal-face—lecturers and teachers. They are the people who know what is happening. The students themselves—who suffer from week to week, month to month, and year to year—should also be consulted. It ill behoves Ministers, who themselves benefited considerably from grants, to force future students to start their careers in debt as a result of this top-up loans scheme.

6.30 pm

Mr. MacGregor: The student loans scheme will provide additional resources for students, and good value for money for the taxpayer. Over time, it will reduce the burden, on both taxpayers and parents, of making provision for students' living costs. There will be no burdensome bureaucracy. The Student Loans Company will be firmly cost-effective. The repayment regime will mirror the best commercial practice. Students will benefit; parents will benefit; taxpayers will benefit. Those benefits, if Parliament approves the Bill, will start in the autumn of this year. The new source of funding about which we are talking today will make it possible, in the medium term, to relieve the burden on taxpayers of students' living costs; to reduce the parental contribution, in real terms, in 1991-92; and to provide substantial additional resources to students this autumn. It is as well to remind ourselves that that is what this Bill is about.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), in introducing the new clause, produced a series of very thin arguments. It was a retread of tired, worn-out old tubes. That was a feature of debates in Committee too.

Mr. Straw: How does the Secretary of State know?

Mr. MacGregor: Because I have read pretty well every word. I have read nearly all the debates, so I know.

The Opposition have made no impact and have lost the intellectual argument throughout. That is a great credit to my hon. Friends who have spoken in the debate—in particular, to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who, I thought, came through the debate with intellectual distinction and great good humour.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to recent developments—developments that have taken place since the Bill was last debated in this Chamber. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, rapid progress is being made on preparatory work for the student loans scheme. Subject to Parliament's approval of the Bill, we are well on course to providing the extra resources for students this autumn. The Student Loans Company, based in Glasgow, is making good preparatory progress. As I made clear to the House just before Christmas the position with the banks was that we were asking them to be our agents for the administration of part of the scheme and, in the course of doing so, to assist by looking after the Student Loans Company. I challenge anyone to say how the Bill has been altered to any substantial degree as a result of its progress through the Committee or because of the change in relation to the banks. The Student Loans Company is proceeding exactly as was originally intended. It is making progress. It is doing so without the banks but by getting banking expertise.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Does not the failure to amend the Bill following the change in the nature of the student loans scheme show that there was something fundamentally wrong with it? It was subject to any range of possibilities arising from the introduction of any type of scheme. We do not yet know what type of scheme will be introduced. There should have been no attempt to put an enabling measure on the statute book.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that in Committee well over 100 amendments were tabled. It was not really a thin Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: How many amendments got through?

Mr. MacGregor: What happened in Committee is a common feature of Committee stage debates on other Bills—my hon. Friends won the argument.

The point has been made today—it has been made time and time again—that we should watch how the scheme is progressing and be prepared to make changes if monitoring and review suggest that changes are necessary. The advantage of the way in which we are proceeding is that we can make the changes year by year, as in the case of student grants, without the need to introduce primary legislation. I have not got anywhere nearly into my

[Mr. MacGregor]

argument, but I have to say that those who ask for monitoring and review must accept that a Bill of this type is what they desire. The fact that they ask for monitoring suggests that they will want changes in the scheme from time to time. It would be impossible to make changes from time to time if every change had to be the subject of primary legislation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, because the Bill is so flexible, he would be able to bring in a fourth access fund for disabled students if this could be worked out?

Mr. MacGregor: If at some future time something like that were thought desirable, it would be possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State has made the most convincing argument that anybody can yet have heard for acceptance of the amendments. This, he says, is a Bill—so flexible and adaptable—about which he is waiting to receive advice. Presumably, therefore, he could, for the first time, say quickly to the House, "I accept the amendments and will show flexibility." Then we could conclude this debate.

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees that I have made a convincing argument for the Bill. I hope that he will accept that that is what I have been saying. I will come in due course to the amendments themselves. I was demonstrating what progress had been made—a matter to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I want to show what good progress we have been making.

The managing director of the Student Loans Company is at his desk. So, too, is the finance and administration director. The loans administration director has been appointed, and further recruitment is going ahead quickly. Premises have been acquired, and fitting-out arrangements are in hand. Work is proceeding smoothly on the complex computer systems required by the company. There have been developments since the Bill was given its Second Reading, and the progress is just as we envisaged.

In terms of monitoring, which has featured a lot in this debate, we shall keep Parliament fully informed of the preparatory work, including revised estimates of administrative costs, as it develops. As we said, current indications confirm that annual running costs will be within the range of £10 million to £20 million, which is far less than some critics have supposed. I will come in a moment to the question of monitoring the future.

This week we published an information leaflet on loans. This is a matter to which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred. Let me explain why we published the leaflet this week. First, the leaflet, in two places, states very clearly:

"Introduction of the scheme depends on Parliament's approval of the Education and Student Loans Bill . . . The provisions of the Bill are open to amendment in Parliament."

Why did we produce that leaflet? There are two reasons. The first is that in Committee there were many requests for a leaflet. The people who made such requests included Opposition Members. We responded to that request. The second reason is that university students, young people hoping to go to university in the autumn and their careers advisers and teachers have been asking for information about what the scheme will contain if the Bill is approved by Parliament. It must be to the advantage of students and potential students to know what to expect. I make no apology for the leaflet; it is what many people have demanded, and I think that we were right to provide it.

Mr. Harry Barnes: If, after the debate, the collective wisdom of Parliament is that these amendments should be passed, what will happen to this leaflet? Will a correction slip have to be inserted?

Mr. MacGregor: I repeat that the leaflet, at a very early stage, says that the provisions of the Bill are subject to amendment in Parliament. It goes on:

"Some features of the scheme described below may consequently change."

In that event, we would amend the leaflet. There would be nothing unusual about that.

Costings have been mentioned frequently in the debate. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) referred to it as the pounds and the pence. There are one or two things that are worth repeating on the whole question of costings. First, we are discussing the introduction of a loan plus grant facility, which next year will be worth 25 per cent. more than the grant this year. That is why I claim that it will benefit students.

In the next academic year, we expect to provide £178 million in loans on top of the updated grant. It will be more if take-up of the loan exceeds 80 per cent., and in addition there is £15 million for access funds. Those are extra resources.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: How much will the Government save by excluding students from access to housing benefit and other benefits?

Mr. MacGregor: We estimate that students who qualify for loans would have been able to claim some £68 million in benefit, but £125 million next year is a substantial net increase in public support for the living costs of students.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: There is much desire to make progress. Several Conservative Members who wanted to speak in support of the Bill have agreed not to so that we can make progress.

The most vulnerable groups—disabled and single-parent students—will retain benefits and will also have access to loans.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the vast sum being provided by the Government will remove the need for parents to give additional money to students? That is good news for parents.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. Disabled and single-parent students will retain benefits and have access to loans. Many students whose parents have not been fully topping up maintenance grants will gain benefit, and our proposals offer an advantage to students who have taken out commercial loans.

For the 35 per cent. of students who claim no benefits, the loan will be a net increase. On average, it will provide a substantial net increase for those who claim benefit. Those whose benefit losses are greater than the loan facility are strong candidates for further support from their institution's access funds. There will clearly be a positive benefit for students next year.

Providing additional resources through loans will cost more in the immediate future. More resources for students are necessary because we are keen to continue the

expansion in the numbers in higher education that has been achieved under this Government. Providing the same addition as grant, rather than grant plus loan—this questions the position of the Opposition or any of our critics—would be more expensive because take-up would be 100 per cent. That would be a dead-weight cost, as it would go not to those wanting to make use of the loan facility but to all. Instead of costing £178 million, if take-up was 80 per cent., in 1990-91 grants would cost £222 million. Grants would clearly be more expensive from the outset. In later years, when the loan scheme will generate savings, that extra cost would continue. An additional amount would be forgone in later years——

Mr. Worthington: The Secretary of State does not believe this.

Mr. MacGregor: I do, and it is impossible for the hon. Gentleman to refute it. It is clear that that would be the case if the resources were provided in grant.

Mr. Worthington *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have finished my point.

In later years, the position will be more beneficial to the taxpayer, because the loans will have been repaid. We calculate that if grant were being paid the amount that would be forgone would be almost £100 million in 1994 and well over that figure by 1995. The combination of our proposals rather than a grant scheme——

Mr. Straw: So what?

Mr. MacGregor: I will tell the hon. Gentleman "so what." He argued that repayments would not exceed benefit beyond the year 2000, but he was on the wrong point. Throughout the 1990s, our scheme will be more beneficial to the taxpayer than a grant scheme at the levels we are proposing.

Mr. Worthington: If my banker lends me £10,000 instead of £5,000, it never occurs to either of us that he is being more generous, but that is the logic of the Secretary of State's argument.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. Opposition Members argue that our scheme will be more expensive to the taxpayer. I hope that tomorrow the hon. Gentleman will read carefully what I said and consider whether I am wrong.

6.45 pm

A comparison between a total grant scheme and our grant plus loan scheme clearly shows that our proposals will be less expensive to the taxpayer, and will become increasingly less expensive as loans are repaid.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Blackburn said "so what". Here is the "so what". What is the Labour party's alternative? I understand from his reaction that its alternative is not a grant scheme at the level of resources that we propose for next year. It hopes that the grant element will gradually be increased "as resources allow". That is not a pledge, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said:

> "What we are promising is an increase for pensioners and an increase in child benefit. Everything else that is regarded as a desirable aim is also listed, quite clearly and specifically, as something that we hope to do as resources allow." [*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 179.]

It has become not something "we will do" but something "we hope to do". It is quite clear that Labour's alternative is less beneficial to students and will continue to be so. That is an important element of the debate and shows why the Labour party was so vulnerable in Committee.

Mr. Straw: It is clear that the Secretary of State is being indiscriminately profligate with taxpayers' money and doing what the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) explained to him—shifting money from those who need it most to those who need it least. The reason why the loan scheme becomes less popular every time the Secretary of State makes a speech on it is that every student understands the iniquity and unfairness of it. Out policy is to target money where it is most needed. The Secretary of State will confirm that the combination of freezing the real value of grant and abolishing housing benefit and income support takes money immediately from those students most in need.

Mr. MacGregor: Next year, the majority of students who have been claiming benefit will be better off under our proposals than under those of the Labour party. The House will note that the hon. Gentleman's remarks confirm that.

New clause 2 and amendment No. 1 propose an advisory committee to oversee the operation of the scheme. That would be an unwieldy bureaucratic structure. The committee would be as big as the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, but bigger than the National Curriculum Council. That would be rather large for an advisory committee that has no powers. I note that there is no similar advisory body for student grants.

I do not propose to advise my hon. Friends to accept the amendment because it is unnecessary. The Bill already gives the Secretary of State power to call for reports on the working of the arrangements. We have made it clear in Committee and in a number of ways that we shall be monitoring the scheme. The Select Committee already exists to examine departmental policy and produce reports on it, so there is no need for an advisory body either as a monitoring facility or to ensure that Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the performance of and changes to the scheme.

We expect to make available to Parliament information arising from the Department's monitoring, for example, in future income and expenditure surveys and in other ways. So Parliament will have no lack of information. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) that we shall be monitoring the scheme. When new regulations are presented to Parliament, it will have an opportunity to scrutinise them and to make suggestions for future regulations. And, in the normal course of parliamentary procedure, there will be many other ways in which, with the information provided to it by us, Parliament will be able to probe and monitor the scheme.

We have already said in Committee that the Government will make the Student Loans Company's annual report available to Parliament, and it will be possible to debate that as well as the regulations required to make changes. The annual accounts of the Student Loans Company, as a limited company, will be required to be audited under the provisions of the Companies Acts and a copy lodged with the Registrar of Companies.

[Mr. MacGregor]

Above all, the Secretary of State will be accountable to Parliament for expenditure on the loan scheme, as for any other expenditure on education, in all the normal ways.

So—and I say this in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)—there will be ample opportunity for consultation and monitoring in a variety of ways. I assure him that I have already had many discussions with a wide range of vice-chancellors about the operation of the scheme and the alternative that they put forward.

The same arguments as I have just advanced apply, of course, to new clause 17, which proposes a parallel advisory committee for Scotland. I do not think that I need to say much more about that.

Mr. Worthington: Absolutely typical.

Mr. MacGregor: There is only one difference between new clause 2 and new clause 17, which are pretty well the same in most other respects. The one difference is that it is proposed that the Scottish body, for fewer higher education institutions, should have more members. Their purposes are the same, so I think the arguments are the same, and I do not propose to repeat them.

Mr. Worthington: There is no Scottish Select Committee for a start, which is a bit of a handicap. The Minister still does not seem to have accepted that there is a separate Scottish education system which is not being defended by the Secretary of State for Scotland and was not taken into account at all in setting up the loan scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: All that I am saying is that the arguments against setting up a wider advisory body as proposed in new clause 2 are exactly the same as those against new clause 17.

New clause 14 requires consultation with higher education institutions in their role as certifying their students' eligibility for loans. I believe that this amendment is unnecessary, for the following reasons. First, I am looking forward to the detailed discussions —which the hon. Gentleman mentioned and about which he was right—with the higher education sector about the institutions' role in assessing their students' eligibility for loans. I intend to embark on those discussions very soon.

Secondly, the power to make regulations requiring certification of eligibility is a reserve power. I expect not to need to use it, because I think that institutions will be keen to play their part in ensuring that their students have access to this additional resource. But if it proves necessary to make regulations, I undertake that we shall consult the institutions before doing so.

I believe that new clause 14 is unnecessary, and similar arguments apply to amendment No. 13.

Much has been said in the debate about consultation. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), in particular, referred to this when he was talking about the need for further consultations with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and discussion of its scheme. Incidentally, I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman accepts our position on the national insurance contribution and that he agrees, if not with all the nine good reasons, at least with the conclusion to which they lead me: that that is not a sensible alternative. I am very glad to have his support on that point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I agree, I think, with all nine points. Will the Secretary of State look seriously at the alternative proposal put forward by the vice-chancellors and principals? They are almost unanimous in thinking that it is better than the Government's scheme. It would not be too late for the Secretary of State to take their advice, and we would end up with something much more widely acceptable than his present proposals.

Mr. MacGregor: I have looked very seriously at that and I think it right to tell the House, because other hon. Members have raised the point, why I do not believe that that scheme is anything like as attractive as ours. It has one benefit. I am glad to have the demonstration from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of its support for our view that, on principle, beneficiaries of higher education should contribute to its cost. It is very important that, in putting forward its alternative, the committee has accepted that principle, which underlies the students loan scheme. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said that he is not in favour of a graduate tax, and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) said that her party is. It is effectively a graduate tax that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has put forward. In fairness to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, I must put the following points.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said in a statement some time ago that public support for students' living costs must meet four criteria: adequacy, certainty, simplicity and social justice. It is worth comparing briefly how its proposals and the Government's meet those criteria. I hope that, in so doing, I shall show the hon. Gentleman that I have looked very carefully at this and have been discussing it.

On adequacy, the Government propose a grant plus loan next year worth 25 per cent. more than the grant this year. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals does not suggest an amount, but as it would remove the parental contribution, the taxpayer would have to find £390 million extra to replace that before any addition to the value of the grant could be contemplated. The vice-chancellors must realise that the taxpayers' pocket is not bottomless. In terms of adequacy, there is a real problem for them to face.

On certainty, the committee would have the graduates pay an additional tax levy; it does not say at what rate or for what period. Even if those figures were fixed, the levy would depend on how much the graduate earned, but it would not be fixed in advance, so there would be total uncertainty for the graduate embarking on a university career as to what commitment he was taking on, because he would not know what he would have to repay.

As for the loan, the undergraduate has control of what commitment he takes on. With the Government's scheme, the student will know how much he can borrow and that he will have to pay back the same amount, indexed for inflation. Moreover, the levy proposed by the committee is not related to any support received by the student. So someone contemplating higher education would have no idea what commitment he was taking on. This is a crucial point about the graduate tax—the unfairness of asking students to pay a specific and special tax irrespective of whether they receive taxpayer support for their living costs while at university, and ignoring the fact that they may

have paid themselves for all their living costs during university. In addition to the uncertainty, there is a fundamental unfairness in the committee's proposal.

On simplicity, I believe that our scheme is simple. From the borrower's point of view, the loan administration would be very simple—like normal commercial credit but with more safeguards.

Finally, on social justice, by removing the parental contribution the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals would require taxpayers, many of them earning less than graduates or their parents, to shoulder the burden in place of students' parents in higher income brackets. Moreover, the levy would be based on income tax, which would be an incentive to emigrate. Clearly, those who emigrated would not have to repay the loan whereas we should seek for loans to be repaid. It would also bite on graduates who obtained their degrees abroad, those who obtained degrees before the start of the scheme or those who received no public support. If it did not do so, it would have to be an extremely complex scheme and thus would lose its simplicity.

On all the tests that the committee put forward, our scheme scores more highly. I hope that I have demonstrated that we have been consulting, examining, considering and reaching conclusions. It is right for the Government to have done so.

7 pm

It is clear that the Government scheme provides more money for students this autumn, relief for parents in 1991 and a reduced burden on taxpayers in the medium term. As we shall be monitoring and reporting to Parliament, the new clauses and amendments are unnecessary, and I urge the House to reject them.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 248.

Division No. 76] **[7.02 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes, and
Mr. John Battle.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jangan, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 4

STUDENT LOANS COMPANY

'.—(1) The Student Loans Company shall be a company limited by guarantee.

(2) No sale or transfer of the assets of the Student Loans Company shall be made without prior approval by resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Andrew Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

New clause 5

POWERS OF SECRETARY OF STATE IN RESPECT OF STUDENT LOANS COMPANY

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall make regulations which shall govern the discharge of functions by, and regulate the finances of, the Student Loans Company.

(2) Any regulations made under paragraph (1) above shall be subject to approval by resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.

New clause 12

THE STUDENT LOANS COMPANY

'.—(1) The arrangements for enabling students to receive loans towards their maintenance shall be carried out by the Student Loans Company ("the SLC").

(2) The SLC shall be a company limited by guarantee.

(3) The SLC shall be required to ensure that all data stored in relation to a borrower's liability is kept in accordance with principles laid out on Schedule 1 to the Data Protection Act 1984.

(4) The SLC shall be prohibited from selling, lending, hiring or reproducing information relating to individual borrowers' liability to a third party.'.

Mr. Smith: In speaking to new clauses 4 and 5, I wish to make it clear that we support also new clause 12 in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I stress that, in tabling the new clauses, we in no way show acceptance of the student loans scheme. I say that because, in Committee, a similar clause was interpreted in that way by the Conservatives. We reject the scheme totally, as do the Conservative students in Oxford who, according to the *Cherwell* newspaper, have split the university Conservative association and propose to run separate candidates in the student union elections in Oxford on a platform of opposition to student loans and to the poll tax.

According to *Cherwell*, an election candidate said:

"How could they"—

that is, the Conservative party,

"expect us to run on a platform supporting student loans, payment of the community charge by students and voluntary membership of the NUS? All of these we fundamentally oppose."

It is clear that nobody supports the student loans scheme apart from the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary of State. We reject wholly the unjust and wasteful bureaucratic nonsense of the scheme and would, of course, have no student loans company.

7.15 pm

If there is to be a student loans company, it should be dedicated to the service of students, and it should be accountable. It should not become a plaything of the financial markets, where profit maximisation for shareholders would come first and students second, and where the information held on individuals would be vulnerable. The unscrupulous might be tempted to make a quick buck out of selling, or otherwise using commercially, the profiles collected as part of the operation of the student loans company.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman should not disappoint his public. Everyone thought that he was a member of the new look Labour party which did not look with disfavour on profits.

Mr. Smith: Making profits out of education is one thing which we totally and utterly reject. A fundamental objection to the whole Bill, shared by most of the public, is that the student loans scheme is the thin end of a very nasty wedge, which would make education the privilege of the few on ability to pay, and not the right of all on ability to benefit.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way in his usual courteous manner. During the debates in Commitee, the hon. Gentleman was most violent in his regret at the withdrawal of the banks. The banks were in it for profit. How can he reconcile the two? The hon. Gentleman says that profit made by the banks is all right but profit made by a private company is wrong. It is difficult to square that circle.

Mr. Smith: The scheme changed fundamentally with the withdrawal of the banks. The Secretary of State and the Minister pretend otherwise, but there was a fundamental change, sufficiently important to cause the Prime Minister to "fizz with fury", no less. The formation of a student loans company must be the first instance of nationalisation before a company has done anything. Now the Government, having nationalised it, want to privatise it well before it has done anything.

It is precisely because of the scope of privatisation and the commitment of the Government to hive the company off into the private sector at the earliest opportunity that these new clauses are particularly important. They relate to the status and operation of the Student Loans Company, which has become a very different beast during the deliberations in Committee, following the withdrawal of the banks.

I will summarise what the new clauses would do. New clause 4 proposes that the Student Loans Company would be limited by guarantee and should not be sold or otherwise transferred without the approval of both Houses of Parliament. New clause 5 would require the Secretary of State to make regulations covering the functioning and the finances of the Student Loans Company, and would require those regulations to be subject to parliamentary approval. New clause 12 would add the requirement that information was stored and handled in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1984 and that information on a borrower's liability should not be sold or otherwise passed on to third parties.

Taken together, the new clauses would write the existence of the Student Loans Company into the Bill and provide it with a legal status conducive to service rather than commercial exploitation. They would ensure that changes in the status and mode of operation of the Company would be controlled where they should be controlled—in Parliament. They would provide essential protection for civil liberties, which are not safeguarded by the cavalier attitude of Ministers to the ownership of the Student Loans Company and its commercial exploitation.

There has been much criticism of the way in which this waif and stray of a Bill operates solely in an enabling fashion. It is incredible, as well as irresponsible, that the Bill makes no reference to the Student Loans Company, the principal vehicle by which the scheme will be administered. Over the years, files will be built up on hundreds of thousands, ultimately millions, of individuals. Outside national insurance, the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue, it will be one of the largest centralised registers of information on individuals.

It is wholly wrong that the Government should deny Parliament the opportunity to determine the status and mode of operation of the company holding that information. I shall return to the important implications for civil liberties in a moment, but first I press the Government to supply what the Minister was unable to supply in Committee—meaningful information on the administration of the scheme.

The £450,000 Price Waterhouse feasibility study on the student loans scheme, and the Under-Secretary in Committee on 18 January, said that it would cost £15 million to £20 million a year to administer the scheme by 1995. That is based on exactly the same forecast as Price Waterhouse applied to the operation of the company by the banks.

Since then, the Government have published revised public expenditure figures for the total cost of the student loans scheme. They suggested an outlay of £563 million of taxpayers' money in the three years to which the public expenditure White Paper applies. It is worth pointing out that that £563 million of new expenditure of taxpayers' money is £78 million more than the sum earmarked for

[Mr. Smith]

capital investment in the universities, which desperately need equipment for labs, books for libraries and investment in computing facilities. It is £235 million more than the amount allocated over that period for the school buildings grant, and £269 million more than the total capital investment earmarked for our polytechnics.

I do not want to repeat the points already made in the debate, but the expenditure on loans is wasteful and it is not targeted to help the students who need it most. Nor will it provide assistance for those seeking access to our higher education system, who are presently denied opportunities that should be available to all.

All the Government's costings, such as they are, are based on no expansion of student numbers beyond the year 2000. For that reason, the Government have backed away from the commitment made by the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), to double participation. The Student Loans Company and the money spent on it will be a further barrier to access to educational opportunity, at a time when we should be opening up avenues of access to higher education, rather than putting problems in people's way.

It is no good the Government making professions of good will on the important matter of civil liberties and leaving it at that. Students, the public and Parliament have a right to know exactly what protection will be available. Given the Government's evident enthusiasm for selling off the Student Loans Company, serious questions must be asked about the uses to which the data could be put. In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State said:

"the Students Loans Company will have considerable potential as the basis for a banking business."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 23 January 1990; c. 398.]

It is also significant that, earlier this evening, the Secretary of State said that the repayment regime would reflect commercial practice. Previously, the Under-Secretary of State said that there was no problem about privatising the Student Loans Company. Indeed, he cited the chief executive's debt collecting credentials. I do not know whether those credentials extend to wandering through the Amazonian rain forest or elsewhere overseas to collect the outstanding debts of those who have gone abroad, as it was suggested earlier that he would have to do. There are serious worries that the debt collection power and the information held on individuals will simply be sold off into the private sector without the safeguards which the amendments and new clauses offer.

Privatisation has enormous potential commercial possibilities. Present practices, and even the Data Protection Act 1984, do not afford the safeguards which many members of the public, and perhaps hon. Members and even Ministers, might assume exist. An interesting article in *The Times* on 5 February speculated on whether the sale of the Student Loans Company might be illegal:

"Mr. Rodney Austin, a senior lecturer in law at University College London, said that under the Data Protection Act it would be unlawful for firms to use for other purposes information gathered to administer loans. He added that companies could make use of the profiles held by the student loans company only if students gave their permission."

No one would be more delighted than me if the proposed sale of the Student Loans Company was scuppered in that way. If it is sold, the qualifications which would have to be put on the protection afforded by the Data Protection Act would be considerable and would give rise to enormous anxieties. That is what makes the final part of new clause 12 so important.

To use the student loans files on individuals as, for example, a mailing list would require only the passive assent of the people involved. A piece of small print asking them to let the company know if they objected would suffice. If people did not object, all sorts of target mailing would be likely to arrive through people's doors, which would bear as much relationship to student loans as the bumf sent out by the AA has to rescuing its members when their car breaks down. Such mail would deluge through graduates' letter boxes. The Student Loans Company could, at the least, offer further loans or even credit card arrangements. Would that be inconsistent with the original purpose for which the company was set up?

Mr. Jackson: What is wrong with all that?

Mr. Smith: I hear the Under-Secretary say from a sedentary position, "What is wrong with all that?" What is wrong with it is that files on individuals would be passed into the commercial domain for exploitation for profit by a company holding private information on people. In the banking context it would breach the fundamental rules of banking to circulate that information. That is a gross threat to and infringement of civil liberties.

Mr. Jackson: Nonsense.

Mr. Smith: The Under-Secretary mutters, "Nonsense". That will do nothing to reassure people outside the House who are worried about the inadequacy of the protection that the Government are prepared to provide.

What is more, there would be nothing to stop a privatised Student Loans Company offering inducements, perhaps discounts on loan repayments, in return for assent to use the files for other purposes. Once that rubicon was crossed, the commercial potential for selling the list indiscriminately would be enormous. We can all imagine just how interested life assurance companies and pension companies would be in acquiring that information. Once assent had been given, that information on individuals would be up for sale. The pressures that might be put on people to allow such information to be used in that way are worrying and are a real threat to civil liberties.

Will the Minister give us an assurance now that, under his proposals, such use would not and could not be made of that information? If he cannot give such an assurance now, and if he does not give it during his speech, I strongly urge him to think about the new clauses again and to accept them when the Bill passes to the other place for consideration because these new clauses alone can safeguard the public interest, and parliamentary accountability, and can protect the civil liberties of those about whom files will be built up by the Student Loans Company.

7.30 pm

This afternoon I attended and spoke at a large rally in Hyde Park at which between 25,000 and 30,000 students were gathered in opposition to the student loan scheme, the Student Loans Company and the whole philosophy behind the legislation. Reference has already been made to the considerable and widening lead that our party holds in the opinion polls. The whole philosophy of the legislation

represents the thin edge of the wedge in making education dependent on ability to pay rather than on ability to benefit from it.

The people of this country reject that principle and want education to be available to all. They also want all those who can benefit from that education to be properly supported in it. The support that those views enjoy and the support for the protection of civil liberties, as set out in our new clauses, is just one of the many factors that will ensure our victory at the next election, as will our ability to repeal this invidious student loan scheme and to introduce a decent and fair system of support.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The amendments go directly to the heart of the Government's difficulties and embarrassment over the Bill. They draw attention to the Government's embarrassment not so many months ago, when the high street banks pulled out of the system that the Government are trying to set up and forced the Government into taking over the Student Loans Company and administering it by way of a nationalised institution.

Having said that, I wish to address my remarks chiefly to the amendment on civil liberties that was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I very much welcome the support of the Labour Front Bench for our civil liberties amendment and reciprocate by stressing our support for new clauses 4 and 5, which were tabled by the Labour party.

The purpose of this series of new clauses is to establish as part of the Bill that the Student Loans Company shall exist, to define its role and function, to ensure that it has accountability to this House and, finally, to ensure that information kept by the Student Loans Company is not traded or stored in breach of the principles of the Data Protection Act 1984.

The first peculiarity of the Bill, and one of the reasons for the new clauses, is the fact that the Government are seeking to enable themselves to do something about which they cannot give the House any detail and about which they cannot write any detail into the Bill. Indeed, I do not believe that they have any detail yet. In the circumstances that the Government now face, at the very least the Student Loans Company should appear on the face of the Bill—as is suggested in new clause 4—because that is how the Government state that they will operate the system and run the scheme. The actions of that company, whether they be the sale or transfer of its assets, should not occur without the prior approval of the House.

My view is that the Bill should not be before the House in its present form and without the kind of detail that is necessary for its proper scrutiny. However, given that it has been introduced in these terms, at the very least the operation of the company itself and its future should be subject to debate and further action in the House should there be any major change such as that outlined in new clause 4. Equally, as is suggested in new clause 5, the discharge of its functions should be considered by the House.

If we are not being given the opportunity to debate it here and now, when frankly it should be debated, before we as a House decide whether this is something that we wish to implement, at the very least Ministers should have to return to the House to answer properly and in detail for the rules once they have been implemented. I find it disturbing that, in one piece of legislation after another that has been introduced by the Government, we seem to be putting ever greater distances between the executive powers of Ministers and the ability of the House to exercise control over what they may do.

The Bill does not even guarantee that there shall be any proper financial accountability to the House, yet the House has the public responsibility to make proper use of what are, as the Government frequently point out, the funds of individual taxpayers. The Government should at least have to come here to ensure their accountability to hon. Members. It is extraordinary that a Government who never-endingly talk about the fact that the money that is raised through taxes is taxpayers' money and should be accounted for should leave so much on trust that that function will be properly discharged.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman does not understand the legislation. The simple fact is that it will be subject to the normal processes of financial accountability that exist for public expenditure throughout the whole area of Government expenditure.

Mr. Taylor: As the Minister is equally aware—this is a debate that we have frequently, whatever the Bill coming from the Government—there is no automatic debate on the Floor of the House of such details. I have frequently heard Ministers argue, on all manner of Bills, that the legislation is subject to the normal procedures of the House, but the truth is that the normal procedures of the House do not allow proper scrutiny unless it is written on the face of the Bill, as our amendments argue.

I have said that the main bulk of my comments will be directed towards the specific concerns that we have outlined in new clause 12, which Liberal Democrats have tabled in our party's tradition of arguing for civil liberties and seeking to ensure the protection of the individual.

There is no guidance in the Bill on whether at some time the Student Loans Company might be sold off into the private sector, and Ministers have regularly said that that is the future that they would prefer for the company. However, if the company falls into the hands of the private sector, there is no guarantee about what will happen to the information that that company may hold. If the company were to stay within Government hands, it would be easier to lay down guidelines for its operation and for the use of its information.

In our discussions on the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which introduced the poll tax, I recall that we debated at length the issue of whether the information contained on the poll tax register should go to the private sector. I talked then about the problems with some of the companies that follow up such information, of the use that is made of it and of the dubious practices in which some of those companies are engaged. The information held by the Student Loans Company goes far beyond anything held on the community charge register. It is detailed financial information regarding what ultimately may prove to be millions of former students who have gone through this country's education system.

It was interesting that some such concerns have been reflected in debates about bad debt as have been expressed by others outside the House. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 December 1989 reported that Sir Gordon Borrie, Director General of Fair Trading, when asked for his initial reaction to the position of students who failed to repay their loans—one piece of sensitive information that the company may have—said:

[Mr. Taylor]

"It is important not to treat students as defaulters. The worst scenario would be if the banks started acting in a tough way and created a whole new class of people in a default category."

That was when the banks were to have been running the system. The future of the Student Loans Company is even more uncertain—it may be with banks or credit companies; we do not know.

Mr. Jackson: No student will be pursued as a defaulter. We are talking about the pursuit of people who have incurred obligations to the taxpayer, possibly mature people in their 30s or 40s, who fail to repay the money borrowed from the taxpayer. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that they should not be pursued in the normal way to retrieve that money on behalf of the taxpayer and other students?

Mr. Taylor: I am well aware that we are talking about ex-students. However, two direct problems arise for Ministers when they make their case in favour of the pursuit of defaulters. In fact, there are three; I shall come to the third in a moment. However, of the two with which I am immediately concerned, the first is that these will not necessarily be ex-students on a reasonable income. They may well be people who decided to go into caring professions in which the sort of return they would make, particularly in the early years after leaving university, would be low.

Mr. Jackson: They will be deferred.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister says "deferred", but teachers' repayments will not be deferred.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Nor will the nurses'.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey mentions nurses; such people will not be in a good financial position in their early years after university.

Mr. Harry Barnes: There could even be people who had pursued courses and failed and, because of their failure, put themselves in a worse financial position than they would have been if they had not gone to university and involved themselves in full-time education. They would still have to repay the money. They would suffer considerably under these arrangements.

7.45 pm

Mr. Taylor: That is absolutely right. We could risk straying too wide of the amendments if we pursued this matter much further. These arguments have all been fully debated in the House and my only regret is that Ministers seem deaf to the concerns.

My second point is that the companies that may be asked to pursue such people will by no means be the most pleasant ones. Many of us, as Members of Parliament, have met people who have run into problems with debt collection agencies. We have had no guarantees from Ministers about who will pursue the bad debts. It is one thing for the Government to take on the responsibility themselves. While I cannot say that all Government Members are necessarily my best friends, they are honourable gentlemen, and I would not wish to cast aspersions on them. If the company is sold off, or even if it is not, we have no evidence that Ministers, or even their civil servants, will be knocking on people's doors—it may well be debt collection sharks.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is unlikely to be Ministers.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend says it is unlikely to be Ministers, and it would be a nasty shock if they did. It is much more likely to be staff of debt collection agencies. The Government's silence about whom it will be only confirms that that will be so. I should like, and hope to get, an assurance from the Minister that I am wrong, and that professional Government employees, subject to the protections and constraints of public employees, will be responsible for this service. However, I fear that is not so, and the Minister will confirm that. The very fact that he is not reassuring me about this suggests that that is the case.

Thirdly, all too often in present circumstances, it will not be former students who get into trouble with the credit company. The information, which may be made available, can be used against third parties—other people in the same home. That is an issue of customer privacy that was aired at the conference of the Institute of Credit Management in London at the beginning of December and, again, reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 December. The Data Protection Registrar, Eric Howe, said that he wanted lenders to stop using information about third party when assessing loan applications. The report states:

"Lenders insist that the whole household's credit record is essential information; they have already agreed no longer to use details about family members who have moved away from home.

Discussions between the two sides have not resulted in any agreement and Mr. Howe is considering serving enforcement notices on four credit reference agencies."

The people who may be penalised as a result of the information being made available are not the former students in their 30s and 40s, about whom the Minister talks, who are doing very nicely and for some reason not paying their debts. Instead, they are third parties who are blackened as a result of others' actions. I hope that no hon. Member would approve of that. I suspect that, if an individual came to any of our surgeries and said that this had happened to him or her, we would be most sympathetic and try to overcome the problem. Why should the Government contribute to those difficulties?

These are the sort of issues raised in the Bill. I was a student only a few years ago. I am probably the most recent full-time student in the House. I was also the president of the students' union which had the highest turnout in elections—more than half, and that is better than most—of any students' union in the country. My involvement, both as a student and as a students' union president, gave me first-hand experience and also experience of those who came to the union with various financial problems.

Such experience allows me to appreciate the sort of questions that students are now asking, because they were asked then. I was then involved in the successful campaign against the introduction of student loans. Information about the privacy of the information that may be given, the accountability of the Student Loans Company, on what basis information may be sought or debts pursued, are precisely the facts that students want and the Government are currently refusing to give. I do not believe that any student who is told about the Government's present plans, without being given proper information, is likely to be satisfied.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can correct me.

Mr. Pawsey: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a balance should be struck between the interests of the taxpayer and those of the student or graduate? It seems that the hon. Gentleman has lost sight of that balance. The system that we are introducing makes allowance for deferral of payment until one earns more than 85 per cent.——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is losing sight of the specific terms of the new clause.

Mr. Taylor: My concern is for all former students who may be hit by the operation of the company, particularly if it is privatised. I am concerned about the privacy of personal information which may be recorded as a result of the Bill and which should never have been recorded. The hon. Gentleman talks about the interests of the taxpayer, but the taxpayer's interests are not served by a system which, for many years to come, will cost the taxpayer large sums of money——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman just heard me direct the attention of the House to the terms of the new clause. I hope that he will have regard to what I said.

Mr. Taylor: My concern is that the operation of the company, particularly if it gives the kind of information that Ministers have suggested that it will be allowed to give, will hit taxpayers and former students, as the Bill will do.

Dr. Hampson: I have been struggling to find answers in the reports of the Committee's proceedings, but I have been unable to do so. It is useful to have new clause 5 so that the provision of regulations governing the functions and finances of the Student Loans Company can be debated on the Floor of the House by Members who were not present in Committee but who have important questions about the company's operation.

The Student Loans Company will be a Government operation. Student loan repayments will not be collected through the Inland Revenue, as some of us have argued would be the most equitable method. That is the system adopted by the Australians. Therefore, I must ask my hon. Friend the Minister what provision he will make for chasing defaulters, particularly after 1992 and the increased mobility of labour across Europe.

How many staff have been designated as investigators to check the process of repayment, and what will that cost? If hordes of people are needed to track down potential defaulters, the cost of the operation will be substantially increased. That is the experience of the Americans. It is extraordinarily difficult to find defaulters who go to earth for a few years, travel round the world, come back and get a job somewhere else. How will such people be found? That question was not answered in Committee.

How will the system operate? We are talking not simply about how to take out a loan, but about what sort of courses will be eligible for loans. It is no longer a matter of discussing with somebody in a bank whether a course is eligible for a loan. The leaflet that has been sent to students implies that there has been a major expansion of the range of courses. They go way beyond the courses that are presently eligible under the grant system. The leaflet mentions paramedical courses which, as far as I am aware, are not now eligible for mandatory grants.

Mr. Jackson: I am happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that some 50,000 students not presently eligible for grants will come within the scope of our loan scheme, which is one of its many generous features.

Dr. Hampson: I am delighted to hear that, but who will be designating the courses? I assume that it will be the Secretary of State. What is a worthwhile course is a wide-open question. The leaflet says that people on higher national certificate courses will be eligible. I may be wrong, but, by definition, all higher national certificate courses used to be part-time and diploma courses were full-time. I welcome part-timers being eligible for loans, but a person doing a part-time university degree course will not be eligible while a person doing a part-time higher national certificate course in a polytechnic will. The choice of courses to be made eligible is crucial to steering the system.

When will students know whether the course that they are thinking of taking will be eligible for a loan? Will they be told at school, or will they have to wait until they go to university? Where does the onus for giving such advice rest? It is not now with the local bank manager. Will the institutions, the polytechnic or the university, be responsible and so bear the cost? Or will peripatetic counsellors from the Student Loans Company give advice in schools? Young people must think through their choice of course before they apply for a place so that they know the exact financial benefit. Loans could be a major benefit, but they must make a judgment because one course may be eligible while a similar one is not.

Mr. Simon Hughes: What view should this year's school leavers take when they still do not know the financial basis on which their studies will start, let alone continue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The new clause relates to the functions of the Student Loans Company. I hope that we shall get back to that.

Dr. Hampson: Peripatetic counsellors from the Student Loans Company may be required to give advice about the type of courses for which the company is prepared to give loans. It is fundamental to the working of the entire system that people should know what courses will be eligible for student loans. Will the cost of that fall on the Student Loans Company, the institutions or the schools, or will young people be expected to discover the information for themselves? The leaflet does not say. It simply gives a broad range of courses that will be available. It says, "e.g. paramedical courses". It does not list which vocational courses are included.

The leaflet sent out on behalf of the Student Loans Company to instruct students about the process implies that there will be no change on two critical matters. For example, it suggests that the other place will not say that five years is too short a period for repayment. It says that loans must be paid back within five years. We must be more flexible. We are saying that everybody who has to repay a loan to the Student Loans Company who happens to have an income which is more than 85 per cent. of the national average will have to pay back the full whack within five years, despite the fact that there is a range of incomes just over £10,000.

[Dr. Hampson]

Ministers have said that not more than £400 a year will have to be paid back, but how will that be done? By what apparatus will the Student Loans Company be able to say that someone's income has fallen below a certain level in a particular year because he has been out of work, or for some other reason, and that he does not have to pay any money?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is dealing with general matters which might be more relevant on Third Reading.

Dr. Hampson: I was hoping not to have to make a speech on Third Reading, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

New clause 5 says that the Secretary of State

"shall make regulations which shall govern the discharge of functions by, and regulate the finances of".

I am trying to get Ministers to say how some of those functions will operate. The perceived fairness of the repayment to the company is essential to the acceptability of the scheme. How will the company achieve that? Ministers say that the repayment will not be onerous because it will not be more than £400 a year, but how will that be determined without a flexible system such as the Inland Revenue's computer system which can assess the circumstances of individual students and relate repayment to them?

The other place may decide that interest should be charged. The leaflet—not the Bill—says that the loan will be interest-free, but why? My right hon. Friend said that to abolish parental contributions would cost £390 million. The other place may say that the Student Loans Company should charge interest so that the money can be recycled much more quickly. On that basis I hope that the Treasury will put enough money up front to get rid of the parental contribution.

Mr. Jackson: I am sorry that my hon. Friend objects to yet another generous feature of our proposal, which is that the scheme should be interest-free. I do not know whether there is much support for the idea of charging a nominal rate of interest.

Dr. Hampson: There is more support for interest being charged than for its not being charged, for two reasons. The whole purpose of the Bill is to encourage more students into higher education. The only way in which the money can be recycled on any scale is to charge interest. Loans might be heavily subsidised, but interest would still be below a commercial rate and represent a major incentive. Money would be recycled far quicker, and one could even avoid the parental contribution, thus the loan could be recovered even more quickly than under the Government scheme. That is why I suggest an interest rate of 3 per cent. or 4 per cent. as charged in the rest of the western world.

There is no need to bribe people with a wholly interest-free scheme. The fact that the Government have negotiated with the Treasury to make the scheme interest-free has not won a single extra supporter. I rest my case in the hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he winds up, will explain some of the mechanisms by which the loan company will operate.

8 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am extremely diffident about speaking, because right hon. and hon. Members who were not involved in the hard work of the Committee stage should be reticent by comparison with their hard-working colleagues. I can only plead that I was involved in the Committee stage of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, which ran concurrently.

Having long had an interest in the subject of student loans, I have two factual questions for the Minister. Why was it that Sir Jeremy Morse, Sir Kit McMahon and John Quinton objected in the final analysis to the Government's proposals? In Committee, the Under-Secretary said that he would answer that question, but it appears that he never got around to doing so. There was a great deal of banter, and that omission may not have been the Minister's fault. Perhaps he will take this opportunity to spell out why it was that those three distinguished bankers apparently decided at the last moment to risk the wrath of the Prime Minister. Whoever may be the Government of the day, such men are not automatically anti-Government. Bankers do not take such a decision lightly. Why did they do so on this occasion, and why do their objections not apply to the whole agency set-up now proposed?

I say in particular to the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who has special responsibility for education, that I am especially concerned about the expectations of students in the Scottish context. If one feels, as a graduate, that one is obliged to repay a loan, whether or not it is interest-free, that commitment hangs over one, albatross-like, and one is under pressure to enter well-paid, money-making jobs. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) knows precisely the point that I am about to make. Has any investigation been undertaken either by the Department of Education and Science or by the Scottish Office into the likely effect of the scheme on people wanting to become, for example, schoolteachers or Health Service workers? Only last night, the dean of Westminster expressed considerable concern to some hon. Members about the effect of the scheme on people wanting to enter the Church. All those jobs are, at least in the opinion of some, valuable to society.

When my right hon. and hon. Friends were busy on the Bill in Committee morning, noon and night, others of my right hon. and hon. Friends were busy with the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill. For the first time in 20 years, I persuaded the Solicitor-General to attend the Committee, which, most courteously, he did.

I am tempted to ask what detailed advice has been given by the Law Officers on the question of liability. The Under-Secretary interestingly remarked that the scheme would incur responsibilities for people in their 30s and 40s. If, in parliamentary work, one tries to unravel the past in terms of something that occurred 20 years ago one finds it very difficult. How does the Under-Secretary know that he will not be confronted by a series of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce cases? The Minister may laugh, and he can interrupt me if I am wrong.

Mr. Jackson: A graduate, having graduated, might defer for a number of years and then re-enter the labour market, at which point he might have an income higher than the threshold, making him eligible to repay the

money that he borrowed from the taxpayer. The person may by that time be in his 30s or 40s. He would simply be repaying a normal debt.

Mr. Dalyell: That is a great give-away. The borrower will be in and out of eligibility. First, he will not be eligible to make repayments, then something will change his circumstances and he will be eligible again. Can one imagine what would happen in the courts and all the legal wrangles that would arise? It is a question of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce. Anyone of a litigious frame of mind—and there are plenty of them—would be in the courts month after month, year after year. There would be no way round it if equity is to be achieved. If equity is not to be achieved, we had better be told.

I anticipate the answer to my question as to what studies have been made by the DES and the Scottish Office. I forecast that the scheme will all end in tears, and that the Under-Secretary will regret that he ever set his hand to it.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is always a most beguiling Cassandra, but the proposals before the House will not have the consequences that he described. As to why the banks withdrew from the scheme, that question is not for me but for the three bankers to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. They made it clear that they had no objections to the principles of the scheme but that they had made a judgment in their own commercial interests. That does not reflect on the merits of the scheme itself, which is designed to be in the public interest, in providing more money to support students while they are studying. The banks' withdrawal from the scheme is irrelevant.

As to the questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), I may tell him first that the designation of courses should be straightforward. If he reads the Bill, he will see that in the case of what are described as public sector institutions, eligible courses are spelt out. One of their characteristics is that they are full-time courses. The list of courses designated in the private sector that are eligible for loans will, as in the case of those eligible for grant, be announced in good time for the autumn.

My hon. Friend asked about counselling. It will be available to students just as it is for grants.

Dr. Hampson: From whom?

Mr. Jackson: Counselling will be available from a variety of sources, including the local authorities from which the grants will be obtained and the institutions where applicants will be studying. Advice is already available in the form of the leaflet to which my hon. Friend referred.

My hon. Friend inquired also about the repayment term. In Committee, it was made clear—and I am sorry that word of this did not reach him—that the repayment term will be extended as the scheme matures. We envisage a term of five years initially, and I told the Committee that we did not expect that repayments would normally be in excess of £400 per year at current values.

Dr. Hampson: I mentioned that figure, but that is not my point. It was not that the repayment would be extended as the scheme matures. I was asking my hon. Friend whether the Student Loans Company was capable of producing what I would call a mortgage repayment profile in which, as the person starts off in a job with a low income, he pays back a relatively small amount, and then pays more as his income increases. Can the payments be adjusted to resources? Can the company do it? If not, why cannot public funds be recollected by a public agency—the obligation to the taxpayer was mentioned—that is, by the Inland Revenue? How else can it be done?

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has explained some of the reasons why the Government do not find the suggestion that the Inland Revenue should collect back the loans acceptable.

There are many student loan schemes around the world and nearly all of them are similar to the scheme that we are proposing, and they are operating successfully. Only one scheme uses the Inland Revenue in the way that my hon. Friend suggested. It is only two years old, and it will be interesting to see whether it survives.

The scheme that we are proposing is responsive to the graduate's income. There will be no obligation to repay the loan if income falls below 85 per cent. of the national average. Our proposal is more generous than my hon. Friend seems to envisage, because we do not intend that the graduate should pay any positive interest rate.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I shall pursue the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked, which has also been alluded to by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). After 10 or 12 years have elapsed, how will the Student Loans Company know that the liable person's income has passed beyond the 85 per cent. threshold?

Mr. Jackson: The Government are proposing a simple test which will rely on the honesty of graduates, and we expect it to be fulfilled. There will be a process of self-declaration, subject to sample checking. It is simple to ascertain graduates' income and how it relates to the threshold, which will be promulgated and announced. People will have to assess for themselves whether their income is above or below the threshold, and the whole process will be subject to sample survey.

Mr. Smith: Is the Under-Secretary saying that, after 10 years on a low income, it is up to the person to decide whether his income exceeds the relevant level and to ring up the Student Loans Company and say, "Please activate my direct debit"? Is that how it will work? It is a farce.

Mr. Jackson: There will be more contact than the hon. Gentleman supposes between the Student Loans Company and graduates. They will be regularly solicited to establish whether they are eligible to start repaying the loan.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West referred to the default rate in the United States. That subject was covered extensively in Committee. The default rate there is high, but that is because the American loan scheme is more wide-ranging than the scheme that we are proposing. The loan scheme that operates in Scandinavia would make a proper comparison, except that it is less generous to students than ours. Default rates there are running at between 1 and 2 per cent. and we believe that British graduates will be as honest as the Scandinavians.

Dr. Hampson: That may be the case, but I have studied the matter carefully. I have seen the work of Dr. Woodall and many others, and I have been a teacher in the States,

[Dr. Hampson]

and I know that there are differences between federal and state schemes. I assure my hon. Friend that one of the problems in the United States has been that when it has been left to a state institution, in particular to a college or university, to track people down, it has not had the resources to do so. Once it gets round the student world that one can virtually escape repayment, it requires massive resources, such as those now proposed by the Federal Congress, to ease the burden that has built up.

Mr. Jackson: I think that my hon. Friend is making a meal of this. We are talking about consumer credit, which is provided extensively by many agencies around the country. The business of collecting relatively small sums from a relatively large number of people is well established. Many practices and procedures are connected with it, and are perfectly acceptable in a commercial operation. My hon. Friend may wish to consider the biography of the chief executive of the Students Loans Company. He started by running consumer credit for the Ford Motor Company, for large numbers of people borrowing money for motor cars. He did similar work for Philips, and for companies operating in Canada. My hon. Friend must not suppose that there is anything new, dramatic, unusual or shocking about this procedure.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose——*

Mr. Jackson: I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will want me to make progress now with the new clauses. I have given way to several hon. Members, but they have raised issues which were mentioned in debate but which are not relevant to the new clauses. But I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Taylor: My question, which arises from the Under-Secretary's reference to sampling, is: who will be responsible for sampling students? How many will be checked? What information are they expected to get—will it be from the Inland Revenue or the employer?

8.15 pm

Mr. Jackson: I am not sure that that point is relevant. We envisage that deferment will have to be applied for and justified annually to the Student Loans Company, and the company will do that.

The new clause relates to the legal characteristics of the Student Loans Company, which is limited by shares, and at present all the shares are owned by the Government. The Government's present intention is, subject to the passage of the legislation, to contract with the Student Loans Company for the administration of the scheme. It will not necessarily be a perpetual contract, and nor should it be. We must retain the option in later years of letting a fresh contract, which may be with a new body, on a competitive basis. It is important to avoid anything in the legislation that might prevent the Executive from serving the public interest by securing a competitive arrangement.

The new clause envisages that what will essentially be a private law commercial arrangement, such as the sale of the Student Loans Company, should be subject to parliamentary approval. That is entirely inappropriate. It must be a commercial transaction, and the new clause is even more inappropriate, as it provides that any disposal of assets by the Student Loans Company requires parliamentary approval. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) thought the new clause through. One implication is that every time the Student Loans Company wants to sell a desk or a typewriter that it has finished with, it will have to come back to both Houses of Parliament for approval. I cannot believe that Opposition Members seriously envisaged that.

We believe that it would be inappropriate for the detailed arrangements between the Government and the Student Loans Company to be established by legislation. It would make no practical sense to do so. The route that is conventionally employed in those cases is a financial memorandum or contract. The arrangements will necessarily be complex but will be routine in character and it would simply not be a proper use of parliamentary time —whether Government's or Opposition's—to go into that extensively.

The nature of the relationship between the Government and the company may change. The Secretary of State needs flexibility to develop the scheme, and could not do so if he was tied in the way that the new clause proposes.

Some hon. Members referred to privatisation. The ownership of the Student Loans Company clearly lies with the Government at present, but they do not want to close the door on opportunity for privatisation at a later stage. It may well be to the advantage of the taxpayer to be able to reduce some of the costs of the administration of the scheme by putting it into private hands. Should the Student Loans Company revert to private ownership—and we must remember that it was originally conceived as a vehicle in private hands—at a later stage, the mechanism for the transfer of ownership would probably be a sale of share capital.

There is no reason why the Student Loans Company should not remain in its present form, as a company limited by shares. Changing it to a company limited by guarantee confers no obvious benefit, although the Opposition may think that it does, and nor does it impose any restriction. If the Student Loans Company were in the form proposed in the new clause, it would still be able to dispose of assets, and the new clause would not achieve the object stated for it.

Several Opposition Members seemed to make out that they alone were concerned about civil liberties. I yield to no one in the House in my concern for student liberties. It is irresponsible of Opposition Members to try to run a hare to scare people about this issue.

The Student Loans Company, whether in or out of public ownership, will be subject to the Data Protection Act in the same way as all similar operations and enterprises. The Act—which was passed under the present Government—provides valuable protection for the individual, while recognising the need for controlled exchange in the use of personal data. The Goverment are wholly committed to the enforcement of the Act through the Office of the Data Protection Registrar.

Borrowers will be given the same protection as they would receive if they had borrowed from a commercial lender. All the people concerned will have bank accounts, which will be treated in exactly the same way as accounts with the Student Loans Company. The company, like other commercial operators, can hold personal data only if those data are registered under the Act, and can use them only for the registered purposes. The data may not be disclosed without the authority of the individual to whom the information relates, as with normal commercial

banking operations. Furthermore, under the Data Protection Act the individual is entitled to receive a copy of any data relating to him held by a data user, on payment of a reasonable fee. Those protections will apply irrespective of who owns the Student Loans Company.

The Opposition's proposal is completely unnecessary. It would be absurd to pass a law stating that companies must do what the law already obliges them to do. The Student Loans Company, and any sub-contracted company, will be as tightly controlled by the Office of the Data Protection Registrar as any other company holding personal data. That, I believe, is a complete answer to the canard about civil liberties that Opposition Members sought to introduce.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has already spoken once; he cannot speak again.

Mr. Andrew Smith: It is abundantly clear from the Minister's inability to deal satisfactorily with the most elementary inquiries about the administration of the student loans scheme that it has not been thought through properly. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) wishes to intervene: I gladly give way to him.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister's reply to me was extraordinary. He said, in effect, "If you want to know the answer to your question, you must ask the people concerned." That might be all right in some contexts, but it would certainly not be all right in the context of my question. I simply asked why the chairmen of Lloyds bank and the Midland bank—serious people—had decided not to go along with the Government's scheme. Surely a Minister should have had the curiosity to find out why such people should consider the scheme—as I suspect—unworkable.

I have asked Sir Kit McMahon many things, but it is not my business to ask him such a question. It is a Minister's business to do so. The Minister should have had the curiosity to ask, and the candour to tell the House of Commons what reply he received.

Mr. Smith: I will give way to the Minister if he wishes to respond to my hon. Friend. Obviously he does not: it appears that he is unable to answer. The lack of replies to our straightforward questions is extraordinary. It is clear to us at least that the banks pulled out because they have no confidence in the scheme, which—as we have shown—is an administrative nightmare.

In the interests of hon. Members who are keen to speak on later amendments, I shall seek leave to withdraw the motion, leaving the Government to reflect on the wisdom of the arguments that have been put to them. They have not thought through their proposals, and—as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said—it will end in tears.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

LOANS FOR STUDENTS

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 1, line 5, after 'arrangements,' insert

'to take effect from September 1991'.

I could summarise the amendment by describing it as a "Let's halt awhile" measure. My intention was to try to check the Government's rapid descent into implementation of what appears to be an unimplementable scheme. I shall not rehearse the arguments about the paucity of information with which we have been supplied, but I shall rehearse—as I consider them overwhelmingly convincing—the arguments for the Government to defer implementing student loans until next year which are supported even by the case that they have made for the scheme.

Opposition Members, along with some Conservatives, have made clear their opposition to the Government's proposals—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Not many Conservatives.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady says, "Not many"—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Only the pinkoes.

Mr. Hughes: Although uttered from a sedentary position, the hon. Lady's remark must have been audible: she said that those of her Friends who opposed the scheme were "only the pinkoes".

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I stand by that.

Mr. Hughes: If some of the most eminent members of the Conservative party are now being described as "only the pinkoes", God save us from those in the rest of the country who are bluer than they are.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): May I assume from those remarks that hon. Members representing the north of Ireland could best be described as either "greenoes" or "orangeoes"?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has led us into dangerous territory, but it is far more dangerous to Conservative Members than it is to the Opposition. I observed that the previous vote did not show the largest Government majority.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There were enough to beat the Opposition.

Mr. Hughes: There were enough to beat us, but they constituted only about half the Government's full majority. I do not think that the hon. Lady should be too confident about the survival of the scheme in either House.

Behind closed doors, the Government are trying to produce their scheme in time for the autumn. All who apply for university, polytechnic or college places in December, filling up an UCCA form as they are required to do, will have done so without knowing whether they will receive grants and loans, and without knowing whether the scheme will be run by banks. The forms have gone in and the clearing houses are looking at them, but the applicants still do not know what will happen. In only six and a half months, students will be entering those educational institutions.

Even with the strongest possible Whip in both Houses, the Government are unlikely to get the Bill through much

[Mr. Hughes]

before Easter: they will have only a handful of months in which to implement the scheme. All the advice that has been received makes it clear that they needed to know the details by the beginning of this year, let alone Easter.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I have a feeling that the hon. Gentleman has just destroyed his case. The grants for this autumn have been published and are known. The Government have said that if students want to borrow under the scheme they can, but they do not have to. They know exactly where they are.

Mr. Hughes: In so far as he makes the point, the hon. Gentleman is right: the uprating of grants has been announced. What students do not know is whether after year one they will be in a grant scheme or a grant plus loan scheme. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as anyone, as he represents a university city, that if the scheme were defeated it would be very difficult for the Government to say next year, in the run-up to a general election, that there would be no further increase in grants. Many of his hon. Friends, if not the hon. Gentleman himself, will be pressing the Government to uprate grants next year, as they have this year.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The hon. Gentleman is right: I represent a university town. Let us assume that most of the students there come from outside Nottingham. They already know that their grant is £2,265, and they will receive it this autumn. I am assuming that they will receive the full grant; I do not wish to get involved in discussing parental contributions. If they wish, they can borrow as well. Whatever happens, they know that for certain, come the autumn of 1991—even if the grant is frozen, as we say it will be—they will still get the other £400, if they wish to borrow it, uprated. The facts are already known and there need not be a delay to 1991.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman would not find much support among those who plan more than a few months ahead. The Government may run on a timetable of coping with the problems of today, without thinking ahead to the problems of tomorrow, but most people want to know how the regime will affect them not just for next year. If the hon. Gentleman wants support for that view, he need only talk to people who have bought their own houses under the Government's incentive plans and are now wondering why interest rates are so high.

8.30 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I represent a university city. My university has been inundated with applications. All those applicants know that towards the end of their university careers they will not be on grant because some form of loan scheme will come into practice. They are basing themselves on that, and still the applications are arriving in increasing numbers.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady represents an eminent city and university, but I do not believe that those who have applied this academic year to start university courses next year have done so with the knowledge at the forefront of their minds that the scheme will change from grants to loans.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman underestimates their intelligence.

Mr. Hughes: I do not underestimate their intelligence. There have been increasing numbers of applications, which I welcome. I accept that there are more this year in many places, although not in all; in some of the best there has been a decline in applications because of the shortage of engineering, science and other courses. I expect that next year there will be a considerable dropping off in applications because, if the Bill becomes law, many of the most disadvantaged students will be unable to take the risk of not having the money and of having to borrow it and give it back.

Mr. Alton: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. He is right that there has not been the consistent pattern that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) suggests. Although the evidence from her constituency may be good, one could give other examples, such as Imperial college, London, where there has been a 15 per cent. drop in applications for science subjects. Surely that information is as valid to put before the House as that adduced by the hon. Member for Lancaster.

Mr. Hughes: These matters will be proved only when we see the number of applications next year. Of course, people are continuing to apply, but they are doing so under a grant system. We are regularly reminded in the House that we cannot assume the passage of legislation. The Government like to assume that they will get all their legislation, but I warn Conservative Members that some of their hon. Friends in another place will not support the Bill. Indeed, the measure would have benefited from a delay for further consideration, and the same could be said of other Government proposals.

Perhaps the Government should have been wiser and taken, say, a year's delay in implementing the Bills on football ID cards and the poll tax. Had they done that, the standing of the Conservatives in the opinion polls would probably have been much higher than it is now. I counsel Conservative Members seriously to listen to the arguments, which are overwhelming, for deferring the implementation of the Bill until 1991.

We need some facts. Is it not correct that the task of recruiting and retaining the personnel at the Student Loans Company is already way behind target dates? There was a delay at the beginning and the Government have just appointed the directors. It would be interesting to know how many staff have been recruited. Is it not a fact that we have no information about who will chase the defaulters whom we discussed in the previous debate? We do not know who the Student Loans Company will engage to do that job. We do not know whether any payment will be given to the institutions for certificating. They have had to deal for the first time this year with the poll tax, and with registering all their students, and they are not happy about that. They will not be happy about the additional tasks that this measure will impose on them.

Nor do we know anything about the administration of the access funds. It is all very well for the Minister to say that there will be three or four access funds, but the Government have given no commitment on that. It seems that there will need to be at least four access funds because everyone in London will be above-average losers, given the loss of benefit, and will have to apply for access funds. Not only could we do with more than four, but we could do

with one for London students alone. If the institutions are to administer the access funds, they will need the personnel and information to do it. No information about that is available.

It is fortuitous that the Department happened to produce the "wonderful form" this week—it would be interesting to know when it was commissioned—but we have not been told when students will be able to apply for their forms, when they should be sent in and, most important, when they will be processed.

Price Waterhouse provided the Government with some interesting figures. Do the Government accept that they may receive applications from 500,000 students, to be processed, on present proposals, by a staff of 130? If so, and if Price Waterhouse is correct that a staff of 250 will process only 3,575 applications a day, it will take a staff of 130 seven and a half months to process the applications.

At the rate we are going, students who apply in the summer will not know until 1991 whether they will receive loans. That is not an acceptable state of affairs— *[Interruption.]* Occupants of the Labour Front Bench should not regard this as an unimportant issue.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): It is important. We want to vote on it.

Mr. Hughes: I am glad that Labour Members intend to support the amendment, but first we need some answers from the Government. When the Government supply those answers, they will give the lie to the suggestion that they are ready to implement the scheme.

We were told that students would lose all their social security benefits. For that to happen there must be regulations, but so far we have seen no social security regulations or details of any other changes. We have not heard of anything like that being referred to the relevant social security advisory committee, yet there are only a few months to go before this comes into operation. The administration of the scheme was described by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), whom the hon. Member for Lancaster would no doubt describe as a pinko—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Oh yes.

Mr. Hughes: She describes him as a pinko, even though he was an adviser to the former Secretary of State, now Lord Joseph, who by no definition should be described as a pinko. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West said that it looked as though the scheme would not be off the ground by the autumn.

The scheme is not yet in good shape and few facts about it are known. It does not look as though it will be fully in place by September. The Government have only said that they hope it will be in place by then. The chances of effectively processing the applications are slim, if not non-existent. The access funds and their arrangements are a mystery and the social security arrangements have not even been published, let alone consulted about. The Government are doing to education this year what they have done often in the past. They are rushing through something without any guarantee that the system can deliver.

If the Government listened to teachers, who are trying to implement the national curriculum or prepare children for new exams, they would know how big a price is paid when the Government are determined at all costs to rush for the tape. I hope that wiser counsel will prevail. Sad as it is, if they want to, the Government can still be in power for another year. The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State can still be in their posts. If they take time, the Government may be able to justify their scheme, but if they rush ahead, this may end in tears.

Mr. Andrew Smith: If the Government will not abandon their scheme, clearly they would be wise to defer its introduction as proposed in the amendment. We support the amendment and will do so in the Lobby.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermonsey (Mr. Hughes) judges the efficiency of government by the standards of the administrative efficiency of the Liberal party. That is why he has such difficulty in understanding how we can press on with the scheme.

I want to reassure the House and all those who may read or follow the proceedings that the scheme will be ready to operate from autumn 1990. The Government do not accept amendment No. 6, which would deny students access to loans in the academic year beginning in September. We see no merit in delaying the scheme in the way proposed.

By autumn 1990, the Education (Student Loans) Bill should have received Royal Assent, after due debate in both Houses, and the necessary secondary regulations required to establish the scheme should have been passed. The Student Loans Company will be fully operational and I can reassure the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that recruitment is going very well. My Department and the Student Loans Company will have undertaken detailed consultation with the higher education institutions about the role that they will be performing. The funds for the initial loans outlay which are already provided for by the Treasury in the Government's spending plans which were published in the public expenditure White Paper will be available, so we anticipate that there will be no obstacle to the introduction of loans by autumn this year.

One good reason why we should introduce the loans in autumn is were we not to do so we would deny students access to substantially increased resources. The maximum grant plus loan in 1990-91 will represent a 25 per cent. increase on the grant alone in the current year. The loan will provide an extra £420 for students outside London, and £460 a year for students in London.

The amendment would take away that valuable facility from students from autumn this year. I am sure that students would not thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey for that service. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the amendment.

Mr. Alton: Not least because the House would want the hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) to regain their reputations after the savage attack by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), I am sure that the period of reflection provided for in the amendment is urgently needed. I should like to say just a few words before we consider the amendment. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that those on the Labour Front Bench are looking forward to that possibility with such enthusiasm.

The first reason why I believe the scheme should be deferred is that it runs against the grain of the two major pieces of education legislation enacted in the last century

[Mr. Alton]

and the present one. They provided the opportunity for many poorer people being able to benefit from higher education. The Education Act 1870 provided for free education and the Education Act 1944, introduced by an enlightened Conservative Government, gave many people from poorer parts of the community their first opportunity to go into higher education. I came from a working class background and was brought up on a council estate and had the chance to go into higher education as a result of the 1944 legislation. It would be a retrograde step if, as the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South suggested earlier today, the Bill were to deter people from under-privileged backgrounds from taking up opportunities in higher education.

A survey conducted at Cambridge university in 1986 suggested that a half-loan, half-grant system would deter some 46 per cent. of women and 37 per cent. of men from entering university; and some 45 per cent. of state school pupils, but only 33 per cent. of public school pupils. So despite the claims made earlier today, it is clear that such a scheme would be a deterrent to people from poorer backgrounds.

Evidence from overseas militates also against introducing a student loans scheme. We should defer the scheme for consideration to decide whether it really is the wisest course of action. The National Union of Students discovered that, in Sweden and Norway, there was a considerable reduction in numbers of students from poorer backgrounds going into higher education as a consequence of their loan schemes.

8.45 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I do not know what school the hon. Gentleman attended, but I believe, and the hon. Gentleman may well accept, that the biggest deterrent to people from working-class homes going to university was the abolition of the grammar school. I am happy to say that ours was not abolished, but when I was at school people from all walks of life could go to the grammar school and go on to university. Now they are debarred from doing that.

Mr. Alton: I wish that the amendment allowed us to debate that in full, but it does not, although I say in passing that I disagree with the hon. Lady.

Secondly, we should defer the scheme for further consideration because many other unforeseen circumstances have come into play. The community charge will clearly have a desperate financial impact on students from poorer backgrounds. It is already having that effect in Scotland. In addition, higher housing costs are having an adverse effect, and many students have lost housing benefit. We also know that there are inevitably educational implications for students facing financial hardship.

A recent survey shows that a growing number of students are taking up part-time employment to subsidise their budgets. That jeopardises their grades. Some students now have to work an average of 10 hours a week. The survey shows that the grades of those students forced to work to raise additional money to finance themselves are suffering. In turn, that leads to graduates not achieving the best possible qualification.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Who did the survey?

Mr. Alton: It was conducted by the Department of Education and Science, so it is not a matter of what I think but it is another perfectly valid reason why the scheme should be deferred.

Deferment of the scheme would also give us a chance to consider the impact of special categories which I do not believe have been given sufficient consideration in Committee or on Report. I should like to give the House just one example. The medical students at Liverpool university undergo long courses and face the huge cost of financing medical courses and clinical equipment. Special provision should be made for such groups. It is not just special pleading; it shows the Government's failure to recognise what will happen to students in those groups.

Deferment of the scheme would enable us to reflect on the impact on applications for higher education. The CBI, to whom the Government should listen, says that demand for graduates will increase by about 4 per cent. a year. Members of the CBI, other organisations, and even the high street banks have expressed reservations about the effect of the scheme on the numbers going into university and colleges. Our ambition should be to double the number of students in higher education by the turn of the century. That should not divide the House; it should unite us. That is why a period of reflection about the best way to finance higher education is needed.

The massive cuts in grant over the past decade has led to hardship. It has been a disincentive. I believe that student loans will be a millstone around the necks of many young people and will be an additional discouragement to those contemplating a course in education.

Yet another reason for deferment of the scheme is the issue of personal debt. In November and in February I put to the Chancellor of the Exchequer questions that will briefly illustrate my point. On 30 November the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, in reply to my question, said that the level of outstanding debt in the country stood currently at £378 billion. On 15 February I asked the Chancellor for the average level of debt per person in the country. The Economic Secretary replied:

"the average level of personal debt in the United Kingdom is approximately £7,870 per adult."

I put it to the House that it cannot be in the best interests of the country to continue to encourage people to go into large-scale personal debt, with all its implications for family life. Such encouragement puts people in hock, constantly in debt, often unable to meet usurious rates of interest, which seem constantly to be hiked up.

Finally, if the House were to defer this scheme we would have a chance to reflect on the widespread concern expressed by academics and students alike. We have heard today about the opposition of vice-chancellors and other academics. I also want to refer to the reaction of students in polytechnics and universities. Just today I received a further stack of representations from students at Liverpool polytechnic. On 8 November 1989, I submitted to this House a petition signed by 1,562 people at Liverpool university. Many other hon. Members, in various parts of the House, have received identical representations. Those representations ought properly to be taken into account, but that has not been done. We should be trying to achieve an education system that will motivate outward-looking young people. Turning our colleges into battlegrounds will not achieve that. We should be turning them into places of learning, centres of excellence.

This amendment is an appeal for wisdom—a commodity which, sadly, is far too often in short supply. I am happy to support my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and commend the amendment to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 220.

Division No. 77] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mrs. Ray Michie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth

Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A very serious situation has been brought to my notice. Earlier this afternoon, the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition was due to address a meeting of the National Union of Teachers—some 500 people. I believe that, after a short while, 450 people left to attend an alternative meeting in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What has all this to do with me?

Mr. King: I should like to explain, if I may, that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was conducting that meeting in the House, with 450 members of the NUT present, according to the reports that I have in front of me. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ask the Serjeant at Arms what room in this building is able to take such a large number of people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not see that press reports are a matter on which I can be expected to be an authority. It was not a point of order.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This is a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, people are not supposed to mislead the House by repeating Press Association reports which are completely and utterly inaccurate. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) can find any room in this House, particularly Room 16, that can seat 450 people——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be generally wise if hon. Members were to take precautions before quoting anything from newspapers.

Clause 1

LOANS FOR STUDENTS

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, leave out lines 1 to 5.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we are to consider amendment No. 10, in clause 4, page 2, line 38, at end add—

'( ) This Act does not extend to Scotland.'.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to move the amendment standing in my name. This group, as I understand it, is the Scottish group standing in the name of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) is in the process of moving amendment No. 9.

Mr. Watson: I think it is important, although some reference has been made today to the situation in Scotland, to have it spelt out quite clearly that simply to read the legislation across from England and Wales to Scotland is not good enough. Quite apart from their different education systems, the effect, because of that difference, will be that the application of a student loan scheme will be considerably more harsh in Scotland.

This point has been made several times. It was made in the Adjournment debate on 20 October 1989, on Second Reading on 5 December and several times in Committee —all, I have to say, to no great effect as far as the Government are concerned. Whether the arguments by me and other hon. Members this evening will convince them is at best open to question. None the less, because these points are important and remain valid, I and my colleagues will continue to press them.

It is quite clear that Scotland's unique education system has been ignored in the White Paper. Despite the fact that the White Paper was 48 pages long, Scotland merited no more than 18 lines. The lip service paid to Scotland, unfortunately, has been confirmed by Government Members on both Front and Back Benches throughout the Bill's progress.

The Bill completely fails to acknowledge that the Scottish education system has at its cornerstone the four-year honours degree. There has been no shortage of opportunities for the Government to take that point on board and incorporate it in the Bill through a number of amendments. They have chosen not to take those

opportunities. In fact, they have made no concessions whatsoever at any stage in the process on any facet of the Bill.

The four-year degree course in Scotland will be profoundly affected by the operation of the scheme. The financial implications will take a number of forms. First, the additional year's loan which will be required for students studying on a four-year course will be at least 50 per cent. greater than for those on a three-year course. That takes into account a fairly generous prognostication of the rate of inflation. The whole White Paper is charted through to the year 2027 on the basis of a 3 per cent. annual increase in inflation, which is rashly optimistic.

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose*—

Mr. Watson: I am sure that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is about to say that that does not matter, that it is the real effect which counts. I shall give way to him, although I am sure that I can anticipate what he will say.

Mr. Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that the rate of inflation is irrelevant because there is a zero real rate of interest on the loan? Does he agree that it is the real and not the nominal burden which matters to those who are repaying the loan?

Mr. Watson: I do not agree that the rate of inflation is irrelevant. I gave an example in Committee. The Government's intention, charted to the year 2007, is that there should be a 50 per cent. loan element and a 50 per cent. grant element. The present level of grant stands at about £2,200. Therefore, if the scheme were fully operational now, we should be asking students to borrow £1,100—50 per cent. of that figure. If the hon. Member for Eastwood is saying that that figure is inconsiderable and that students will not bother about it, I must take issue with him, as would many others who are currently studying or who might wish to study in the future. I am happy to deal with the matter in either way. On the real value, the figure is £1,100 a year at 50:50. That figure is large enough to prove a disincentive to students and potential students.

Secondly, over and above that figure is the cost of an additional year's loss of benefit through studying for an extra year. The loss of housing benefit, income support and unemployment benefit will in many ways be more damaging to students than the fact that they will have to borrow a significant part of their income while they are studying. Getting rid of housing benefit is an especially punitive measure for students. The White Paper speaks of an average figure of £211 a year being claimed in housing benefit by students throughout the United Kingdom. Again, that is an optimistic figure.

I have been given figures that cover students based in Edinburgh which show that, for the 30-week portion of the academic year for which students are deemed to be studying, the average figure was about £290. That ignores the vacation period, for which the average figure was £209. With simple arithmetic, we see that that produces a figure of about £500, which is a real loss to students in the Edinburgh area. I admit that housing costs there are higher than anywhere else in Scotland and higher than in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned Edinburgh. Does he accept that Aberdeen has had for some time as high a cost of living as London? Whereas students in London receive London weighting, students in Aberdeen have had to make do with the basic grant. That has caused considerable hardship for students in Aberdeen. The problems facing students in Aberdeen can often be greater than for those in Edinburgh.

Mr. Watson: I am perfectly willing to take on board the hon. Gentleman's point. My point is simply that the notional average of £211 is unrealistic when measured against the amount that those who are obliged to claim housing benefit actually claim. Even if those dependent on housing benefit, both through the academic and vacation parts of the year, took the maximum loan available to them, they would still be considerably short of the portion that they are losing in housing benefit. That takes no account of the fact that they cannot claim unemployment benefit and that income support cannot be claimed except in two specialised circumstances. For housing benefit, age is relevant because those over the age of 24 stand to lose an even higher figure, which is a real problem.

Thirdly, the four-year course in Scotland also means that there is an additional vacation which has to be financed. That is often a real problem for students. It is all very well to say that students can obtain jobs in the summer and do not need to claim unemployment benefit, but we all know what the job market is like at the moment. It is often extremely difficult for students to get jobs.

Even those who pick up employment benefit do so for the whole period or even for the larger part of it. At that time, pressures on students increase. If they cannot find jobs, they are at a disadvantage compared to other people who are seeking work. Students cannot claim unemployment benefit or income support if they cannot get jobs. The Government's figures for 1988, published in the *Employment Gazette*, show that the student unemployment rate during the vacation was 31 per cent. That meant that students up to the age of 24 could claim benefit of £27·40 a week, and those aged 25 or over could claim £34·70 a week. Now that money has gone.

A point to which little reference is made is that benefit will also be denied to further education students who will not have access to loans. They will have to rely on the access funds, so called, which in themselves will be inadequate. Can anyone say that the loss of benefit to a potential student will not make him or her decide that it is not worth studying? It must be a real disincentive to those who wish to enter higher education.

9.15 pm

The fourth disincentive to Scots or to students undertaking a four-year course in Scotland concerns the extra burden on parents. The Under-Secretary has made considerable play of the fact that part of the aim of the legislation is to take the burden off parents. Many parents cannot or will not make up grants by parental contribution. In theory, the loans system will reduce the burden on parents. In practice, there will still be a strong moral case, if nothing more, for parents to assist students during vacations. Students living at home will make additional demands on parents. Those living away from home may be forced to seek assistance from their parents if they cannot get part-time jobs.

Students may also need to retain accommodation over the holiday period. Again, that comes into the argument

on housing benefit. The non-payment of housing benefit to students is a disincentive and means that a moral, if not a financial, burden will fall on their parents.

For students on a four-year course, there will be a delay in entering the employment market. That factor must be taken into account. Of course, it could be argued that someone with an honours degree will have a better chance of getting a job and may even get a job with a better starting salary. But if a potential student adds everything up, he or she may say, "I was hoping to do an honours degree, but the financial implications are such that I will opt for a three-year course."

We were pleased to learn in Committee that the doubt about eligibility for loans for students studying for the certificate of education has been cleared up. Students who take a first degree and then want to study for an additional year to become teachers will have access to the loans scheme. While we are not happy about the loan system, it does not make sense that postgraduates should be excluded. However, honours degree students in Scotland who want to become teachers will have to study for five years. The financial implications, on a compounding basis, should be clear.

A further and wider consideration arises in regard to the education system in Scotland. I have said that the cumulative effect of the Government's actions can only be a disincentive to potential students. It is not just a case of whether they will go into higher education. Some who opt for higher education will choose the three-year course, but if the course on which a student has decided to embark is available in England or Wales, he or she may opt not to study in Scotland but to study instead in England or Wales.

The House should consider what effect that could have on Scottish education. At present, about 3,000 or 6 per cent. of all Scots who enter higher education leave Scotland and study at universities and colleges in England and Wales. About 10,000 students from England and Wales come to study at colleges and universities in Scotland. That makes up about 16 per cent. of the total number of students in higher education in Scotland.

Earlier in the debate, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said that about 23 per cent. of those who study in Scotland do three-year courses. I am prepared to accept that figure, but it leaves 77 per cent. who do a four-year course. That is a high percentage, which should not be brushed aside with the smirk and smile that we are seeing from the hon. Member for Eastwood. It is an important factor. Several thousand students do four-year courses.

I speculate that there will be economic pressures on Scottish students to study in England and Wales rather than stay in Scotland, and on students in England and Wales to stay there rather than come up to Scotland. If the figures of 16 per cent. and 6 per cent. which I mentioned were equalised, for the sake of argument, to 10 per cent. —which is not an unrealistic potential effect of the proposals—some 5,000 students would either leave Scotland to study in England and Wales or would not cross the border to study in Scotland. When one considers that there are about 16,000 students in higher education in Scotland, the implications are clear: one or more colleges or institutions in Scotland could close as a result of loans.

I am conscious of the time and the fact that other hon. Members wish to speak. There is a great deal of evidence from the broadest base of the Scottish educational community that student loans will hit Scots and Scottish education particularly hard. The bulk of informed opinion —not political opinion—from universities, vice-chancellors and central institutions in Scotland regards loans as a bad idea which will have a seriously detrimental effect on Scottish education.

If the proposed legislation cannot be applied fairly and equitably, it should be withdrawn. I suspect that the Government will not do that. Therefore, they should at least recognise that the position in Scotland is different and should allow Scotland to be spared the worst excesses of the measure. The only method of doing that is to withdraw references to Scotland from the Bill.

Mr. Allan Stewart: References were made to Scotland on earlier groups of amendments. References were also made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It should perhaps be recorded that the Secretary of State is a distinguished graduate of Scotland's most ancient university, which is more than can be said of some of the Opposition Members who propose to contribute to the debate.

I shall be brief but I hope to save the time of the House by pointing out to Opposition Members the disadvantages of dividing the House on either amendment. Amendment No. 9 would exclude the Scottish colleges from the Bill but would not exclude the universities. Amendment No. 10 would exclude the Scottish universities completely.

The consequence of amendment No. 10 would be as follows. The grant would be maintained at its present level north and south of the border. In England and Wales next year top-up loans would be available, representing a 25 per cent. increase in students' resources. However, in Scotland there would be no top-up loans. My hon. Friend the Minister of State might say that there is a political argument for allowing the House to divide and keeping Conservative Members out of the Lobbies——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: What about students from England who go to Scottish universities? As English students, would they receive a top-up loan while a Scot going to a Scottish university would not? That would be ridiculous.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. It would depend whether amendment No. 9 or amendment No. 10 were accepted. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State were so minded, he could simply keep Conservative Members out of the Lobby in the Division and let the Labour party have the great triumph of depriving students at Scottish universities of loans. As a result, only students in English universities would have loans, so we could go round Scotland saying, "That is what the Labour party wanted", because the grant would not change. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister that there is a political argument for allowing that to happen. However, there are many honest and decent Scottish students who will take up the loans —indeed, who want to take them up—and I hope that my hon. Friend will bear that fact in mind before deciding how he should advise the House to vote on these amendments.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) referred to the four-year course. I put on the record the fact that the four-year course is not unique to Scotland. About 23 per cent. of Scottish students do not take a four-year course. I complimented the hon. Gentleman earlier on his ability to deduct 23 from 100 and come to 77. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right with his

arithmetical triumph. Another reason why the four-year course is not unique to Scotland is that 22 per cent. of students in England are on four-year courses.

Let us go right to the heart of the argument about the four-year course. Maintenance is only a small proportion of the total cost of a student's course, accounting for less than 10 per cent. or perhaps only 8 per cent. Therefore, about 92 per cent. of the cost is borne by taxpayers—and mostly by English taxpayers. If Scottish students at Scottish universities are not prepared to take on the deferred liability for such a tiny proportion of the total cost, they are making a judgment that, to them, the extra year is not worth having. If that is the student's judgment, why should the taxpayer pay the other 92 per cent?

The four-year course is not under threat from Conservative Members, but it is clearly under threat from the arguments of Opposition Members.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I have the honour to represent the oldest university in Scotland, of which the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is a graduate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I believe that the hon. Gentleman found it necessary to take a four-year course, and no doubt with the frankness for which he is justifiably renowned he will tell the House in due course whether he received a grant for each of those four years. As I was saying, I listened with interest to his argument—

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because that is not the case. My education was financed by scholarships and bursaries won in competition.

Mr. Campbell: All that I can say to that is that the hon. Gentleman's frankness has been replaced by remarkable immodesty.

As I was saying, I listened with considerable interest to the hon. Gentleman's argument that, if the amendments were passed, the grant received by students in Scotland would be retained at precisely the same level as in the current year. If the amendments are passed, I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman explain to his constituents, who no doubt have children who are students at Scottish universities and colleges, that the Government whom he supports are unwilling to increase those grants in Scotland. I suspect that as many of those who enter higher education in Scotland come from precisely the sources of support that the hon. Gentleman would seek to tap at a general election, he will have a stormy passage.

I wish to deal with the subject on a slightly broader basis. The four-year degree is not some arbitrary period of time that has been fastened on for historic or other reasons in the Scottish education system. The four-year degree course arises from the fact that the system of secondary education in Scotland is separate and distinct from that in England and Wales. Higher leaving certificates are a broader-based set of qualifications than A-levels, although not necessarily as advanced. They are broader because the tradition of Scottish education, as evidenced by the courses that four-year students take in their first year, insists on a wider education with less specialisation, at least at the outset. Whether that is inferior or superior to what is practised in England and Wales is neither here nor there for the purpose of the argument, but it is undoubtedly different.

9.30 pm

The system of secondary education is grooved to fit neatly into that of higher education. If grants are treated as the Bill proposes, and if that creates in the minds of people who might otherwise take four-year degree courses a desire to take only three-year ones because of a concern about the financial burden that may be laid on them, universities will feel bound to respond. I would not be surprised if, in the Scottish universities in which a four-year honours degree course is standard, working parties were already considering how four-year courses can be turned into three-year ones.

Such is the nature of the market influence, which the Government regard as so important in higher education, that Scottish universities will have to respond to an apparent change in demand. If they do so without considering the consequences for secondary education, we shall have a system that is mismatched to that of higher education. That would be extremely serious. There may be arguments about changing the system of secondary education. If so, let us have them here, but let us not, by stealth or implication, cause the material changes in secondary education in Scotland that a three-year degree course, as a matter of generality throughout Scottish universities, would necessarily imply. It is that feature of the proposals that the Government seek to persuade the House to accept that is much the most sinister and potentially most damaging for education in Scotland.

If we are to change these matters we should do so openly and avowedly. There is no real concern about whether the Scottish system of secondary education is changed. I do not believe that it is an oversight because I do not credit Ministers with such a lack of care.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As someone who taught at Heriot-Watt university for 12 years or more, I well understand why emphasis has been placed on four-year courses in Scottish universities. However, are we not in danger of overlooking the interests of those students who have to study for much longer than four years—for example, architectural and medical students?

Mr. Campbell: That point applies north and south of the border. Courses in veterinary medicine or medicine will undoubtedly result in the student having a higher degree of commitment and financial responsibility. At present, I am concerned at what appears to be a willingness to accept tacitly the potential for substantial change in the Scottish system of secondary education because of the Government's desire to institute a fundamental change in the system of higher education.

For these reasons, the amendments should command the attention of the House. It is frequently said, especially by Ministers in the Scottish Office, that the interests of the Scottish people are best served by the retention of a Parliament that has responsibility for the whole of the United Kingdom. They frequently say that they are the guardians of the Scottish legal and education systems. Their support for the Bill and their unwillingness to accept the logic of the arguments made in support of the amendments makes the claim that they are the trustees for the people of Scotland no more than a sham.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and

[Mr. John Marshall]

Science, I am a graduate of St. Andrews university and I am somewhat appalled by some of the comments that we have just heard from the temporary hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), whose constituency contains St. Andrews.

We are really being asked by the Opposition to accept the argument that students who are intelligent enough to benefit from a course of higher education are not sufficiently intelligent to realise the worth of that education. That is an insult to their intelligence and it fails to recognise the thirst and enthusiasm of most people in Scotland for higher education.

The success of the Scottish four-year course has never been related to financial considerations. Any student who chose a four-year course at a Scottish university—I remind the House that 40 per cent. of all students at St. Andrews come from England where they could have chosen a three-year course, but they chose a four-year course at St. Andrews instead——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: There is an even higher level at Stirling university.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Lady is making my argument for me. All those who have undertaken that course have done so despite the short-term financial considerations. A four-year course has always meant an element of short-term financial sacrifice because the grant in the fourth year would always be less than what the student would receive as a graduate on the labour market.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Am I right that the logic of what the hon. Gentleman is saying is that a university such as St. Andrews should simply be filled with English students?

Mr. Marshall: I said nothing of the sort. One of the strengths of St. Andrews is that it attracts people from a wide variety of backgrounds, not only from Scotland and England, but from outside the United Kingdom. A university should be universal in its appeal, and that is what St. Andrews is.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I agree that universities should be universal, but the tragedy for Scottish universities at the moment is that they are being dominated by students from England at the expense of Scottish students and at the expense of overseas students for whom fees are cut.

Mr. Marshall: I used to sit in another Parliament where there was another Mrs. Ewing who also used to exaggerate. The hon. Lady exaggerates when she says that Scottish universities are dominated by English students. If she were to go to Glasgow university where I once lectured, she would find that the vast majority of students there come from a relatively small catchment area. If she were to go to Aberdeen university—I see the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the former Member for Aberdeen, South, come into the Chamber —she would find that the majority of students at Aberdeen come from the north of Scotland. If she were to go to Edinburgh university, she would find that a large number of students there come from Edinburgh and the surrounding areas. She would find that the vast majority of students in Scottish universities are born in Scotland. They are Scottish students from Scottish schools. Therefore, her argument is false.

The amendment would have the perverse effect of encouraging Scottish students to go to English universities. Under the amendment, Scottish students going to a Scottish university would get no loan, but a Scottish student going to an English university would get a loan. Are we asking the House to approve an amendment which encourages Scottish students to go not to Glasgow, St. Andrews, Edinburgh or Dundee, but to Leeds, Essex, Nottingham or Warwick? That is what the Opposition are up to. It is nonsense.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), and start from the assumption that the Government will not listen to the strong arguments that have been made by Opposition Members. One of the great tragedies for Scottish education is that 1984 has come and gone, yet Big Brother still thinks that he knows better than the rest of us. If we in Scotland pride ourselves on our education system, it is pride in our traditions. We acknowledge that there are opportunities to better Scottish education, and in all the debates on the Bill we have argued that the Government's proposals will do nothing to improve Scottish education but will undermine it.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office should remember that Scottish education and the Scotish legal system are among the institutions that have mainly been responsible for maintaining Scotland's separate identity over the centuries. I have no doubt that the Bill and legislation affecting the Scottish legal system are deliberately being introduced by the Government to undermine Scotland's identity in respect of those two major institutions.

At a time when the House is looking to developments in Europe, it should acknowledge that Scotland's education traditions are much more suited to the European Community than those south of the border. If the Scottish Office put up a real fight for Scottish education, there would not be the same anger felt by right hon. and hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies—but we see no sign of it. If there had been a statement confirming that Scotland's four-year university courses would not be pressurised out of existence, Scottish Opposition Members would have felt less depressed. There has been no clear statement to that effect from the Government, despite the many questions asked of Ministers by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. In an earlier debate, the Secretary of State made no clear statement of his view on the Bill's implications for the four-year degree course. If we could see the Scottish Office really fighting to ensure that Scottish universities became part of the international scene, Scottish Opposition Members would be less cynical, but it has taken no such stand.

I point out to the hon. Member for Hendon, South that many young people in Scotland pass their attestation of fitness and gather the necessary number of higher and O-grade passes, yet are denied access to Scottish universities.

That would not be so bad if universities south of the border were prepared to recognise their qualifications. Unfortunately, English universities, with only a few

exceptions, do not understand the Scottish education system, nor do they want to know about it. Consequently, our young people are denied access to them.

Scottish universities must be truly international. I have no grudge against students from England, Ireland or Wales coming to Scotland, but I should like to see a truly international dimension, with greater emphasis being placed on helping developing nations, but giving their students easier access to our universities rather than risk them being dominated by another culture.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Lady fails to pay tribute to the public higher education sector in Scotland, which has expanded enormously under the present Government.

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman makes a facetious point, which I anyway find difficult to understand. Perhaps he will explain what he means.

Mr. Stewart: I shall try to explain to the hon. Lady. The public sector is the non-university sector—the other side of the binary divide, but if she does not accept the term, that is fair enough; I shall rephrase my question. Why does she fail to pay tribute to that important sector of higher education in Scotland—the non-university sector, which has expanded enormously under the Government?

Mrs. Ewing: I think that if I were to stray into a debate on the whole of the post-school education system, you would rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker. Pressures are being placed on central institutions and other colleges to ensure that the courses offered are the ones that the Government pay for, for example, the Manpower Services Commission courses and YTS courses, rather than observing the traditions of best education in Scotland to offer a wider course. I can say that from personal experience, because I worked in the post-school system before returning to the House in 1987.

9.45 pm

If the Scottish Office were showing initiative in education, we might have a bit more time for it. We saw the interesting report produced by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council, which studied the whole of post-school education. That report proposed an integrated system, but it was rejected by the Government. I have never understood why we have not been able to consider the entire post-school education system in Scotland. No real strategy for Scottish education is emerging from the Scottish Office. We do not have a Scottish committee that can spend time considering the Scottish education system. We do not have a Scottish assembly, where we can consider it, and we do not have a Scottish parliament. We have two parliament buildings in Scotland but we have no government, and as a result we have no real strategy or idealism for Scottish education.

We have not seen the Government make any major attempt to create jobs that would retain our graduates in Scotland. Eire and Scotland are the only nations in Europe that have a net loss of population. Independent surveys have proved the figures. Conservative Members representing English constituencies may laugh, but this is a major concern for any nation, because we have a net loss of population and there is a drift of the youngest and best away from our community. If there were an initiative to ensure that our graduates had real jobs at the end of the day, we might be more impressed.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The hon. Lady is rightly stressing the unique connection between Scottish and European universities. Is she aware that European countries that have introduced the system of student loans that is advocated in the Bill have found that it has elongated courses, as students take years off to earn money? It is now quite common for people to take seven, eight or even 10 years to get an honours degree. That is bound to discriminate against the traditional Scottish four-year degree compared to a three-year degree, and we shall find that it will take not three years but six or seven in future.

Mrs. Ewing: I agree wholeheartedly with the right hon. Gentleman, and I think that he and I have been reading the same research documents. It is clear from the research in other countries where there is a loan scheme or a mix of grants and loans that students are taking longer to complete their courses, and there has been a decline in access for some sections of the population.

I agree totally with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who spoke about the traditional breadth of education in Scotland. People who are studying science are encouraged to learn a modern language—usually a European language—and students who are learning languages are encouraged to take a science subject for at least part of their education. I should be very depressed if we followed a system where education narrowed down at an early stage in a youngster's life. Breadth of education is important for each and every individual.

The Government's proposals will lead to pressure for shorter courses, and breadth of education will be forced out. The only principal who has suggested that we should curtail our courses is Mr. McNicol from Aberdeen university. He was roundly condemned by everyone involved in the education system, and all the literature that I have received from all types of organisations shows that we wish to maintain the broad four-year degree course in Scotland, and the breadth of the education system of which we are so proud.

The House would do well to listen to the arguments of Scottish Members, regardless of whether their constituencies contain universities. We are well aware of the anger felt in Scotland about the treatment of our education system, not just in the Bill but in the Government's actions in general.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I shall be very brief, as most of the points that I wanted to make have already been put very eloquently, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson).

There are many good reasons for excluding Scotland from this iniquitous Bill. Reference has already been made to the differences between the Scottish education system and the system that prevails south of the border. Scotland has a longer tradition of comprehensive education; we have a tradition of broadly based education in both the secondary and the post-school sectors. That is reflected in the fact that the Department of Education and Science has very little remit in Scotland; most of our education system is administered by the Scottish Education Department.

We often hear the Government boast that a Scottish Parliament is not needed to deal with such matters as Scottish education, because we already have administrative devolution. Under the present Government, however,

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

the Scottish Education Department simply acts as a rubber stamp for the DES. For instance, when the DES introduced an assisted places scheme for schools, the Scottish Education Department did likewise. In the post-school sector, when the DES put up fees for overseas students, the Scottish Education Department did the same in regard to the Scottish colleges for which it is responsible.

When the DES abolished the minimum student grant, so did the Scottish Education Department, although in theory at least it had the power to operate its own grant system: by and large, student grants and allowances in Scotland are administered not through the local authorities but through the Scottish Education Department. Now, instead of fighting this alien proposal, the Scottish Education Department simply rubber-stamps the initiative taken by the DES.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said that Scotland was not unique in having four-year degree courses—I think that he meant that it was not unique within the United Kingdom. It is unique to some extent, however: if a student in Scotland wants to take an honours degree course, he or she must study for a minimum of four years. I understand that that is not the case in most other parts of the United Kingdom, although it may apply to certain disciplines and universities.

The scheme will discourage many students from proceeding to a four-year course. That is why there is such widespread opposition to it, not only from students and their parents—many of whom have written to us—but from the university authorities, which are not always on the same side as the students. The rectors and presidents of the Scottish universities have also contacted us to oppose the Bill.

I urge the House to accept the amendment. I should prefer the whole Bill to be scrapped, but, if that is impossible, I should like Scotland to be excluded from the legislation, and I should like the existing grant system to be retained and improved. Sadly, the grant level has deteriorated since the Government came to power more than 10 years ago. We want it at least to keep pace with the rate of inflation, rather than being phased out and replaced by this crazy loan scheme. The scheme will discourage many students from proceeding to further and higher education, and those who take advantage of it will find that it becomes a financial millstone aroud their neck.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister address himself in the Scottish context to the questions which I put to the Under-Secretary of State and which were unanswered? The first was about the factual advice that the Government had received from the bankers. The second was whether the Scottish Office had an assessment of how the Government would attract teachers, clergy and others to the professions that were less financially rewarded, and whether an assessment had been made to see whether that was a problem. The third was whether the Government had consulted Scottish lawyers on the law of liability, it being Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce.

Mr. Worthington: Earlier this evening, we debated an amendment concerning a proposal for a review board for England and Wales and a review board for Scotland. The Secretary of State dealt with the case applying to England and Wales and then said, in effect, "It will be the same for Scotland," and that was the only consideration that he gave the issue.

That has been the trouble with this measure all the way through. Opposition Members have pointed out eloquently that we have not just the feeling but the knowledge that Scotland is a separate and distinct nation and that a pillar of that nation is its education system. Indeed, the only reason for the presence of a Scottish Minister on the Government Front Bench is that there is something distinctly different about Scotland.

Unfortunately, time and again with legislation we have experienced the feeling that the Scottish education system is not being built upon from its roots and traditions but is being bent into an English shape. All too often English measures have been adopted in a Scottish context. That has applied to the assisted places scheme, the opting out schemes, school boards and universal testing.

We have had to take all that and we have had to take this Bill, even though it will do considerable harm to the Scottish education system. It will mean that students in Scotland will start paying for their education a year earlier than students anywhere else in the United Kingdom, because of the four-year degree system.

We in Scotland have a higher participation rate—I will not describe it as noble and brilliant, just as better—because of the Scottish education system. Particularly ironic is the fact that Conservative Members constantly say how much they admire the Scottish education system and only wish the English system was as good. Why, then, must we put up with English-inspired measures that do not fit the Scottish need? The amendment is designed to say, "Enough is enough."

We wonder whether this is the end of making students pay for their education. I am particularly worried when I think back to a visit I paid to the Under-Secretary earlier this year, when we discussed veterinary education. We were selling the merits of the Glasgow veterinary school. The Minister clearly thought the school was magnificent, but I got the impression that going through his mind was the thought, "If it's that good, people will pay for it," and they have started paying for it through the Page report.

We do not want the principle of people having to pay for higher education in Scotland, which is why we are asking that this and future Bills should not apply to Scotland.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): It is astonishing and depressing that the Oposition have so little faith in the quality and strength of Scottish higher education as to think that it would be damaged by the student loan proposals which will amount to less than 10 per cent. of the total cost of a student's higher education.

The amendments seek to distinguish in various ways between the treatment afforded to students domiciled in or studying in England and Wales and those in Scotland. Their practical effect would be anomalous in many ways. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out that the amendments would deny Scottish students the £420 advantage to be gained by English and Welsh students this year under the proposals.

Under amendment No. 9, students in higher education in Scotland outside the universities would not have access to the extra resources provided by loans, while those at university in Scotland could receive the benefit of loans. Under amendment No. 10——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Education (Student Loans) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 185.

Division No. 78] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baliste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*

Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Lang: It is typical of the muddle and confusion in the minds of Liberal Democrat Members that they should have sought to delay the House with that Division. Their muddle and confusion was reflected in the debate that preceded it. Within the space of a few minutes, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) said that student loans would lengthen degree courses, but the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said that they would shorten them. It is hardly surprising that Liberal Members have put their names to these extraordinary amendments.

Under amendment No. 9, students in higher education outside universities in Scotland would not have access to extra resources provided by loans, while those at university in Scotland would receive the benefits of loans.

Under amendment No. 10, students from north of the border would have access to loan facilities to study in England and Wales, while those from the south would apparently have access to a loan if they were studying at university but not at other institutions in Scotland. I cannot conceive of a system that would be more damaging to Scottish higher education.

Whatever the intention of the amendments, the long-standing convention is that support arrangements for students undertaking courses of higher education should be broadly the same throughout the United Kingdom. Although student support in Scotland is governed by different legislation and administered by a different Department, we operate on the principle of broad comparability of treatment. I am sure that that system is in the interest of Scottish higher education, and I see no reason to depart from it. To do so in the way proposed by the amendments would mean that some students would enjoy the benefit of additional resources, while others undertaking the same or similar courses would not. There can be no justification for such a distinction.

Much has been made of the disincentive effect of loans for students wishing to take the Scottish four-year honours degree, but the point has to be made yet again that four-year degree courses are not unique to Scotland; nor are all Scottish degrees of four years' duration. Any special provision for them would thus create more anomalies than it would resolve, particularly in relation to even longer courses, such as those for medicine and architecture, to which the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) referred.

10.15 pm

There is no sound reason for altering the basic principle that a loan should be made available for each year of the course, irrespective of its nature or length. A four-year degree course must by definition be more expensive than a three-year course, for all concerned: for the institution, the student support system, the parents and the student, in terms of both time and deferred earnings.

We allow the students themselves to make the judgment of additional cost versus added value, and we then offer them positive help to take the course of their choice. Students on four-year courses already receive more assistance by way of maintenance and tuition fees than their counterparts on three-year courses, and those students will enjoy the same positive benefits under the loan facility for each year of their course.

The threat that hon. Members perceive to the Scottish higher education system is not supported by the facts: the fact that the full-time student population has risen over the past decade in Scotland by around 15,000—an increase of over one fifth; the fact that the number of entrants to higher education has risen from around 18 per cent. of the relevant age group 10 years ago to over 21 per cent. by 1988 and that by 1991-92 it is on target for 23 per cent. —a level which our colleagues south of the border hope to reach by the end of the century. It is hardly surprising that

the *Education Scotsman*, on Wednesday 20 December, had a headline "Scotland reaches tertiary target a decade early".

Student award applications for 1989-90 are up over 70,000 for the first time, despite the demographic downturn. We in the Scottish Office, the universities and the central institutions are all planning and funding for a further increase in 1991. So to talk of closure of colleges as a result of the student loan system, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) did, is alarmist nonsense.

I do not believe that the prospect of an extra year's study and a somewhat larger loan commitment will discourage students who want to embark on a broad-based Scottish four-year honours degree course. We already know, for example, that some 25 per cent. of the students undertaking four-year courses at Scottish universities come from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is evidence of the value which students attach to those courses. They accept the delay in entering the jobs market that the longer course means. I believe that they will be unshaken in their commitment by top-up loans.

I am in no doubt at all that a student's own perception of the nature and content of the course, together with his assessment of the value of the final qualification—a point very ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall)—will continue to be the most significant factor in the choice of institution and course. To suggest otherwise would mean that the additional year was of little value to students, and there is no evidence to support that theory.

For many years, we have had a broadly uniform system of student support in the United Kingdom. These amendments would end that uniformity and introduce a whole host of anomalies. They would be to the detriment of Scottish higher education, and I invite the House to reject them.

Mr. Wallace: I want first to take up what the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), said when he tried to make the very technical point that if these amendments were passed it would put Scottish students at Scottish universities and colleges, or those from elsewhere in the United Kingdom attending Scottish universities, in a different position, as they would not be entitled to the loans to which students attending colleges elsewhere in the United Kingdom would be entitled. In the strict technical sense that is true, but it is not possible for the Opposition, in framing amendments to this Bill, to make provision—because of the rules of which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Minister are well aware—for the grant system to continue in Scotland and for it to be increased each year in line with inflation.

The Minister cannot be saying that if it is the will of the House that the loans scheme should not apply to Scottish institutions of higher education we shall be left high and dry. The will of the House would be perfectly clear—that the present grant system should continue in Scotland. If the Minister is saying that he will campaign throughout Scotland and say to the students in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale that it will leave them high and dry, he is in for a rude awakening. I do not believe for one minute that that is precisely what he means.

When he resumed his speech after the vote on the business motion, the Minister said that there was a contradiction between my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). Clearly, the Minister cannot understand the distinction between my hon. and learned Friend saying that many Scottish universities are considering the need to reduce their honours courses to three years and my right hon. Friend saying that the length of time that it would take students to complete that course might increase to six or seven years. Perhaps he was not paying attention. If that is the case, he should not try to make smart comments about those points.

Mr. Lang *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Wallace: I see that the Minister is shaking his head. He was probably paying attention, so he cannot have understood the difference. Perhaps he should go back to university.

The Bill is a disgrace. On a later amendment, we shall focus on how little is in it and how much will be left for orders. There is little reference in it to Scotland. There are one or two passing references to Scottish legislation and Scottish places of education, but the only substantive provision relating to Scotland is paragraph 5 of schedule 2, which is headed "Insolvency: Scotland". It speaks volumes that the Government are having to make specific provision for Scotland in the context of debt failure.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman made the same point on Second Reading. Why is he delaying the House by repeating it?

Mr. Wallace: Because despite the fact that the Bill has gone through Committee, there has not been much improvement, so the point is worth making again, if only to underline it.

If the Government consider it right and proper, having regard to the distinctive legal system in Scotland, to enact separate legislation for major reforms to the legal system in Scotland, as distinct from that in England and Wales, why should one of the other great pillars of the Scottish nation—its education system—be lumped in with arrangements for England and Wales?

What depressed me most about the Minister's speech was when he said that, although Scotland had a four-year honours course, other places, too, had courses lasting for more than three years. He did not not seem to appreciate the importance and distinctiveness of that four-year honours course. Again, that must be the result of not listening. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East clearly illustrated how the four-year honours course in Scotland follows from a broad-based system of secondary education. The two are interlinked, so to take away what underpins one threatens the other. That is why Opposition Members, especially those who represent Scottish constituencies, are so concerned about the damage that we believe will be done to Scottish education if the Bill is passed.

Even if we accept the Minister's argument that there are other places where courses are longer than three years, we must wonder what will happen, for example, to teacher training. After four years, students will have to go through another year of teacher training, which will mean another year of debt round their necks before they start to earn—and we all know how little teachers earn, especially in the early years.

One distinctive feature of the Scottish university system is its four-year course and its broad base. Another is that

[Mr. Wallace]

far more pupils in Scotland go to local authority-maintained schools than is the case in England and Wales. That is part of the Scottish tradition. As a constituent said in one of the many letters that I have received, education is not a privilege; it is a right. The Government seek to bring into effect in Scotland what is already the case in England, where education is seen as a privilege rather than a right. We fear that, by putting these financial burdens on students, youngsters from poorer homes will be unable to afford to take on the burden of going to university, or will think twice about it.

If Conservative Members do not believe me, I shall quote from a letter I received from a constituent at Edinburgh university. She said:

"If these plans are implemented then students will lose all entitlement to housing benefit and income support. They will have their grant frozen and be eligible for a loan of £420 a year. Fortunately, I am in the position where I rely on my parents' contribution to finance my education. However, the proposals spell disaster for my colleagues and education in the future."

Not just the additional burden of loans but all the changes in housing benefit and the social security regulations, as well as the imposition of the poll tax, will make it far less attractive for Scottish students to go to university and fulfil their potential. Government policy is shortsighted in the extreme because it means a loss not only to individuals, which is important in itself, but to society and the community as a whole if those individuals cannot fulfil their potential and cannot add their skills to the wellbeing and welfare of the community.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) talked about developments in eastern Europe and the opportunities and challenges involved in them. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale made a similar point in his intervention. It is disappointing that in a letter which I received today the Minister of State said that provision would not be made from Scottish Office funds to enable a Czechoslovakian student, who has spent some time at the Anderson high school in my constituency, to take up a place at Glasgow university if he meets the academic requirements. It is said that where there is no vision, the people perish. I cannot imagine the West German, French or Italian Governments being so narrow-minded in regard to the opportunities opening up in eastern Europe. No doubt those Governments are welcoming eastern European students to their universities, but our Government are putting up financial barriers.

I conclude by disagreeing with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East on one point. He said that if the Government are trying to change the system of education in Scotland, including secondary education, we should debate that here, and not through the mechanism of this tawdry little Bill. I do not believe that we should debate it here; we should be debating it in a Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 144, Noes 201.

Division No. 79] **[10.26 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Battle and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Morrison, Sir Charles
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 2, line 13, at end insert—

'(5A) The powers to make orders and regulations under this section to amend Schedule 1 or to make regulations under Schedule 2 to this Act shall, insofar as they are exercised in order to establish a scheme, in the first year in which such a scheme is to have effect shall be exercisable by order within the terms of this subsection, and no such regulations shall be made unless a draft of the instrument containing the order has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, each House of Parliament.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 17, in page 2, line 14, after 'section', insert

'other than any such orders or regulations falling within subsection (5A) above.'.

No. 18, in page 2, line 15, after 'Act', insert

'other than those falling within that subsection.'.

Mr. Beith: The House will note the length and complexity of the amendments. However, their purpose is straightforward and important. They seek to ensure that the House can properly consider the student loans scheme that the Government intend to introduce. The whole process that this House and another place have gone through has, because of the character of the Bill, given us no opportunity to consider the Government's proposals—that is because the Bill does not contain the Government's proposals. In an extreme form, the Bill is characteristic of the desire of Ministers and civil servants to write the law as they go along. Hon. Members who doubt that that is the nature of the Bill should read it and they will see that it contains almost nothing except the power to make regulations.

The purpose of the amendments is to provide for parliamentary scrutiny of those regulations, of any changes to schedule 1, relating to courses eligible for loans, or of any changes to regulations made under schedule 2, which relates to the level of interest, the manner of repayment and the issuing of certificates. The amendments state that if in the first year of the scheme there are any changes to schedules 1 or 2 that relate to its establishment, they shall not come into effect unless they have been approved by Parliament. The amendments are protective in that they ensure that, if there is to be a change, it cannot be without parliamentary approval.

It is disgraceful that so major and fundamental a policy should be enacted by means of delegated legislation. That so significant a departure as the reversal of the practice of student support in this country should be brought forward on the basis of regulations made by Ministers is totally inadequate. That point has been made in this place and, vociferously, in another place, where it was one of the major criticisms of the Bill.

This is not simply a matter of academic interest. It means, although I understand from those Members who served on the Committee that the Under-Secretary of State did not seem fully aware of this at that time, that the scheme proposed by the Government cannot be amended. Is it incapable of amendment; there are no procedures for amending statutory instruments.

It is conceivable that the Government can bring forward a scheme setting out which courses are eligible for loans, the manner of repayment and the issuing of certificates that is wholly without fault or flaw? It is absolutely beyond the bounds of imagination that they can devise and draft a scheme that does not need amendment.

I invite Conservative Members, who have often proposed, and sometimes had accepted, amendments to Government Bills, to recognise that they will not have that opportunity when we consider the student loan scheme. The procedures are not available to the House, because the matter is being dealt with entirely by statutory instrument. I cannot understand Ministers who, when in opposition, complained about the way that legislation was being pushed through the House, putting their names to legislation that will not have proper scrutiny in the House. The problem is not merely that the regulations that implement every aspect of the Bill proceed by way of delegated legislation, but that they do so under the negative procedure. They are not required to be debated on the Floor of the House, and there is no guarantee that the House will have a vote.

Let us recall what you, Madam Deputy Speaker, know well: the procedure for the kind of statutory instrument under which every aspect of the Bill will be brought in. The regulations are devised by civil servants, and made by Ministers, and it is up to hon. Members to table prayers against them. Those prayers appear on the Order Paper and there is no guarantee that they will be debated even in a Committee. It is entirely within the hands and at the behest of the Government whether they give the House permission to debate the scheme under which student loans will be introduced.

Let us suppose that the Government decide to allow a debate on one of the dozens of statutory instruments that will spew forth to implement the scheme, but as they do not want a lot of fuss about it, they insist that it is held in Committee. They will put a motion on the Order Paper stating that the debate will take place in Committee.

What happens then, Madam Deputy Speaker? Wonder of wonders, if 20 hon. Members wish to object to its being taken in Committee, they can rise in their places to signify that. Consequently, it will not go to Committee. But do not assume, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that means that they will get their way and that it will be debated on the Floor of the House. The result will be that it is not debated at all. The Committee will not be set up and the House will be unable to debate the matter on the Floor of the House because the Government will still be under no obligation to bring this most fundamental of changes, and its major details, before the House.

Let us imagine that those 20 hon. Members, or many more, decide that since it is the only debate that they will get, they will not object, but consent to the Bill going into Committee. The matter will go upstairs to Committee, and for one and a half hours those Members chosen to serve on the Committee can debate the scheme. Any other hon. Member can take part in the debate. But if, during those proceedings, it becomes clear that the whole thing is a complete mess, first, there can be no amendment and, secondly, if the entire Committee draws the conclusion that the Government have made a hopeless mess of the drafting of this part of the scheme, there is no way in which it can pursue that objection. They could, if they felt so inclined, resolve that the Committee had not considered the instrument, and from time to time that has happened. But the consequence nevertheless is that it is reported to the House that the Committee has considered the instrument. It is not even reported to the House that the Committee has decided that it has not considered the

instrument. The fact that objection was made by every Member of the Committee never appears on the Order Paper.

10.45 pm

Let us also suppose that in the meantime the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, chaired by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has, as it does with all statutory instruments, looked at the matter in some detail and discovered that there is an abuse of power or an unusual use of power in the way that the Government have drafted the important student loans scheme. That would not be unusual. It has happened three times in the past few weeks. All that would appear on the Order Paper is a notice that the Joint Committee has drawn the attention of the House to the instrument, but that notice does not give rise to any debating time or any proceedings.

If an hon. Member has taken the trouble to go to the Vote Office, read the report and discover what has, in some recent cases, been severe criticism of the way in which civil servants have drafted statutory instruments giving rise to an abuse of power, he has no opportunity to draw it to the attention of the House because you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you were in the Chair, would be obliged to put the question forthwith on that statutory instrument. The only information before the House is that the Committee has drawn the special attention of the House to the instrument.

It is even possible, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you will recall from an incident about 10 days ago, that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has not even had time to get on to the Order Paper the fact that it has considered the instrument and wishes to draw the attention of the House to it. We had a case recently where the matter was brought before the House for a vote before the Committee could get that information on to the Order Paper.

So we have the major features of the Government's much vaunted, cherished student loans scheme. A Committee has considered the merits of the instrument and has voted that it is rubbish, but all that it has been able to do is to vote that it has not considered the instrument. Then the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which considers the use of powers in the scheme, considers the matter and has drawn attention to the unusual or improper use of powers under the scheme. Neither of those facts is before the House when it is required to vote forthwith on the instrument. That is an absurd procedure, of which Ministers are well aware.

Ministers may claim that the House should change those procedures, but so long as the procedure is so inadequate, how dare they put the whole weight of the student loans scheme on so creaking a piece of machinery? Ministers know the inadequacy of those procedures. They know the importance of the issues raised under the procedures in the legislation. So why did they not at least accept the pleas made in Committee, including pleas from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who spoke eloquently on the subject, that we should have affirmative instruments for the major matters?

If Ministers are not prepared to go that far, why cannot they go at least as far as our amendment, which has the limited effect not that all subsequent changes to the scheme have to go through the affirmative procedure, but that at least the first time that the original scheme is introduced it should be properly debated in the House?

It may not be understood or recognised outside the House that, unless we amend the Bill, we are putting in place today arrangements under which the whole character of the student loans scheme will be precluded from parliamentary debate, amendment and proper consideration.

The Government seem happy that that should be so. That is an outrage and it is not without significance that it was this Bill, and that feature of it, which was so widely quoted in another place when a prominent Conservative, a former Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Rippon, drew the attention of Members to the disgraceful practice of widening the ability of Ministers to legislate by delegated legislation. Again and again, the Bill was instanced as the worst example to date of that practice.

There are records of those who argued before the second world war that Parliament should have the power to bring about radical change unencumbered by the representatives of class interests on the Tory Benches, who otherwise would seek to prevent such changes from taking place. That argument was made by the Socialists, some of whom asserted that Parliament should have powers allowing Ministers to sweep through the radical changes that they saw as being necessary for society. Today, Conservative Ministers are taking the opportunity, which the Socialists never seized for themselves, to make laws up as they go along. The House should never consent to such a practice in respect of any major issue, and the Bill is one such issue.

Mr. Straw: I congratulate the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on an extremely well-informed and powerful speech.

It is wrong for the major part of the scheme to be incorporated in legislation that is unamendable in this House or in another place. When I did a paper on the British constitution, I was informed that statutory instruments were reserved for subordinate or secondary legislation. But there is nothing subordinate or secondary about the Bill, which will be brought before the House and rubber-stamped—if anyone is allowed to pick up the rubber stamp—under the scheme.

As we know, the Bill is merely an enabling measure, with one operative clause and two relatively minor schedules. The rest of the scheme—for which no precise parallel exists in this country, and for which no parallel exists in any other country—will be established by delegated legislation that is neither subordinate nor secondary.

In the 20 October debate, on Second Reading, and many times in Committee, the Secretary of State and Under-Secretary sought to justify the Government's abuse of delegated legislation by claiming that the scheme used for the Bill was the same as that adopted for the Education Act 1962, which set up the present grants system following the findings of the Anderson committee the previous year.

I hope that the Under-Secretary has identified the fundamental difference between the Act and the Bill, but I shall place it on the record so that the Minister does not attempt to draw that parallel again. The 1962 Act made one change and one change alone: it transformed the discretion that local authorities had to make grants into a duty. Discretion had existed since the Education Act 1944.

[Mr. Straw]

After 18 years' experience of that legislation, all the Anderson committee did was to say, "We believe that the various discretionary arrangements that exist throughout the country should be turned into a mandatory, uniform scheme."

Section 1 of the Education Act 1962 therefore states that it shall be the duty of a local education authority to make a mandatory grant. The rest of that legislation was subordinate, laying down how that duty should be undertaken.

That is completely different from the Bill, which begins not by imposing any duty, which could not only be tested in this House and in another place but continually in the courts, by becoming a justiciable matter; instead, the Bill imposes a power on the Secretary of State, enabling him to make any arrangements that he requires in establishing a loans scheme. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed pointed out, all that is to be brought forward.

No right hon. or hon. Member believes that every jot and tittle of Government decision-making should be subject to an elaborate procedure in this House. We all know that that is not the real world.

There are some decisions that are made by ministerial fiat, and it is appropriate that others should be made by regulation, subject to negative procedure—although I accept the criticisms that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made about the inadequacy of that procedure.

I hope that the Under-Secretary accepts that there are other decisions which are in the nature of primary legislation, which for one reason or another are not in the primary legislation but which ought, at the very least, to be subject to the affirmative order procedure. It is not asking very much. We are only asking that, before decisions are made, they are brought before the House and there is an hour and a half of debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman and I both pursued this matter strongly in Committee, and he will be well aware that one of the Government's arguments was that they did not want a compulsory debate every year because of a minute alteration in detail. The argument for the amendment tonight is that, at least in the first year, when we have seen nothing, there can be no argument against the whole package coming before the House.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reinforce the fact that all the arguments against having such a debate every year fall, because we have not seen the scheme. This amendment has a one-year operation period.

Mr. Straw: I agree with the hon. Member, and I congratulate him on his ingenuity in drafting an amendment to enable further debate on this important issue on the floor of the House, after it has been debated at some length in Committee.

The affirmative order procedure is hardly a foundation stone of our parliamentary democracy. It does not allow great scrutiny or amendment, but it changes the nature and quality of decisions that Ministers and officials make. Officials know that what they are serving up will have to go before the House. A Minister has to stand up and justify it, and not have his reputation wrecked through reading out an inadequate brief—all of us have seen that from time to time, but I exclude the Under-Secretary from that. Therefore, the nature and the quality of the decision taken will be better than it would have been under subordinate legislation.

This issue was discussed at some length in Committee. I hope that the Under-Secretary accepts the strength of feeling about it. The amendment is outwith the merits of the student loan scheme. We are not trying to pin the Under-Secretary down. By accepting the amendment, he is not accepting our criticisms of the scheme. He can have all the loan scheme he wants, of the kind he wants, subject only to the approval of the House. That is what we are asking for—that this scheme is legislated on with proper respect for our democracy.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will think again before insisting that the whole scheme should be subject only to the negative procedure.

Mr. Jackson: We had a good debate on these issues in the Standing Committee, and I recommend hon. Members who are concerned—I think we understand the reasons why they are concerned, because high constitutional issues are at stake—to read the account of discussions in Committee.

It will be apparent to anyone who reads the proceedings of the Committee that the Opposition—not only the official Opposition, but the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who was fighting a distinguished campaign on behalf of his party—in the course of argument recognised that it would not be appropriate to put all the details of the scheme into primary legislation. That was accepted and borne out by the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). It seemed to be the premise of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that it would be desirable to have all the details in primary legislation, but the Committee moved beyond that.

The general view of the Committee was that it would be quite acceptable to have most of the legislation in the form of resolution by negative procedure. My hon. Friends supported me in my rejection of amendments at the conclusion of the debate, and it was decided that it would be reasonable to proceed by negative procedure, although the Opposition sustained the argument that there should be an element of affirmative procedure, and that is reflected in tonight's debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is important to put two points on the record. First, the Opposition voted for the procedure that we are now recommending whenever the Committee divided on the issue. Secondly—as I hope the Minister will be fair enough to concede—we argued strongly that, when we did not know the details, it was imperative, now and in the future, for important issues to be dealt with by Parliament in a way that automatically allowed for debate. We never conceded that there should be no guarantee of debate, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) pointed out, there is no such guarantee under the present arrangements.

11 pm

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is being fair, and I am not trying to score a point, but I think that hon. Members will agree that the position changed. At first the Opposition said that the regulations should all be subject to primary legislation, but it was later accepted that they should be dealt with by resolution. There was then a

division of views over how much should be dealt with by affirmative resolution and how much by negative resolution, and it was, I think, accepted that much of it should be dealt with by the negative procedure. That, indeed, is the spirit of the amendment, which suggests a negative procedure in later years and an affirmative one in the first year.

We must see how our debates develop, to establish whether the concern described by the hon. Gentleman really exists, but I believe that there are powerful arguments of principle against what he proposes. First, we have become used to operating under the negative resolution procedure for some 30 years, under the Education Act 1962. The structure of the Act, to which the hon. Member for Blackburn referred, is identical to that of the Bill: the only difference is between imposing a duty and taking a power.

I should have thought that it was more in keeping with the constitutionalist view urged by Opposition Members, and with the spirit of the House of Commons as they see it, for a power to be given—a power that may or may not be exercised—than for a duty to be imposed. Moreover, the procedure whereby every year a mandatory awards regulation is subjected to negative resolution before the House or in Committee has not prompted any complaints; it has worked in an entirely satisfactory way. The document in question is 37 pages long, and is amended regularly. All sorts of detailed points emerge in the course of the year. A graphic case was cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier): we all call it the Podger amendment. The negative resolution procedure has worked perfectly well with student grants, and we believe that it will work equally well with loans.

The hon. Member for Blackburn described the Bill as sketchy, but that description is not accurate. It determines the way in which the power can be used in considerable detail. Schedule 1 contains a list of eligible courses, which can be changed only if Parliament does not object. Schedule 2 requires the Secretary of State to provide for zero real interest, and to set out the amount of the loan and the arrangements for repayment, deferment and cancellation. All that is to be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Schedule 2 also contains regulations to cover the arrangements to be made with the Student Loans Company, or any other company, for the administration of the scheme. In fact, the Bill contains more detail than the 1962 Act: the argument that it provides excessive discretion simply does not stand up.

Although I generally defer to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, who is an expert on parliamentary procedure, I do not believe that affirmative resolution would add much to the effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny. The hon. Gentleman spoke as if there were some power to amend under the affirmative procedure, but the same position applies to both affirmative and negative procedures. Parliament has the opportunity to vote the regulations down in either case.

Mr. Beith: The Minister has made two incorrect statements in the space of two sentences. First, far from my having argued that there was a power to amend, part of the burden of my speech was that there was no such power under either of the procedures that we are considering. I had the impression that the Minister had formed that view in Committee and had become confused about the matter, but he is clearly not confused now: he realises that the scheme cannot be amended.

The hon. Gentleman went on to suggest that items coming under both the affirmative and negative procedures were subject to parliamentary scrutiny. The second part of my argument was that they were not necessarily subject to parliamentary scrutiny under the negative procedure, and that the Government had the capacity to prevent them from being debated under that procedure.

Mr. Jackson: I misheard the hon. Gentleman. I thought his argument was to the effect that one could amend under the affirmative resolution procedure. The fact remains that, whether by way of the affirmative or negative procedure, there is not the facility to amend, so I do not see any great advantage in the plea that Opposition Members are making.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Under the negative procedure, the matter does not come before the House, unless a prayer is tabled, and prayers are never heard. We in Northern Ireland have suffered from that. The Minister should make the position absolutely clear.

Mr. Jackson: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I should be willing to hear any prayer that he has to offer, and my hearing is very acute.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Would the Minister do more than hear it?

Mr. Jackson: I should seek to answer it, too. But there is some dependence on the Opposition in the matter. It is perfectly possible under the negative procedure for matters to be brought before the House, if the House so wishes.

Mr. Straw: The Minister has not had the benefit—I do not say this in a mocking sense—of any period in opposition. We hope to correct that in a year or so, but meanwhile, Conservative Members who have been in opposition will know, as we know, that there is a profound difference between regulations brought before the House under the negative resolution procedure and those brought under the affirmative procedure.

The Under-Secretary does his argument no good by suggesting that there is no difference. Indeed, if he believes that there is no difference, why not concede the case and have the affirmative procedure? There is a difference. It is that the affirmative resolution procedure requires that the matter be debated, whereas with the negative procedure it is at the Government's discretion whether the matter is heard.

Mr. Jackson: I shall be willing to accept tuition from the hon. Gentleman should I find myself in opposition, and I derive great benefit from the instruction of the way in which he handled himself in Standing Committee. I repeat: it is possible for these issues to be debated on the Floor of the House, whichever of the two procedures is followed.

Mr. Beith: In that case, will the Minister explain why so many prayers tabled by hon. Members do not get debated, either on the Floor or the House of in Committee? Will he explain, for example, why the prayer against the regulations under which it ceased to be required for

[Mr. Beith]

garages to display petrol prices in price per gallon, even though that prayer was signed by a large number of hon. Members——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hardly think that is relevant to the amendment.

Mr. Beith: I was asking the Minister why prayers such as that, which had the support of many hon. Members, are not debated on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Jackson: You are right to point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that matter is not within my competence. It is a matter of agreement whether such matters come before the House. On one occasion, I took the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations through a Standing Committee. On other occasions, that instrument has not been prayed against and it has not been necessary to adopt that course.

I have no doubt that if the Opposition, and we, wanted this matter brought before the House, perhaps on the first occasion, it would be possible to agree to do that, without necessarily adopting the amendment to bring it within the affirmative resolution procedure.

There are further practical arguments against the amendment. We agreed on the previous amendment that we should proceed to implement the scheme as from the autumn of this year. It is necessary to press on with that. There would be problems of finding parliamentary time under the amendment. The Government have no desire to short-circuit parliamentary procedure. A negative resolution can be voted down, but we have to make the new system clear to students and others, so it will be necessary to proceed quite swiftly after Royal Assent to adopt the proposals by secondary legislation. The proper way of dealing with that is through the negative resolution procedure. We need to be able to make the regulations and orders quickly after Royal Assent if we are to be ready for September 1990, so I call on my right hon. and hon. Friends to support me in rejecting the amendment.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I wanted only to ask the Minister: if clarity is the purpose, why does he think that a debate for one and a half hours would not assist him? Is it not rather that he wishes to obscure?

Mr. Wallace: I shall respond briefly to the points that the Minister made. He gave no convincing reason why the amendment should be resisted.

No doubt any student of constitutional law who can afford to go to university after the passage of the Bill will be told that one of the purposes of the House of Commons is to check the Executive. That is increasingly becoming a big lie. It is becoming less possible for hon. Members to carry out our duty to keep the Executive in check.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Minister's speech was the impression he gave that the negative procedure should be the norm. Many people who believe that we are here to keep control of those in government would resist that notion. Nevertheless, legislation has increasingly introduced statutory instruments that are subject to the negative procedure. That means that there is less opportunity for the official Opposition, and other Opposition parties and Back Benchers to pray against statutory instruments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) gave a pertinent example when he referred to the statutory instrument on the description of petrol prices. It attracted support from both sides of the House, including the distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, yet despite that, it was not debated on the Floor of the House or in Committee, because it was not convenient to the Government. Increasingly, more power has been put into the hands of the Government, and it is our duty to resist it whenever we can.

The Minister tried to suggest that what has happened to the awards scheme under the 1962 Act should be the model for what we are about to do. The 1962 Act, inasmuch as it made it mandatory for local authorities to give grants, conferred a benefit on students. The amendment does not aim to deal with the merits or demerits of student loans, but anyone would accept that a loan represents less than a grant. If one approaches one's great uncle for some money, one would prefer a straight grant to a repayable loan, so the scheme is taking something away from students. That is an important distinction.

The Minister seemed to suggest that the present system is a method of fine-tuning the engine, and that our annual debate represents an MOT. The amendment deals not with what will happen year after year but with what we want to happen in the first year, before the scheme comes into operation. If the Minister is saying that it will be debated and we will agree it, he has absolutely nothing to lose by accepting the amendment. The fact that he does not do so gives us sufficient cause for suspicion to divide the House.

Question put. That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 158.

Division No. 88] **[11.14 pm**

AYES

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Kennedy, Charles
Battle, John	Kilfedder, James
Beggs, Roy	Lamond, James
Beith, A. J.	Leadbitter, Ted
Bermingham, Gerald	Livsey, Richard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	McCrea, Rev William
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	McGrady, Eddie
Callaghan, Jim	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McLeish, Henry
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Maclennan, Robert
Canavan, Dennis	McWilliam, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Madden, Max
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Clay, Bob	Mallon, Seamus
Clelland, David	Meale, Alan
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Michael, Alun
Cousins, Jim	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Cryer, Bob	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Nellist, Dave
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Paisley, Rev Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Pendry, Tom
Eastham, Ken	Pike, Peter L.
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Fearn, Ronald	Prescott, John
Flannery, Martin	Quin, Ms Joyce
Foster, Derek	Redmond, Martin
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Rowlands, Ted
Gordon, Mildred	Sedgemore, Brian
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Sheerman, Barry
Harman, Ms Harriet	Skinner, Dennis
Haynes, Frank	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*	Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Howells, Geraint	Spearing, Nigel

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

Northern Ireland

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, leave out lines 19 to 26 and insert—

'No Order in Council purporting to bring into force a scheme of student loans for Northern Ireland shall be made under paragraph 1(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974.'

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we shall take amendment No. 3, in clause 4, page 2, line 38, leave out 'except for section 2'.

Mr. Stott: We now move to the part of the Bill which deals with the provisions for Northern Ireland. It is becoming a habit to do so at such a late hour. I would that it were different, but it seems to be an established pattern.

As we are dealing with Northern Ireland, may I, on behalf of my colleagues in the Northern Ireland team and my right hon. and hon. Friends, offer our deepest condolences to the wife and family of Harold McCusker, the late hon. Member for Upper Bann, who died on Monday and was buried yesterday? He will be sorely missed by those of us who knew him and respected his integrity.

This clause is extremely controversial, for two reasons. First, it deals with a constitutional issue, which I will touch on in a moment. Secondly, it will have an adverse effect on students in Northern Ireland, a Province that is quite different from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The constitutional arguments were forcefully brought out in Committee by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). I have read the *Hansard* transcripts of that debate and the Minister's response to my hon. Friends' points and—if I could have the Minister's attention for one moment—I have to say that the procedure by which this scheme is being introduced in Northern Ireland is wholly unacceptable.

It is unacceptable because, only recently, we had before the House the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which changed the system of education in Northern Ireland very dramatically. It was almost a mirror image of the Education Reform Act 1988 in the rest of the United Kingdom. But all that Northern Ireland's representatives had was a three-hour debate in the Chamber, at this time of night, which ended at 2 o'clock in the morning. There were no amendments and we could not interrogate the Minister on his proposals. The order was put forward wholly undemocratically.

Provisions for Northern Ireland are difficult. There is no devolved Assembly. Once again, from the Dispatch Box, on behalf of the Opposition I make the plea to the

[Mr. Stott]

elected representatives of Northern Ireland to find a way, with the Secretary of State, to achieve agreement so that these and related matters can be dealt with properly, not by the House of Commons, but by a properly constituted, devolved Assembly in Northern Ireland. That might be asking a little too much, but at least in my innocence I ask that, so that we do not have to repeat these arguments time and time again.

I am pleased to see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his place this evening as we discuss this important matter.

11.30 pm

Mr. Mallon: I take it that the hon. Gentleman is implying that, if there were a devolved administration in the North of Ireland and if this matter were being considered there, the North of Ireland would have arrangements with regard to its education budget that would not be tied by legislation here. I assume that that is what the hon. Gentleman is saying. If so, it should be put on the record, especially when we anticipate what may happen after the next election.

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend has asked me to respond to that question. I hope that he will allow me to develop my comments about our view of the present procedure and how we believe it should be dealt with. I do not want to delay the House on a pedantic point.

Mr. Mallon: I certainly do not want to delay the House. Surely the hon. Gentleman cannot ask Northern Ireland representatives to create an administration in the North of Ireland to deal with this ourselves, but not put it on record that, if we create such an administration, we shall be given the power to deal with it ourselves. I want to see that on record from the Government and the Opposition.

Mr. Stott: I have no doubt, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend will try to catch your eye a little later. As I understand it, under the Northern Ireland Act 1974, there were provisions for certain matters to be determined by the Northern Ireland Assembly, of which education was one. As the Assembly does not exist, the Secretary of State can make Orders in Council to do what he wishes on education. Had the Northern Ireland Assembly still been in existence, I should have thought that this matter could have been referred to it and could have been dealt with there. I shall expand on that point a little later if my hon. Friend will allow me to proceed.

Even listening to previous debates, I have realised that there is a consensus that the Order in Council procedure leaves much to be desired. The Bill makes it worse. The 1974 Act is the basis for government in Northern Ireland. Transferred matters are defined as issues that are within the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly, the Secretary of State can exercise the powers of the Assembly. The logic of the 1974 Act is that transferred issues, of which education is one, should be handled in such a way as to take local conditions in Northern Ireland into account. I stress the words "local conditions" because they are very important in the Northern Ireland context. They should not be subsumed into United Kingdom law.

Mr. Mallon *rose*—

Mr. Stott: I will not give way again.

Clause 2 not only makes the already unsatisfactory Order in Council procedure worse, but undermines the concept of transferred matters. I understand the arguments about devolution in Northern Ireland, but in regard to the principle, the 1974 Act should not be tampered with until agreement is reached on a new system of government for Northern Ireland. Clause 2 seeks to put the nonsense in the Bill into operation by the use of the negative procedure rather than the affirmative procedure.

Mr. Mallon: We must be precise about this. I take it that the import of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is that, in matters pertaining to Northern Ireland, any future Northern Ireland Assembly would have power to legislate on reserved matters. Would that apply not just to education but to social security, health and agriculture? We have to be consistent, or the hon. Gentleman's case falls very quickly.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interesting points have been raised by the hon. Gentleman, but they go beyond the amendment.

Mr. Stott: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman raising the issue when the debate is confined to education. Education was a transferred power. I do not know why the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is giving me such a hard time, because I am on his side on this. I share his view that the procedure being adopted in the Bill is unacceptable. I have outlined for the record what should have happened.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am on the side of the hon. Gentleman on the negative resolution procedure, as he knows, but the point that is being put to him is that more than education was transferred to the Assembly. He must go through all the matters that were transferred and say exactly the same about them as he is saying about education. I am not on the side of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on that, but we are dealing with the facts of the 1974 legislation.

Mr. Stott: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you would not allow me to go down that road.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already made that point.

Mr. Stott: I have outlined the position on this measure, and I think that I have done that forcefully.

I have already acknowledged the presence of the Secretary of State. I am sure that the Minister responsible for education in Northern Ireland has read in *Hansard* the debates in Committee. He wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) about the points that were made. I want to read out one paragraph. This is the nub of the issue:

"Orders in Council by negative resolution are used sparingly. We only proceed by this route when, first, the matter concerned is transferred and should, therefore, be on Northern Ireland's own statute book; second, the Government wants parity throughout the United Kingdom (the provisions of the Order have to correspond to the provisions of the Bill); and third, when it is necessary for the provisions to apply in Northern Ireland soon after the GB Act comes into effect. Affirmative Orders, on the other hand, tend to take about two years to complete."

He goes on to make several other points. By using the negative procedure rather than the affirmative procedure,

the Government are attempting to avoid constitutional scrutiny of a measure that has no support in Northern Ireland.

We were wholly justified in raising the matter because of the special circumstances that apply in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The fact that it is left to negative resolution means that it does not come before the House at all. Therefore, discussion in the House is abandoned.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that that was the point that I was making. He has simply reinforced the point for the record. When we discuss Northern Ireland matters, which are difficult and complex, Northern Ireland elected Members on both sides of the House genuinely feel that this is an unsatisfactory way of passing legislation that has a profound effect on the lives of people in Northern Ireland. That was the point that I sought to make.

The Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science is not present. That is regrettable, but I recognise that he has been there for a long time. In Committee, in response to points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Hillsborough and for Derbyshire, North-East, he said:

"I must tell the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) . . . that I found his remarks bordering on the offensive when he implied that the Government are introducing discriminatory legislation in Northern Ireland. That is not so. The hon. Gentleman constructed the argument that women and Roman Catholics will be discriminated against by the operation of student loans. I do not accept that argument; it is speculative, and does not support the accusation of discrimination. Neither do I accept the premise on which it is based." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 18 January 1990, c. 365-66.]

My hon. Friend was commenting on statements and written articles by people in academic circles in Northern Ireland who have studied the potential impact of this legislation on students in Northern Ireland.

The Minister should understand that the circumstances in Northern Ireland are wholly different from those anywhere else. The proposals will impact adversely on the entrance into higher education of women and Roman Catholic students and the already significantly under-represented Protestant working-class groups.

The Minister should be careful about his language when he deals with Northern Ireland matters. He should not accuse my hon. Friend of basing his arguments on a flawed premise. If he does, he will show his complete ignorance of the complexities that are special to Northern Ireland.

My colleagues gave many examples in Committee of the way in which the legislation will have serious and long-term implications for Northern Ireland students. I do not intend to rehearse those arguments tonight, although I have no doubt that others may wish to do so.

11.45 pm

One group that will be disadvantaged by the legislation are mature students. The introduction of loans will restrict educational opportunities for older students. According to the White Paper, students over 50 will have no facilities to borrow finance and they will be expected to find the top-up portion from their own resources. Although the 1990s will witness a declining population of 18 to 20-year-olds, and the Government have accepted the need to attract greater numbers of mature students and other non-traditional entrants, mature students under 50 will certainly be deterred by the prospects of substantial repayments spread over a shorter working life.

It is a gross discrimination to exclude those over 50 from the proposed scheme. It is deplorable that mature students, often with long records of national insurance contributions, will be prevented from claiming social security benefits, including unemployment benefit, while at college. What then is the incentive for mature students to return to college and retrain and re-educate themselves?

The other problem that is pertinent to Northern Ireland is that the Northern Ireland institutions suffer a loss of high-quality students through migration to institutions throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, the salaries in the south of England are probably better than those in the Province, graduates will be able to pay back their loans more easily if they take work outside Northern Ireland rather than return to Northern Ireland to put their time, effort and skills into the economy there.

I am conscious that it is late and that many other hon. Members may want to speak, but I advise the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—I would say this to the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science if he were present—that evidence relating directly to Northern Ireland tends to reinforce the view that the proposed loans scheme will increase public expenditure, provide a disincentive to potential entrants to higher education and force students into further debt.

At the very least, the Government should postpone the implementation of the scheme in Northern Ireland until its impact has been adequately researched and considered. If they do not, I genuinely fear that they will be doing a singular disservice to students in Northern Ireland, and the long-term consequences could be disastrous.

Rev. Ian Paisley: This is a big and serious issue. I am glad that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is on the Treasury Bench to hear the debate and, we believe, to answer it. We from Northern Ireland welcome that, because this matter goes right down into the depths of our society.

I should like to make it perfectly clear that I regret that religious discrimination has been brought into this matter, because I believe that the provisions affect the Protestant working classes just as much as the Roman Catholic working classes. I am also afraid that some Republican elements are trying to drive this issue as a wedge between both working classes and to put certain people off supporting the grants. I made that point perfectly clear to the students when I met them.

I also made it perfectly clear that at our party conference we unanimously adopted a resolution opposing the legislation, because we felt that the students of Northern Ireland needed all the help and encouragement that they could get. I feel strongly about that.

My party believes that this issue goes right across the board and that it will have equally detrimental effects upon womenfolk and on the Protestant and Roman Catholic working classes. It will affect how students make their choices, because they will choose those professions that will bring them more money quickly in order to pay off their loans. That means that arts students and others in similar educational and professional spheres will not be in abundance. That is sad, and it will be detrimental to Northern Ireland.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

There is a constitutional issue involved in this. I am delighted that the House, after many years, is convinced about the undemocratic nature of the Order in Council procedure. I have been in the House when nearly all the Benches have been vacant, with perhaps two Labour Members, two Conservative Members and the rest Northern Ireland representatives. We always protested as we stood up that once again the Order in Council was being put through the House in an undemocratic manner.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made an eloquent speech tonight. I hope that the issue will be carried on to the Northern Ireland constitutional debate, because we feel strongly that it is entirely unfair to the elected representatives of Northern Ireland to have no say about the laws that govern the Province.

It seems a great anomaly that I can stand up in the House and move an amendment to the laws that govern England, Wales and Scotland, but cannot move an amendment for the people I represent. The House must come to grips with that anomaly eventually, because we cannot cohtinue to govern Northern Ireland by Orders in Council. Sooner or later, the system will come unstuck. We are now seeing the extent to which the Executive are taking the powers of the House and using them in far-reaching regulations that should be discussable, amendable and debatable in the House.

I have been in the House 20 years and I remember very few prayers coming to it. If there is such opposition from the Government of the day to having them debated, there is little chance of them being accepted, so the procedure is a disgrace to the democratic structures of the House.

These far-reaching regulations will not even be subject to one and a half hours debate. When we talk about one and a half hours or three hours, we have to take out the time that the Government take to present them. They are entitled to present their business, and the Opposition have to do their job and give their view. When that time is taken out, there is not much left for the elected representatives of Northern Ireland to discuss the matter, and other Members are also entitled to speak.

Mr. Flannery: I do not want to rehearse all that I said in Committee, but I want to reiterate something that the hon. Gentleman has said. The last time that we debated an Order in Council, I had sat for three months on the Education Reform Bill. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends remember that, after all that time, the Education Reform Act 1988 was applied to Northern Ireland by an Order in Council with 202 pages, 10 schedules covering 36 pages, and 167 clauses. On that occasion we had three hours for debate. Under clause 2 of this Bill, we cannot even do that. That is such a violation of democracy on the sensitive issue of Northern Ireland that it shows a complete lack of any proper feeling among Conservative Members about the problems of Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman and I are poles apart politically and we have often crossed swords on a Northern Ireland issue, but on this issue we are at one. These matters should be discussed in a proper manner, amendments should be moved and there should be an opportunity to vote on them.

No Government, no matter how good they may be, can bring an Order in Council to the House and say, "This is it. You can't amend it. We couldn't improve it. It's so good, it is infallible and you must accept it." Such infallibility is not the democracy that we need. We need discussion on every matter.

Even the Secretary of State must admit that the Government now see the weaknesses in the Orders in Council that they have brought to the House, but what can they do about them? If it takes two years to get an Order in Council through the House, would it not be far better to introduce a Bill?

Mr. Harry Barnes: One of the Orders in Council that has been referred to, and which we found particularly obnoxious, was the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) described as a replica of the Education Reform Act 1988. It was not quite a replica, because it contained matters such as education for mutual understanding, matters that were appropriate to Northern Ireland. If it had been a replica, it would have been dealt with under the negative resolution procedure, and we would have been unable to debate that.

According to the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), one of the conditions for the negative resolution procedure is that the measure achieves parity throughout the United Kingdom. If a measure is a replica of what has happened elsewhere, there will not be an opportunity to debate it under the affirmative resolution procedure in the House.

Rev. Ian Paisley: These are serious matters, and they need thorough discussion. The hon. Gentleman will remember that we did not get a proper reply from the Minister on the education order. Some of the things that he said could not have stood up if they had been challenged in debate. He misled the House on many things in that debate. That is why representatives from Northern Ireland felt angry and frustrated. That order changed the structure of our schools. Northern Ireland has excellent schools, and before the House pulls something down it should put something better in its place. However, we never had an opportunity to discuss that matter.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said that the education order contained arrangements for education for mutual understanding, which was applicable in Northern Ireland. Does my hon. Friend agree that education for mutual understanding is equally, perhaps more, applicable to many areas of Great Britain?

Rev. Ian Paisley: We all need to understand one another mutually. Having sat in the House for 20 years, I know that each and every hon. Member needs educating on that. We cannot say that Northern Ireland needs it and nobody else does. Mutual understanding goes to the heart of a parent's right to say what way his or her child should be educated. Yet a child can be directed by a teacher not to tell his or her parents where he was taken on a particular day. I tried to raise that matter on the Floor of the House in our previous debate. It needs to be discussed.

Mr. Mallon: We should agree that there is a problem with the way in which legislation is dealt with here, but that surely should not prevent us from debating legislation when it does come before us.

12 midnight

Rev. Ian Paisley: People hold differing views on that subject. I believe that such matters should be debated in a proper devolved Assembly. I was interested to hear what was said tonight about the powers that will be given to that Assembly. No doubt the Secretary of State will be reminded of those remarks. As a politician, the right hon. Gentleman knows that, if he is in the kitchen, he must take the heat—and the heat is usually pretty severe when it comes from Northern Ireland and from both sides of the Northern Ireland divide.

In no way am I, as a public representative from Northern Ireland—any more than my Northern Ireland colleagues, no matter of what particular hue—in a position to influence the legislation that is being passed tonight. It rests with the infallable pontiff, the Secretary of State, to make his decree—and all must abide by it. That is obnoxious to me religiously, and it is certainly obnoxious to me politically.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) for his tribute to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), whom we all greatly respected and who will be much missed from the House.

I do not believe that the student loans scheme will provide adequately for students generally—and certainly not for those from low-income families in England, Scotland and Wales or Northern Ireland. The scheme will create worries and concerns about debt. Some students struggling to stay outside the debt trap may suffer impaired health because of the sacrifices that they will no doubt make in order to live within the resources available to them without incurring debt through the loans scheme.

The scheme will deny many students from low-income families across all sections of the community the opportunity to enjoy a college or university education. Mature students also will be denied that opportunity, and many young women students will be deterred from entering higher education. In Northern Ireland, we believe that, when an educated young woman becomes a mother, she can be a tremendous influence on the next generation, which she will bring up to respect and appreciate the education opportunities for self and family improvement. All elected representatives from Northern Ireland firmly believe that education represents the best investment that we can make for our young people's future.

A consequence of the scheme will be that students from many families will decide privately not to embark on a course of education that will necessarily require them to enter into debt and perhaps become a greater burden on their families. It is not in the best long-term interests of the United Kingdom as a whole for any of our young people who are capable of successfully completing college and university courses not to realise their full potential.

Northern Ireland has an increasingly aged population, and it is the young who will help to ensure a reasonable standard of living for our pensioners in the years ahead. We must support them adequately during their courses of study, whether they last for three, four or five years—or more. They should not be compelled to accept second-best courses so that they may start earning money sooner.

Within Northern Ireland, there are areas where more than 40 per cent. of the male population are unemployed. In the continuing absence of Northern Ireland unemployment figures from the statistics covering only Great Britain parliamentary constituencies that are placed in the Library, I trust that right hon. and hon. Members accept that fact. The loss to students of unemployment and housing benefit will be felt more acutely in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. There are fewer opportunities for the young to find employment, and the number of unemployed there is already high.

In keeping with our opposition to Northern Ireland business being debated by Order in Council procedure in the House—whether it is by negative or affirmative resolution, my colleagues and I are completely opposed to the business of legislation going through the House by unamendable Order in Council—we shall vote for the amendment.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Time is short, so I shall confine myself to a few remarks, but I should like first to pursue the constitutional matter of democracy in Northern Ireland.

Autocracy is crumbling in eastern Europe, but we have had confirmation tonight in the Chamber that we do not have full democracy in Northern Ireland, because the Secretary of State rules by decree, and that is not acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland.

The Order in Council procedure is unacceptable, and that has been stated time and again in the House on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland. The answer has always been that that is the way that Northern Ireland must be governed, since the people there cannot agree.

Tonight in the House, representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, from all political parties, are in total agreement that the scheme is unacceptable and ought to be rejected. Since all the Northern Ireland Members are in agreement on that score, surely the Government should heed our united plea that the scheme should not be pursued there.

I add to what has already been said about the Order in Council procedure—it denies the representatives of the people of Northern Ireland an opportunity to debate thoroughly legislation for the Province. That is why I shall welcome the day when we can have a Northern Ireland Assembly once again so that such matters can be put before representatives there. I know that they would decide to reject the scheme. It will cost the United Kingdom more than the existing grants. Whether the Government wish it or not, it will be so costly that grants will be in real danger of being abolished. I think that in due course the Government will impose a means test for loans.

One of the criticisms is that the Education (Student Loans) Bill will transfer resources from those who need help the most to those who need it least. I think that many deserving students, who should have access to further and higher education in Northern Ireland, will decide to forgo that training and experience rather than be saddld with a debt that they fear they will not be able to repay within the foreseeable future.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the philosophy, "Spend now, pay some time later", is a dangerous one to encourage young people to adopt?

Mr. Kilfedder: I agree. The people of Northern Ireland like to pay their bills when they fall due. It goes against the grain for most people there to contemplate a system whereby they accept a loan and it is hanging over their head. They worry about whether they will ever be able to repay it in full. A student whose family is affluent will have no such anxieties, and will be able to accept any burden of debt regardless of potential—although that does not necessarily mean that he will repay the debt. The scheme will penalise the less well-off, and I find such discrimination intolerable and unacceptable.

We must invest in our young people by ensuring that they are encouraged to enter further and higher education. Although a small percentage of students may act irresponsibly, the vast majority, at least in Northern Ireland, are eager not only to improve themselves educationally and to secure greater opportunities, but to make a worthwhile contribution to the community in which they live.

The scheme will harshly affect many students in Northern Ireland, and in my constituency in particular. Ulster's future depends on its young people: we must encourage them to pursue education opportunities, rather than deter them. At the weekend, one of my constituents—a student—told me that the prospect of incurring a £2,000 debt was frightening, especially as that was an enormous sum for him and his family. I agree with the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Scott): many young people will leave the Province for the affluent south-east to secure a job that pays enough to help them to pay off the loan.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Is it not unrealistic to talk of loans as small as £2,000? Many, if not most, students nowadays are having to borrow large sums from banks at commercial rates to complete their education, and the extra loans could well be the straw that breaks the camel's back—particularly in Northern Ireland, where wages are lower.

Mr. Kilfedder: I agree; I was merely quoting what one student said to me.

I think that all Northern Ireland Members agree that the loans scheme will rob Northern Ireland of its talent. Some people will leave, never to return; others will be deterred from pursuing further education by the thought of enormous debts hanging over their head. A brain drain would be detrimental to the Province: we need all the talent that we can get to rebuild it and make it into the prosperous place that it ought to be.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has said that any scheme for student support must be adequate, certain, simple and socially just. The scheme fails all those tests abysmally, and it ought to be rejected.

Mr. Mallon: Let me refer briefly, in connection with what was said by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), to what is becoming the constitutional aspect of the debate.

Sometimes we Northern Ireland Members become slightly impatient: we are continually being exhorted to do certain things, and it is continually implied that if we do those things certain consequences will derive from our actions. As the Secretary of State is present and will be able to give a definitive reply, may I ask him whether, in the event of devolution, powers relating to agriculture, social security and education could be exercised if they were at variance with the primary legislation applying in England? It is a good time in the political life of the North of Ireland for the Secretary of State to take the opportunity to clarify that point. We await his reply with interest.

12.15 am

I feel particularly strongly about this piece of legislation because I probably came from a vintage that was too late for the advantages of the old system of education and too early for the advantages of the new. The point that was made earlier in an altercation with the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) was valid because I see this whole issue in two terms, especially in Northern Irish life. The scheme will pose a question to the person from a less affluent background. He or she has two choices, either to borrow or to go out to work to get the money. I know from personal experience of building sites in this city—I have more than a passing acquaintance with 10ft deep trenches in which I laid cables—that once we put people in that position, we are taking from them something important in educational terms, and that is student life. It is a crucial part of education.

It is not simply a question of what is learned in the classroom or at lectures. The whole being of student life is part of the learning process. The Bill will take that away, certainly in Northern Ireland, because people will have a choice. They can do what I had to do—come here and work for three months in the summer on building sites or laying cables—or, under this legislation, borrow money. It is estimated that, after a three-year course, they will owe at least £6,000.

Imagine entering a career owing that amount of money. That will be a big millstone around the neck of a young person starting out, especially in the North of Ireland, where few ever reach the 85 per cent. of national average earnings on which consideration of the repayment of loan is based.

We keep missing the crucial point, that we are damaging the education system by taking away that aspect of student life from young people. We are—if I may be permitted a flight of fancy at this hour—replacing the tranquillity of the groves of academe with the stress, noise and bustle of the Rialto. We are replacing Hamlet with Shylock. I stretch the metaphor further, to when Hamlet was debating this very point with Horatio. He said:

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

I make that point seriously, because it is crucial in any discussion of the educative process as opposed to the learning process.

I am opposed to the Bill for other reasons, including the fact that it brings the market mentality into the education system, where it should never be. I am opposed to it because of the damage that it can do to the individual and, through the individual, to society. It is the creation of rolling privatisation within education. It is the creation of a debt culture at a crucial age which, in many cases in the North of Ireland, could remain with people for the rest of their lives. It is happening in youth training programme schemes in Northern Ireland. The courses change when market forces are imposed upon them. That is crucial in the context of Northern Ireland.

In earlier discussions with the hon. Member for Wigan, I was trying to make the point that Northern Ireland does not have parity with the rest of Britain. In almost every respect, it is parity minus. We have the highest unemployment, the lowest average wage, the highest social

security dependency and the highest costs of basic materials such as food, energy, heating, electricity and transport. When this measure bites in Northern Ireland, it will intensify the differential between social security arrangements here and in Northern Ireland. Because of that differential, the majority of parents whose children go on to third-level education are one third poorer before they start.

It has been a bee in my bonnet ever since I came to the House that there has never been any attempt to redress that differential in terms of education or social security legislation. Yet we were told that, if we were good boys and agreed to devolution, we would be able to take those decisions for ourselves.

Does anyone believe that we would be in a position to create a social security structure for Northern Ireland, an agricultural arrangement which depends on the EEC or an education system which would be antipathetic to this one? We should be honest about what devolution means for us. The Bill is brutal in terms of Northern Ireland, because we start off one third poorer and the further we go the poorer we get.

Mr. Stott: I have listened intently to my hon. Friend. Although we had a slight problem in our interpretations of the constitutional question, I put it on record that my two hon. Friends who were members of the Standing Committee pointed out the special differences that apply in Northern Ireland and the disingenuous way in which the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). My hon. Friend will recognise that I said at the Dispatch Box that the special circumstances of Northern Ireland make the legislation even worse.

Mr. Mallon: Of course I accept that. I thank the hon. Gentleman for recognising it today and in Committee.

Parity is of no use to people in Northern Ireland. Parity is an injustice, because invariably it is parity minus the advantages that exist in England, Scotland and Wales. I am not making a political or ideological point, but to talk about parity for Northern Ireland is to do an injustice to the people there.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The electricity tariff is a good illustration of the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Mallon: Electricity is about 33 per cent. dearer, and there is no mains gas at all. We all know the advantages of mains gas over electricity.

On the cost of administering the loans scheme, we have two sets of figures—the Price Waterhouse figures, and others that dispute them. There can be no dispute that Price Waterhouse did not allow for the default rate of about 10 per cent. and for interest subsidy which, in Northern Irish terms, probably comes to about £150 million. There is also the fact that there will be no ultimate cumulative saving to the Exchequer until the year 2092. The Minister is smiling. No doubt he will contradict what I have just said, but if what I have said is taken as a starting point, it has to be admitted that many people are right to say that it would be much better to give students grants than to squander such an amount of money over such a period on administering a system that is doubtful in the first place.

What will the cost of borrowing mean to people? The Minister shook his head when I quoted the figure of £6,000 in the case of a person doing a three-year course outside London. Perhaps the Minister, when he sums up, will be able to confirm that the cost, in terms of loans, to a person studying medicine in London, from start to qualification, will be about £14,000. That figure should be confirmed. If the Minister disagrees with it he will certainly be in dispute with Dr. Nicholas Barr, a very senior economist at the London School of Economics. When Dr. Barr's analysis is set against that of Price Waterhouse, there is no doubt about whose figures I accept. However, the Minister will have an opportunity to enlighten us.

The point has been made that the proposed scheme will have a tremendous effect on access to higher education. Cormack, Osborne and Millar, writing on behalf of the Policy Research Institute in Belfast, say:

> "Our estimate, based on extensive survey research, is that the proposed loans scheme will diminish participation rates, particularly among those Mr. Baker has targeted for special attention."

Who are those people? To start with, they are females. The Policy Research Institute has produced the figures. According to the institute, 49·1 per cent. of females take up and participate in higher education. But in the case of those in the manual work sector—the less well-off—the figure is 30·6 per cent. By contrast, in the non-manual work sector—those who are much better off—the figure is 69·3 per cent. That is the root of the problem.

These proposals will hurt most where people, whether Protestant or Catholic, slot into the manual work sector. A problem has arisen as a result of religious labels being applied to economic definitions—manual or non-manual. Let me remind the House of the figures: 39·6 per cent. compared with 69·3 per cent. That is the injustice of the system. People without financial status are being asked to borrow heavily in a way that is totally alien to their experience and their cultural background. Places will not be taken up, and the manual group figure will go down substantially. The less well-off will be most vulnerable. That is a euphemism; what I am really saying is that the less well-off will be frightened off by the system, and the number of people from that background in higher education will fall substantially.

The system will also force Northern Irish students to study in Northern Ireland. That is inevitable, but it is a very bad thing. For 20 years I was involved in education, and I constantly advised young people, "Go somewhere. Go anywhere. There is a different world out there. There are different values. It is an exciting world, compared with what you will see daily in the North of Ireland." It would be a tragedy if, because of the loss of income support and especially because of the loss of housing benefit, students had to remain in the North of Ireland, where the education system would become increasingly introverted, which must be bad.

Another bad feature will be inflated university admission figures. If more people stay at university, admission levels will increase artificially and people at the lower end of the education scale will be unable to take advantage of higher education.

The loans scheme will be a problem in England, Scotland and Wales. It will be a nightmare in the North of Ireland because of students' different levels of ability to pay when they have finished their degree or higher education courses.

12.30 am

The touchstone is that 85 per cent. of students graduate in Great Britain, whereas the percentage in the North of Ireland is 69·2 per cent. Those figures are readily available from the Department of Education in the North of Ireland. Of that 69·2 per cent., 58·2 per cent. are male, which shows the discrepancy between male and female achievement. To extend the argument, using not religious but social and economic terms, the figure for the Protestant community is 69·8 per cent. and for the Catholic community 75·2 per cent. The reality is that that 69·2 per cent. will not receive 85 per cent. of the average wage in England, Scotland and Wales. Is that just? One can keep asking whether there is any element of justice in any of these things.

The repayment scheme will be a nightmare in the North of Ireland. Debt will determine the destination of graduates. At present, 9·3 per cent. of students graduating from Queen's university, Belfast, which is one of the best universities anywhere, and 17·7 per cent. of students graduating from the university of Ulster, another excellent university, either take short-time work or become unemployed. The figure for the university of Ulster is the same as the overall figure for unemployment in the North of Ireland. They are not getting the full-time, stable jobs which would offer some justification for introducing loans instead of grants.

Earlier in the debate—it seems many hours ago now—the Secretary of State for Education and Science mentioned what the loss of housing benefit means to a student. I understand—the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland may be able to confirm these figures later—that a student aged between 18 and 25 in the North of Ireland who pays rent of £30 a week will lose £139·46p a year in housing benefit. A student over 25 paying £30 a week will lose £267·52. That is out of very little to start with. These are people who have to borrow the money, yet this is what they will lose in housing benefit.

The loss of income support falls into the same category, because it is not compensated for by the amount of loan allocated for the summer vacation. People in the 18-to-24 age range have £27·40 income support for 14 weeks, which is £383·60; so with the loan working out at £110, that is a loss of £273·60. For the over-25s it is even worse—a loss of £378·60.

The figures speak for themselves. The Minister and the Secretary of State earlier gave global figures about the millions of pounds going into the system to replace this and that, but that is what young people in Northern Ireland will lose.

One can say cynically that those people should spend the summer working to get money to help them to continue their studies. That is quite true and many young people now feel it necessary to do so. But can anybody tell me where they will find that work in Northern Ireland? Where can a male student get any kind of work in summer in the North of Ireland? It simply is not possible. In the North of Ireland, education has always been the only alternative to the emigration boat or the dole queue. Now the student finds that, to cope with that loss in the summer months, the only thing for him is the emigration boat.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful for the opportunity to make a short contribution to the dabate. I listened with great interest to the eloquent contributions by hon. Members from Northern Ireland, who know the situation there so intimately.

It seems to me that two main points arise in this part of the debate. The first is the increased detriment that the student loans scheme brings to young people in Northern Ireland. We have heard that described with great clarity, in particular by the hon. Members for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Those of us who have children who are going through those vital teenage years when we wait anxiously for their examination results and look at other people's throughout the country, look with some envy at the results achieved in Northern Ireland, where secondary education standards are extraordinarily high. But those children in Northern Ireland are faced with a particularly difficult decision at the age of 18, when they ask themselves whether they can go on to higher education.

I notice from the statistics that I have read that, for every 350 children in England and Wales who are asking that question and who could not expect any parental financial contribution, there are 450 children in Northern Ireland who cannot expect any parental contribution. Putting it another way, although perhaps with a little hyperbole, poverty already contributes to the education deficit in Northern Ireland faced by young people who might wish to go on to higher education.

We know that there are, historically, political differences between England and Wales, and Northern Ireland, as well as social and economic differences. All those differences contribute to making the student loans scheme much harsher for young people in Northern Ireland and, of course, for their parents in advising them, than for students in England and Wales.

My particular concern and interest in clause 2 is in the constitutional aspect. It is rightly clause 2, for it provides second-class legislation for Northern Ireland. I had always understood—and I think that we all agree—that Northern Ireland is entitled to its own legislation on major issues. It has its own legal framework and its own constitutional conventions. One of those conventions is that it has its own legislation.

The Government are indulging in a constitutional swindle against the people of Northern Ireland. They are producing, time and again, second-class legislation for those people. Why should the inhabitants of Northern Ireland put up with such second-class legislation? Why do the Government consider that Northern Ireland Members—and English, Scottish and Welsh Members who, like myself, are interested in the affairs of Northern Ireland—are not qualified to consider clause by clause and line by line legislation such as the student loans scheme for Northern Ireland? There seems to be a logical fallacy in what the Government have done in the Bill.

I had hoped to see devolved government coming quickly to Northern Ireland—a devolved government to enable hon. Members in the House and others to go line by line through legislation such as this in Committee. They do not have that opportunity. What should the Government logically do? It is clear. Unless there is a new constitutional theory about the quality of Northern Ireland legislation, a theory that gives only such second-class legislation, surely the Government should have either included the Northern Ireland legislation in full in the Bill or brought in a

separate Bill for Northern Ireland, so that Northern Ireland Members would be able to amend, debate and consider the legislation fully.

We know what happens in Committee compared with what happens on the Floor of the House. If, under the negative resolution procedure, there is a debate on a Northern Ireland order, it is taken in the spirit of a Second Reading debate. The Government issue a three-line Whip, the Opposition parties issue a three-line Whip, we all troop through the Lobbies, and it becomes just another part of the sacred political drama in which we indulge night after night in the House and which often does the House little credit.

If we were to have the opportunity of this legislation for Northern Ireland being considered in Committee, the nuances of debate in Committee would enable Ministers to make concessions that they cannot make in a procedure such as Second Reading. Committees enable them to fine-tune the legislation to the particular conditions under discussions.

Mr. Harry Barnes: That might be the normal process that one would expect to operate in Committee, but it did not operate in the Committee on the Bill. There were no amendments apart from three technical amendments, which prompted a debate of one and a half columns in the 580 columns of debate on the remaining issues. The Government put on the Whips, battened down the debate and pushed through the measure because of its nature.

Mr. Carlile: There should have been separate consideration, line by line of provisions affecting Northern Ireland. Conditions are quite different in Northern Ireland, and so are the considerations for Committee stage. I apprehend that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whom we all regard as a kind and reasonable man, might have responded to an analysis such as the Committee might have offered.

For me and my hon. Friends, the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made about the constitutional issues in relation to the previous series of amendments, which received praise in his absence from Conservative Members—in which I share—applies even more strongly here. We should be allowed to consider this legislation for Northern Ireland as legislation, not just as a statement. In clause 2, we have a statement of immutable Government policy, which is not acceptable.

12.45 am

Mr. Harry Barnes: There are three main reasons for welcoming the debate. First, more Back-Bench Members have been here for the debate than are usually here for debates late at night on Northern Ireland issues. Debates on Orders in Council usually take place between hon. Members on the two Front Benches, some Northern Ireland Members and one or two other hon. Members. Tonight, other hon. Members have been listening to the debate.

Secondly, I welcome the fact that there is fantastic unity in the Province on the issue being debated. Members of the four political parties from Northern Ireland have spoken with a common voice. The representative of the fifth party, who chooses not to be here, would speak in the same way. The trade unions, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Fair Employment Commission, universities and other bodies, as well as the political parties, probably with the exception of the Conservative party which is trying to emerge in Northern Ireland, adopt a common position both on the fact that there is something wrong with the procedure and on the substance of the student loans proposal. They are all adamant that the measure is incorrect for Northern Ireland. That point has been made clear in the debate, as it was in Committee.

Thirdly, I welcome the fact that all hon. Members who have spoken have taken a common position. That must make it awkward for the Government to respond, especially when other hon. Members have expressed the same view as Northern Ireland Members. To introduce elements of the enterprise culture and cash nexus in an area where there are such strong divisions, and where we need to encourage unity and co-operation, is disgraceful. There is a host of measures which are problematical for England, Scotland and Wales which should not be introduced for Northern Ireland without proper consideration and scrutiny by Northern Ireland Members.

In Committee we were not fortunate enough to have a Minister from Northern Ireland present. When we came to clause 2, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), who speaks on education in Northern Ireland, should have been present temporarily to respond to the points made. The best endeavours were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), who is very knowledgeable about these matters, by our Front Bench spokesmen and by myself, but because we do not have day-to-day experience within Northern Ireland, it was a case of the blind leading the blind, especially as the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, who did not have experience of Northern Ireland matters either, was responding to the debate.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is it not a fact also that no Northern Ireland Member was a member of the Committee?

Mr. Barnes: I argued that in Committee. That further illustrates the problem. There were no Northern Ireland representatives, just as there were no Ministers with Northern Ireland experience to respond to the debate. We had as good a debate as we could and drew on what experiences we had but by its very nature, it was a second-class debate. That has altered tonight. There has been full involvement in the debate. Having the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland here has meant that at least we have concentrated minds on the issues.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman will recall that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) described Northern Ireland legislation as second-rate legislation. Does he agree that one of the reasons why it is second-rate or second-class legislation—I take the two to be the same thing—is that Ministers and indeed the whole House, are deprived of the educational process that takes place in any Committee? Only by that educational process on Bill after Bill will there be a full understanding of Northern Ireland circumstances and their nuances in the House.

Mr. Barnes: Clearly that is the case for everyone involved. It would be of benefit for Northern Ireland Members to be involved in that process, to put forward arguments and to receive answers so that a growing understanding could emerge from the dialectics of debate.

[Mr. Barnes]

An illustration of the problems that we faced is that, following the contributions made by Opposition Members in Committee, we received a letter from the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough. In my case, it was three pages long. It defended the Government's position on positive and negative resolutions on Northern Ireland measures. About the procedures, it said:

"I think both sides of the House would agree that they are not ideal."

That implies that something needs to be done, although what needs to be done is not clear. It goes on to say why and in what circumstances there are negative and affirmative resolutions. A similar version to the one that I received was read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott).

Mr. Robert Cormack, Mr. Robert Osborne and Mr. R. L. Miller were contributors to the documents of which I made use in Committee. Ministers argued against what they said by saying that they could not establish the things that they were claiming, and that estimates were involved. The estimates were based on an analysis of information.

Mr. Mallon: That may be the position. Now is the opportunity for the Secretary of State to put it on record whether those figures are right or wrong.

Mr. Barnes: Interestingly, part of the other evidence that I used was a survey that had been conducted among sixth formers. Again, I was told that that survey did not prove what I claimed, and that the Government had conducted the research. The letter failed to mention—I have researched the matter—that Cormack and Osborne were involved in the production of that information. Cormack and Osborne and their associates produce regular documents about education in Northern Ireland, and about higher education developments. Presumably their expertise was used by the Northern Ireland Office to draw the relevant information forward.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is ridiculous for Departments in Northern Ireland to criticise any figures presented by those who conduct surveys when they cannot give figures, for example, on the number of disabled young people in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Barnes: I agree that the whole basis on which we had the discussion was inadequate.

The letter to which I referred showed in what a nonsensical way we were proceeding. There we were in Committee with Ministers who could not respond to us because they did not have the relevant experience. When the Committee was over, we all received a letter. Letters are not the ideal way to sort out details of arrangements. The points contained in the letters should have been part of a Minister's brief, which we should have argued and discussed, so that the dialectics of the debate could take place.

The arguments that show that there are extra problems in Northern Ireland that make the student loan scheme inappropriate have been fully ventilated. In addition, there are special characteristics and problems about the participation rate in higher education of working-class Catholics and Protestants—problems which are greater than those in the rest of the United Kingdom. There are also more women in education in Northern Ireland. The legislative element also comes into this.

It will be more difficult for graduates in Northern Ireland to reach 85 per cent. of average wages and so to begin to pay back the money. Perhaps, when the Government reflect on these things, they will decide that that they will have a different percentage for Northern Ireland from that which operates elsewhere. If that is the case, they will be putting forward different measures for Northern Ireland, in which case they should do so under its own rules of the affirmative, rather than the negative, procedure.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I join the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) in what he said about our late colleague, the hon. Member for Upper Bann, Mr. McCusker. I have paid tribute elsewhere to his courage in discharging his constituency duties most notably when in the grip of a terrible illness, and I repeat those words tonight.

At the end of his speech in which he moved the amendment, I heard the hon. Member for Wigan say that he hoped that the Government might postpone the implementation of the Bill in Northern Ireland. I detected from those observations that he was seeking to exclude Northern Ireland from the Bill, by means of his amendment. It will not affect my response to the debate because we have had a good debate, but in practical terms the amendment would not have the effect that he has described. It would mean that the scheme would apply and be operated in Northern Ireland—he will see references to Queen's university, Belfast and to the university of Ulster in clause 1—but it would have been administered by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), and his Department rather than by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

Therefore, perhaps inadvertently, the hon. Member for Wigan was putting an argument which, in the constitutional jargon of the Northern Ireland debate, might have been described as "integrationist", which is a novel thing to emerge from the Opposition Benches.

I said that I would respond to the essence of the debate regardless of the terms in which hon. Members have spoken. The hon. Member for Wigan quoted what the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) wrote to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith): a letter which the hon. Members for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) have also received, although perhaps not in exactly the same terms.

My hon. Friend stated the circumstances in which we use the negative procedure in these matters. The essential issue was that the provisions that we would be deploying in Northern Ireland were the same as those deployed throughout the United Kingdom; that there would be parity throughout the United Kingdom, so the wording of the Order in Council that we would bring in from the Northern Ireland Office would closely follow the wording deployed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, who took the Bill through Committee.

I shall come back to this issue, but I believe that there are—and have been over the years—considerable advantages to Northern Ireland in having the same grants and other procedures for the maintenance of higher

education as those that have obtained throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. I shall not go into precise detail on that, because I should not wish to be greatly on the record in a place where Her Majesty's Treasury might see my words, but there would be reasonably common agreement that Northern Ireland has benefited considerably over the years from being part of a national scheme.

The hon. Member for Wigan raised the issue of discrimination, which had come up in Committee. It arose from a letter that Mr. Cooper of the Fair Employment Agency wrote to the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough, last year, to which he received a reply. My hon. Friend sought to dispel the suggestion that the legislation was discriminatory.

I shall return to some of the implications mentioned by other hon. Members. The hon. Member for Wigan also referred to the academic articles, and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East came back to them. I pay tribute to the valuable work done by Mr. Cormack, Dr. Osborne and Dr. Miller. I have had the opportunity of seeing the extensive work that has been done.

I am

I think that there will be agreement, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said in his letter to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, that in the end the forward prognostications have to be speculative. We can work from the data that we have, but precisely what the effect will be is something that we shall be able to test only by results. The Government's position, in terms not only of Great Britain, but of Northern Ireland, is closely and consistently to monitor what is happening. The trends in Northern Ireland towards participation in higher education, which are considerably higher than those in the United Kingdom as a whole, do a great deal of credit to the Province, and I hope that they will continue.

Alarming observations were made by various hon. Members during the debate, suggesting that dire and apocalyptic consequences would follow from the measure. Having once held the position held by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, I must say that Conservative Ministers have listened to warnings of all the apocalyptic things that were supposedly going to happen during the past decade in this sphere. Consistently, the age participation rate and the qualified participation rate have continued to rise, and increasing numbers of students have come into higher education.

In the context of Northern Ireland, the observation was made when we changed the regulations governing travel arrangements for students in 1984—a measure in which I played a part—that this would reduce the number of students travelling to universities in Great Britain. However, the numbers of students going to Great Britain have continued to rise during the subsequent six years.

The hon. Member for Wigan spoke about mature students above the age of 50. I acknowledge that there is a cut-off point at 50, but for mature students below that age the proposals provide a considerable incentive. Their present commercial borrowing will be substituted by borrowing with a zero rate of interest.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) gave me a warm welcome to the debate, but towards the end of his speech offered me the poisoned chalice of describing me as an infallible pontiff—a phrase which, I fear, will haunt me. He talked of the constitutional and general legislative position. The length of time spent on Northern Ireland concerns in Committee—I had the pleasure of reading the proceedings—and tonight's debate contradict the claim that Orders in Council by negative resolution do not allow Northern Ireland concerns to be aired.

I sympathise with hon. Members for the fact that tonight's debate started at 11.30 pm, but the debate has already lasted 90 minutes. I agree, and the Government accept, that the temporary legislative provisions for Northern Ireland are far from ideal. We should like such matters to be considered in a devolved Northern Ireland administration, as has been apparent.

In the meantime, I repeat what has been said before from this Dispatch Box, that I shall gladly meet Northern Ireland Members of Parliament and discuss Northern Ireland's legislative procedures with them.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I may not have caught it correctly, but I think that the Secretary of State said that tonight's debate illustrates how we can discuss matters under the negative procedure. We are not under such a procedure tonight. We are on the Report stage of a Bill. That is entirely different from the negative procedure.

Mr. Brooke: We are on the approach road to a negative procedure. I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Beggs: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that Northern Ireland representatives do not come here just to give their views an airing? We object to Orders in Council because we cannot amend legislation that is being applied to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Of course I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point. I sought to do that in the observation and the offer that I made earlier. I should be the first to acknowledge that there are unsatisfactory features, but at present one Parliament is being asked to do the work of two, and that creates complications.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brooke: I shall not give way again.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North then came back to the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, as did other hon. Members. The consultation on that order was allowed a significantly longer period than a normal order because of its wide implications for the schools system. A large number of responses were received, and they led to a significant number of changes in the Government's proposals. I advance that not as a rationale for the Order in Council procedure, but just to show that it is possible to amend legislation in advance of its presentation to the House.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) came back to the issue of mature students. I repeat my observation about the benefits of the proposals to mature students below the age of 50. I agree with him on the admirable trend in the participation of women in higher education in Northern Ireland, which again exceeds that in Great Britain, and in a sense sets an example to the rest of the country. The number of graduates obtaining employment on leaving Northern Ireland universities to all intents and purposes matches the number of such graduates in Great Britain.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) sits on the Government Benches but occasionally, as this

[Mr. Brooke]

evening, does not wholly agree with the Government's proposals. I thought that I caught him saying that we would soon have a means test for grants. We have had a means test for grants since my father, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, introduced the 1962 proposals, to which Opposition Members referred.

The hon. Gentleman showed an undue lack of confidence in the people of Northern Ireland in his remarks about saving and borrowing. Again, Northern Ireland leads the rest of the country in the capacity for savings on the part of those who live there.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) made a seductive siren suggestion, that I should be taken right outside the terms of the debate in the same way as he was seeking to involve the hon. Member for Wigan. I would be offending the spirit of the House if I were to get into that at this time of night, but I repeat my remarks about monitoring and parity. Where he got the year 2092 for the year when savings would begin to accrue to the scheme, I am not quite sure, since annex E of the White Paper has the year 2002, but I acknowledge that, if one adds administrative costs, it will take a little longer.

I shall be happy to correspond with the hon. Gentleman on his point about 69·2 per cent. not reaching the 85 per cent. figure. Our figures show that, in the first year after graduation, the average earnings of those graduating from universities in Northern Ireland reach 85 per cent. of the national figure. Our figures and his could be mutually compatible, but we need to exchange further correspondence. The critical thing is that there is an 85 per cent. cut-off in the legislation. The maximum debt for medical students at 1990 prices will be about £7,500, at five times the £1,500 a year when the scheme is mature.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was using the same statistic that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) used in Committee—35 per cent. as against 45 per cent. The figure for England and Wales is 29 per cent.—although I am the first to acknowledge that that simply strengthens the hon. Members' case.

In return, I point out that, as conditions in Northern Ireland have been the same as in the rest of the United Kingdom, the fact that the participation rate has increased so much more sharply, and is so far in advance of that for Great Britain—I am not sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey took that point in Committee—demonstrates the thirst for education within Northern Ireland, which has overcome some of the grant regime difficulties to which reference has been made in other places over the past 10 years.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East introduced a dangerous theory when he said that it was the common position of all who had spoken in the debate to disagree with the Government. If I had arranged for various of my right hon. and hon. Friends to contribute to the debate in support of the Government, I should be rising at 1.40 am instead of closing at 1.10 am.

As to the remarks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East concerning the enterprise culture, I am proud to have with me on the Front Bench my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with responsibility for the economy, the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), because it is by reducing unemployment and creating jobs that we shall make a contribution to resolving the problems of Northern Ireland.

Overall, Northern Ireland has a proud record of participation in higher education, embracing many of the disadvantaged groups that have been described in the debate and referred to in academic research. I salute that achievement over the past decade, and the Government have committed themselves to monitoring closely the effects of the legislation. I repeat, in the past we have been told that dire things would happen. In fact, good results have consistently flowed from measures that the Government have introduced.

Mr. Stott: I thank the Secretary of State for his presence and for the way in which he has responded to tonight's interesting and mature debate. The right hon. Gentleman must now be aware, as I am, that the consensus among hon. Members in all parts of the House representing Northern Ireland constituencies signals a message to all right hon. and hon. Members and to the Government.

I say to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Mr. Beggs) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who tried to kebab me in the kitchen, that I am prepared to stay in the kitchen for as long as it takes, and if necessary to lock horns with them again over important constitutional issues.

The Secretary of State said that amendment No. 2 is technically defective. I have faith in the expert draftsmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who is a lawyer, but in view of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, I will, with the leave of the House, withdraw it. But I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends, and any other right hon. and hon. Members who care to join us in the Lobby, to support amendment No. 3. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

SHORT TITLE, CITATION, INTERPRETATION AND EXTENT

Amendment proposed: No. 3, in page 2, line 38, leave out 'except for section 2'.—*[Mr. Stott.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 56, Noes 108.

Division No. 81] **[1.13 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Beggs, Roy	Kennedy, Charles
Beith, A. J.	Kilfedder, James
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Kirkwood, Archy
Callaghan, Jim	Lamond, James
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Livsey, Richard
Canavan, Dennis	McCrea, Rev William
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Clay, Bob	McWilliam, John
Cousins, Jim	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Cryer, Bob	Mallon, Seamus
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Meale, Alan
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Eastham, Ken	Nellist, Dave
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Paisley, Rev Ian
Flannery, Martin	Pike, Peter L.
Foster, Derek	Quin, Ms Joyce
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Redmond, Martin
Haynes, Frank	Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Rowlands, Ted

Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Eddie McGrady and
Mr. Cecil Walker.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Needham, Richard
Norris, Steve
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

1.25 am

Sitting suspended.

1.35 am

On resuming—

Schedule 2

Loans for Students

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 3, line 34, at end insert

"(d) make alternative arrangements to ensure that no part of the maintenance loan is used towards the educational costs which may be incurred by both a student's disability and the demands of a course as defined under Schedule 1 to this Act."

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 8, in page 3, line 40, at end add

"( ) make alternative arrangements for the repayments of loans by disabled persons which take particular account of their disposable income."

Mr. Hannam: It is good to see you back in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. Your replacement was not quite so attractive. I hope not to take up too much of the time of the House. I thought that I might take five minutes for every hour that I have been waiting to speak.

These two amendments follow a very helpful meeting that the all-party disablement group had in the autumn with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. Attending that meeting were people from various organisations representing students with disabilities, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf. They presented to my hon. Friend details of the problems that disabled students face as they pursue higher education. Not only do those students have to cover the extra costs relating to their disability while they are at college, the extra costs continue after they have completed their studies, and right into their earning careers.

At this stage, I consider these to be probing amendments. They deal with those two matters. Although they may not be correct technically, they give us a chance to hear what my hon. Friend has been doing in the review that he promised when he met us and during the Committee stage. The first amendment would enable the Secretary of State to make separate arrangements to cover the extra costs of disabled students—first, by increasing the maximum amount of the disabled students allowance, and by improving its operation; and, secondly, by setting up a fourth access fund for disabled students.

The latter I regard as a very important proposal. The present disabled students allowance is means-tested, so the maximum of £760 is available only to those who are in receipt of full maintenance grant. It is subject to a range of anomalies. There are different regulations for different age groups, and local benefit officers lack detailed knowledge of the regulations.

We want from the Minister a clear commitment that the helpful assurances that he gave at our meeting in November and in Committee will result in alternative arrangements being made so that disabled students will not have to take out higher loans to finance the extra expenses that arise solely from their disability. One could give a range of examples, but communication aids are the most obvious—sign interpreters, note-takers, what are

[Mr. Hannam]

called versabrailles for the blind and partially sighted, and all sorts of other aids and adaptations that disabled students need.

There is clear evidence that some costs that disabled students have to bear solely as a result of their disability are not being met. The proposed loans system would simply exacerbate those difficulties. It could result in disabled students having to take out higher loans to pay back costs that are not met by the disabled students allowance. That would act as a disincentive to disabled people contemplating entering higher education. The Royal National Institute for the Deaf gave the example of a student who paid £1,302 from her own pocket for an interpreter to ensure that she had the same information as her hearing peers at college. Visually impaired students incur expense in reading and note-taking, such as the assistance of a sighted reader or an electronic braille machine, which can cost about £5,000. A reader can cost £40 a month.

Those sound rather extreme examples—disability organisations are not saying that all disabled students face such high additional costs—but they illustrate the need for a flexible system. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister acknowledged that the costs of some disabled students were in excess of the disabled students allowance. he said that he was reviewing the disabled students allowance and that

"the Government recognise that many disabled students face additional costs."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 7 January 1990; c. 222.]

He said that he hoped to make a statement before the Bill was completed.

The amendments allow me the opportunity to ask some questions. First, can the Minister make a statement on the outcome of his review of arrangements for disabled students? If not, when can we expect one? Secondly, will he guarantee that the new arrangements will come into force at the same time as the loans scheme? Thirdly, will he give a guarantee that the disabled students allowance will not be frozen when grants are frozen and loans introduced? Will he give an assurance that he is issuing revised guidance to local education authorities on the administration of the allowance to enable lump payments and to ensure that the LEAs will use the allowance to pay for human and technical support? Will he give an assurance that the maximum level of the disabled students allowance will be raised substantially to ensure that the few students who need much larger amounts, such as those whom I have already detailed, will receive them?

In Committee, the Minister gave no formal commitment to access funds, although he said that he still had an open mind. If we are to encourage more disabled students to participate in higher education, there needs to be a guarantee that their disability educational costs will be met fully or met more adequately. The disability access fund would guarantee the availability of help for extra communications costs and other expenses.

Amendment No. 8 ensures that disability costs are fully taken into account when loans are repaid, so that the loans system does not discourage disabled people from participating in higher education.

The amount of real disposable income available to most disabled graduates can be much less than that available to their able-bodied peers. Many disabled people must meet extra disability-related daily living costs from their own pockets. They will therefore have less disposable income to repay loans. The take-home pay of one disabled graduate who works part-time as an access officer for a city council is £104 a week. From that, she must pay £20 a week for personal care. She would have to have care costs of more than £270 a month before the independent living fund could make a payment.

The costs of disability can clearly make large inroads into an individual's income. If graduates must repay student loans at rates set according to their earnings rather than their disposable resources, disabled people will almost certainly experience considerable hardship.

Responses to questions that I have recently tabled show that the Department does not hold information centrally on the average incomes of disabled graduates compared with able-bodied graduates. That point was not fully taken on board in Committee. The Minister said that low-income disabled graduates would be protected by the 85 per cent. threshold. However, that misses the point about disability costs. A disabled graduate could be earning 86 per cent. of the national average income—and therefore not be eligible for reduced repayment—but may, after paying the extra costs that disabled people incur week by week, have a reduced income of about 75 per cent. of the national average, which is outside the reduction in or non-repayment of the loan. Also, with the current level of the disabled students allowance, many disabled students already leave higher education with debts to repay because of the extra costs they have incurred while studying.

1.45 am

In conclusion, unless some different arrangements are made, disabled students could find themselves in the position of owing more money than their able-bodied peers at university because they have to borrow to meet their disability-related problems. They then come out and have fewer resources from which to repay the loan because they have to meet the cost of disability from their income after graduation. Furthermore, they have greater difficulty finding part-time work while at university and obtaining full-time employment when they graduate.

I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the interest and awareness about these problems that he has shown in our meetings. I know that he is looking very carefully into them and I hope that he will be able to respond constructively tonight to these probing amendments which have come from the various disability organisations. I hope that he can tell the House that he will bring forward suitable Government amendments when the Bill proceeds to the other place.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In supporting these amendments, I do not intend to detain the House for any length of time. The hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) has outlined very clearly the concerns of the various disability organisations which have spoken to the all-party group for the disabled and, indeed, lobbied many hon. Members on this issue.

Many of us feel very strongly on this point. The Government have not conceded very much during the progress of the Bill. If there is anywhere where they ought to make concessions, it is in this area. We know of the special difficulties which disabled students face. Some of these are the very basic ones of access to buildings, finding suitable accommodation and travel to and from the

campus and on campus. All that involves expenditure. The blind and the deaf need to obtain special equipment, as has been pointed out, to ensure that they can participate fully in the courses available. Sometimes they need the assistance of a care attendant, and we must remember that care attendants are now liable for payment of the community charge, at whatever level it may be set; that is an additional cost.

As has been said, the earnings potential of disabled graduates is often substantially reduced because of the difficulty of ensuring that they have equality of employment opportunities. It would be a terrible indictment of society if disabled students had to face the possibility of extra borrowing and having to find money from a lower wage to repay it.

The severe disablement allowance has also been referred to. Many people recognise this as totally inadequate; I ask the Under-Secretary to look carefully at the regional disparities that exist in the rulings on eligibility, because this is a major cause of concern. Those involved in the assessment of this award seem unable to decide what the real criteria are. Individuals with similar disabilities are treated differently in different parts of the country, not just for this benefit but in the allocation, for example, of income support. It is important that we have an equal spread throughout the country.

I echo the hope already expressed that we shall hear tonight a positive statement from the Department that special consideration will be given to these matters. I think that the case has been more than adequately made by the organisations involved. In particular, we should like to know whether a fourth access fund will be made available. Such a concession would help many people and give them the encouragement which is so essential.

It is not enough to pay lip service to the integration of the disabled into our society and our education system; we have to show willingness, and if that willingness involves money, I think that this is an area in which the Government should be prepared to concede extra funding.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I want to detain the House for a moment to support the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), in which he set out the reasons why he and his colleagues in the all-party disability group have seen fit to make their representations to the Government. He set out the case at some length and with eloquence. The House is right to spend some time on these important amendments, so that it can satisfy itself that the Government have considered this important problem. Alternative arrangements must be made for people with disabilities, and this is the Government's only opportunity in the context of the new loans scheme.

If one accepts that loans are to be introduced, and if that is the will of the House—although it will not be for want of the Opposition trying to stop the scheme—surely all hon. Members must agree that disabled students should not have to devote any part of the loan to the additional costs of disability in the course of their educational work. That must be a principle with which we all agree. If that is the case, the only way in which the Government can ensure that such students are treated equally with ordinary students is by making some provision to meet the extra costs. Positive financial discrimination is essential if such students are to be put on an equal footing with their fellow students in their lecture rooms and classrooms.

Most people are beginning to think that the idea of meeting the extra costs of disability is the appropriate way to deal with disability as a whole. In the context of education, it is easy to quantify the costs for those who are deaf or blind. The hon. Member for Exeter set out perfectly sensibly the additional costs that are incurred for note-takers, and in providing sign language, interpretation facilities and braille machines. All those costs are easy to ascertain and to quantify. They are substantial costs to the individuals. The Government should consider the new technologies which are available. Recent developments make it possible for students to cope with most disabilities if the costs can be met, although they are often significant.

It has already been pointed out that, after graduation, disabled graduates often have a lower earning capacity than their peers, and there is certainly no guarantee of employment. The disincentive that exists at present under the student grants system will be exacerbated in future.

Although the cost for the disabled student is individually high, the collective provision, in whatever form the Government chose, would not be prohibitive. The proportion of the student population who are disabled is relatively small, so common, collective provision with sensible schemes, which the Government could introduce, would not mean a tremendous additional Treasury bill.

Let us examine the schemes available in other countries. The Scandinavian countries lead the way in exempting disabled students from their loan systems, as such students are given grants. In Sweden, for example, interpreters are provided as a matter of course. In West Germany and America, there are schemes for disabled students. I am told that in Australia counsellors assess the additional needs of disabled students and schemes are put in hand. So there are precedents in other parts of the world to which the Government could turn if they were minded and had the political will to introduce assistance.

The disabled student's allowance, which was also referred to by the hon. Member for Exeter, is totally inadequate. It is means-tested, and the conditions operated by various local education authorities vary. Even if the full allowance is given, £765 per annum does not begin to meet the costs that some disabled students face. It flies in the face of the panoply of Government policy announced recently in the document, "The Way Ahead — Benefits for Disabled People".

The Minister for the Disabled and the Department of Social Security went out of their way to try to persuade the House that they were seriously tackling physical and other access, transport, housing and so on, yet this educational measure, if we are not careful and if we do not get it right, will deny access to disabled students. If the Government do not bring forward schemes that measure up to the problem, disabled students will be denied access to further education because of the financial penalties.

Can the Minister tell us what consultations have taken place with the pressure groups and lobby groups which do such sterling work on behalf of those who are disabled? If the Government had gone through the same consultation process that my colleagues and I carried out, they would have been well seized of the urgent need for positive financial discrimination.

We support amendment No. 4, in so far as it relates to special arrangements for disabled students. If the Government are not prepared to make special arrangements to ensure that disabled students do not suffer, amendment No. 8, which would make special provision

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

for repayment by disabled graduates, is essential to give any guarantee that in future those who are disabled and who study in our universities and colleages get a fair deal.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I have a personal reason for intervening in the debate. The amendments are extremely important, and I hope that the Government will consider them seriously.

I wish to speak on behalf of the deaf, in my capacity as a vice-president of the National Deaf Children's Society and as the parent of a deaf daughter, aged 13. Through the society, I have had much contact with people who are deaf and who aspire to further education. Many have not attempted to pursue the possibility because they cannot afford or even get the support that they need. I also know of people who had secured entry to university courses, dropping out, after taking up their places, because they could not get the support that they needed and the grant was totally inadequate.

That is the position under the existing regulations. If we are to move to a loans scheme, under which additional burdens will be imposed, even more deaf and disabled people will not aspire to further education. If they manage to get that far, they are likely to drop out. That is not in anybody's interest, and the House should not allow it to happen.

We should go further than the amendments propose, leaving aside the fact that we do not like the Bill in any case. I have taken some time to study the position in the United States. The rights and assertiveness of deaf people there are more advanced than in the United Kingdom, where deaf people get one of the worst deals in the developed world. They have to fight for advancement of treatment.

The position in the United States is due to the passage of a law through Congress giving disabled people rights of access to college, university and further education courses. The deaf community saw that law as an opportunity to advance its interests. It is interesting to note that, when the Bill went through Congress, the debates were about ramps, wide doors, wheelchair access and so on—about the physical access of the physically disabled people.

Once it had become law, the deaf community realised that it could be exploited to their advantage. The consequence was that they could bring test cases to require colleges, universities and institutes of further and higher education in the United States to provide the necessary support facilities for deaf people at their expense.

2 am

I am working on a Bill, which I hope will have all-party support, to introduce such a right for deaf people in the United Kingdom. It would give them access to higher education and training and support that they need. The amendments have a much more specific and immediate scope. The hon. Member for Exeter moved them ably and with a great deal of clear factual support.

If profoundly deaf people are to pursue a course at university, or college, or even a training course, many of them require the support of note takers, sign language interpreters, lip speakers, radio hearing aids or other such aids. It is immediately apparent that those needs cannot be met even out of the existing facility and that they should not be a burden to deaf people, who should not have to take out a mortgage to pay for their education. If they do, it is understandable that deaf people will not pursue a course, because they will not want to take on that burden.

As the hon. Member for Exeter said, the consequence would be that they would arrive at the end of the course more indebted than those who are not disabled, yet disadvantaged in securing the higher earning jobs. The least that we should do is ensure that we do not introduce a Bill that makes deaf people's difficulties worse. Unless the amendment is accepted, that will be the direct consequence.

As the hon. Member for Exeter said, if the Government cannot accept the technical nature of the amendment, they must accept its spirit. Otherwise, they will make disabled people much worse off than they are now. Even this Government cannot do that knowingly. They cannot say that they did not know, because we have told them tonight.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The hour is late and time is at a premium so I shall be brief.

The amendments are of the utmost importance to disabled students and well-deserving of a firm expression of commitment from this Front-Bench. They merit the support, if necessary in the Lobbies tonight, of everyone who understands their importance. Students with disabilities try so very hard to triumph over handicap and should not be let down by the House.

Amendment No. 4 would require Ministers to meet the extra costs of disabled students in higher education. They can be substantial, especially when they involve personal assistance, not least communication assistance for students who are deaf. Recent parliamentary replies show that only a handful of people now receive the disabled students allowance. Yet voluntary organisations are flooded with requests for help which they are unable to meet.

As a trustee of the Snowdon Awards Scheme, an admirable charity which distributes some £50,000 a year to disabled students in need of financial help to complete their courses, I ask the Secretary of State to consult Lord Snowdon so that he can learn at first hand about the statutorily unmet needs that arise. Ministers have suggested that charities can meet all such needs, but they are overwhelmed by current demand. The Snowdon Awards Scheme can meet less than half the sums requested and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf is in the same position. It is certainly the case that charities are willing to do what they can to help, but they are unequal to the task of providing a comprehensive system of funding. In Standing Committee it was stated for the Government that Ministers were "reviewing the position" with respect to the disability allowance. I hope that the Minister replying tonight will give a definite undertaking both to increase the maximum and to ensure that all local education authorities operate the scheme with humanity and understanding.

Research undertaken by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf into loans systems in other countries shows that three of the nine with such systems exempt disabled students and that all of them provide communication support for deaf students. In several countries, the level of communication support is very high and sign language interpreters are available to deaf students as of right whenever required. This means that deaf students enter higher education, as far as possible, with the same

opportunities as hearing students and can compete on equal terms. Here in the United Kingdom, by contrast, handicap is piled on handicap in that deaf students, among others who are severely disabled, have to run up extra bills during their studies. That is the position now, even before the introduction of the loans scheme.

Peter Large, who is known to and respected by hon. Members on both sides of the House, has expressed his worries about the prospects for its disabled victims when the loans scheme begins to bite. He says:

"Some disabled people enter higher education to expand their intellect and interests and nothing more. Others hope that qualifications will enhance their employment prospects, but later discover that they cannot find paid work.

We are worried that these disabled students will find it difficult to secure a loan and impossible to pay one off."

They will be doubly handicapped and suffer double despair.

Sadly, all too many disabled graduates fail to find work or succeed in finding only low-paid employment. The recent reports on disability in Great Britain from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys provide a damning picture of the ineffectiveness of the Government's employment services. They show that only 31 per cent. of all disabled adults of working age are actually working. That compares with 69 per cent. of the population as a whole. The ratio for men is even worse—33 per cent. compared with 78 per cent.

These findings shout the need for the amendments, and the Government's own record in terms of jobs offered to disabled people is among the worst of all employers. How many does the Department of Education and Science employ? Is the Secretary of State aware that the earnings of disabled people who do find work are substantially lower than those of non-disabled employees?

The Secretary of State may say that unemployed graduates or those on very low pay will not be required to repay the loan, but amendment No. 8 addresses the fact that even many disabled people in better financial circumstances have to spend all their disposable incomes on the extra costs arising from their disabilities.

The Government's recent document "The Way Ahead", published on 10 January, gives no hope at all to the severely disabled young people with whom the amendments are concerned. A total misunderstanding of the OPCS research has led Ministers to claim that the attendance allowance and the mobility allowance exceed disabled people's extra costs. Nothing could be further from the truth as the independent living fund has so amply demonstrated. Unless the loan repayment arrangements take account of the actual expenses of each graduate, Ministers will be guilty of robbing severely disabled young people of the essential help that they need to live their lives as full and equal members of the community.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on the amendments and my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) who worked with him in tabling them.

What we now seek is a firm indication that the Government accept the case that we have argued for these amendments. If it is not forthcoming, I hope very much that the amendments will be pressed to a Division.

Mr. Jackson: I appreciate the courteous but firm way in which all hon. Members have put their views, and the all-party meetings that I have had with people who are concerned about the disabled, as the Government are. We are sympathetic to the needs and circumstances of students and graduates with disabilities and want to ensure that they are not unfairly treated.

I shall review the position of students with disabilities and the student support arrangements. They will continue to be eligible for income support and housing benefit. Therefore, they should not generally need access fund assistance with housing costs or as a result of inability to work during the long vacation, because their needs will be covered by the social security system.

Disabled students will also be eligible for help from those access funds, where appropriate, in individual cases. That will be a matter of discretion for the higher education institutions. I note what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). We shall consider the suggestion that there should be a special access fund.

Disabled students who are eligible for disabled benefits will continue to receive them. They will also continue to be eligible for the disabled students allowance which is specifically intended to help meet the extra costs necessarily incurred in attending a course.

There is assistance for disabled students from the disabled students allowance, social security benefits, disability benefits, the access funds and—in addition to all that, not replacing it as with other students—the top-up loan. Some institutions make additional equipment and other resources available to disabled students, as do some local education authorities. One should never forget to mention the valuable assistance from charitable and other voluntary organisations.

I turn to amendment No. 4. We do not want to prevent disabled students from using the loan facility if they choose to do so to meet educational costs, however they might be defined, related to their disability. In practice, it would be hard to prevent them from doing so, because a person's budget is a single budget, no matter what different sources of funding go into it.

The Government are looking at the representations that have been made in support of changes to the level and operation of the disabled students allowance, which is payable with the mandatory grant. We are also looking carefully at the evidence submitted to us by the various groups supporting the interests of those with disabilities to see whether a case can be made for alternative provision for the repayment of the loans.

In relation to both those matters, I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter that I am not yet in a position to make a statement, but I am happy to reaffirm what was said earlier, that we intend to do so before the Bill completes its passage through Parliament.

If any further action for disabled people is needed, beyond the disabled students allowance and the loan deferment provisions, either now or in the future, the right method is to do so through the regulations that we are able to make under the 1988 Act and under this Bill. We have the flexibility, because the House has voted with us, to enable us to do that.

However, I stress again that the Government are sympathetic to the needs and circumstances of disabled students and graduates. We want to ensure that they are not unfairly treated. It is important to retain flexibility. We are open to persuasion and are demonstrating that approach by looking carefully at the representations that we have received. We have undertaken to monitor the

[Mr. Jackson]

impact of the operation of the student loans scheme. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman will withdraw the amendment——

Mr. Alfred Morris: Am I right in thinking that the Minister is giving a commitment tonight that the Government will amend the Bill in the way that has been recommended from hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Jackson: We are still considering the position sympathetically. I am not yet in a position to make a statement, but the Government will certainly do so before the Bill completes its passage.

Mr. Hannam: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for his assurance that this is a serious matter, worthy of consideration by the Government, which will result in a statement being made during the Bill's passage. In the light of that assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

2.14 am

Mr. MacGregor: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has had a thorough consideration in the House and that consideration has shown that it is a fair and sensible way of increasing resources for students, reducing the burden on parents and taxpayers and ensuring, as is the Government's aim, that we have increased numbers of students in higher education. Therefore, I hope that the Bill will receive the approval of the House.

2.15 am

Mr. Straw: The hour is late. We have had substantial consideration of the Bill today. The measure is worse now than it was on Second Reading on 5 December. It is a bad Bill, badly drafted and an affront to the House in the arbitrary powers that it gives the Secretary of State, but above all it is a bad deal for the student, for the taxpayer and for higher education. We shall oppose its Third Reading in the Lobby tonight.

2.16 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Bill is a dangerous step for education. It is unprecedented, because Britain has never gone from a system of grants to one either totally or partly of loans. The legislation that introduced mandatory grants in 1962 is no precedent.

Throughout, the Bill has been an engine with no train. The Government tried to couple the banks as carriages. That very nearly derailed the train. They are trying to couple the universities as carriages, but it is clear that they are still far apart.

There have been only two minor amendments to the schedules in Committee and there has been only one undertaking to consider one of the subjects that has been raised on Report.

The arguments for keeping grants as opposed to introducing loans have been overwhelmingly made. The burden of proof is on those who wish to change the system to make out their case. The obligation is on them to show that education access will be increased rather than diminished, but they have not done so. This is an enormous risk and an enormous gamble.

It can be argued that the Government are as isolated at home on this issue as the Prime Minister is isolated abroad on the issue of sanctions. Some Conservative Members are as unhappy with the Bill as they are with the Prime Minister's policy on South Africa.

The Government said that the Bill would produce more resources, but they did not say that those resources would come not from the taxpayer but from the students. They said that students would be better off, but having a larger debt is a funny way of being better off. The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State have willingly entered into debate, but debate without listening to the responses that they have received is hardly responsible debate.

We do not believe in arguing for rich students to do better at the expense of those who are already poor. We do not believe in arguing for advantage for those who already have advantage if at the same time we have a scheme that will be a disincentive to those who find it most difficult to get into higher education. We do not believe that everybody needs to be on longer courses, but we do believe that those who are required to be on longer courses should not be discriminated against by virtue of that fact.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I believe that education needs investment, non-discrimination, and above all in Britain in 1990, nothing that will prejudice its extension to those who find it most difficult to obtain. My right hon. and hon. Friends representing constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales, and right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House representing Northern Ireland constituencies, made it clear that the Bill is enormously unpopular. It is unpopular among the tens of thousands of students who protested today, their parents, vice-chancellors and principals, and heads of institutions —all of whom also made it clear to the Government how unpopular the scheme is. Arguments adduced over the few weeks that the Bill has been debated also made that clear.

In Committee, we came within two votes of defeating the Government, and tonight we came within 43 votes of doing so with an amendment to postpone the scheme's implementation. At only one stage this evening did the Government have a majority of more than 60, yet they have an overall majority in the House of more than 100.

The Government have been forewarned of the trouble that still lies ahead for them in getting the Bill on to the statute book. The Prime Minister began her ministerial career in education, in a job that won for her the label "Margaret Thatcher, milk snatcher". She will end her career, and take with her the Secretary of State, as "Margaret Thatcher, grant snatcher".

The burden of proof of the need for a change from grants to loans is on the Government. They have failed to discharge that burden of proof. They are risking the educational futures of thousands of people, which is a risk that no Government should be prepared to take. That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends and I urge right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to join us in voting against the Third Reading of this iniquitous Bill.

2.23 am

Mr. Jackson: There is common agreement that we should expand higher education, and the Government are committed to doing so. We demonstrated that by announcing in the Autumn Statement additional funding of £750 million over the next three years. We expect that the participation rate for 18-year-olds will rise from 16 per cent. to 19 per cent. in the near future. However, with growing student numbers, we cannot for ever commit increasing amounts of taxpayers' money to paying for students' living costs. Nor can we expect parents to meet ever-higher parental contributions.

Loans allow us to reconcile conflicting pressures. They mean more money in students' pockets and less of a burden on taxpayers and parents. In international terms, loans are a perfectly ordinary element in student support.

On two previous occasions, I have been unable to complete an anecdote, but I take the opportunity to do so now. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who started us on this long and glorious path, visited Sweden in the course of the studies that lay behind the proposals. He asked the Swedish Education Minister why Sweden, as a model of social democracy, had operated for 30 years a student loans system far less generous than any scheme that the British Government could hope to operate. The Minister explained that they did not believe in taking money through the tax system from the less well-off to give to better-off people, and that loans improved students' motivation and commitment.

That is the testimony from Sweden. Every country around the world that operates a student support system based on loans testifies to its benefits. That will be true of Britain, too. Loans will be good for all concerned. They will provide more resources for students, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer and on parents.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 100, Noes 49.

Division No. 82] [2.24 am

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Needham, Richard
Norris, Steve
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Begg, Ray
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allan *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. James Paice be discharged from the Employment Committee, and Mr. Chris Butler be added to the Committee —*[Sir Michael Shaw, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Sir Ian Lloyd be discharged from the Energy Committee, and Mr. Michael Colvin be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Michael Shaw, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ordered,

That Mr. Malcolm Bruce be discharged from the Trade and Industry Committee, and Mr. Menzies Campbell be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Michael Shaw, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Acute Hospital (Antrim)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

2.36 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): My Northern Ireland colleagues and I wish to put on record our appreciation of the remarks made today by the Secretary of State and, from the Opposition Front Bench, by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) about our late colleague, Harold McCusker. All hon. Members from Northern Ireland will miss his contribution to our counsels. We salute his memory as a gallant Ulsterman.

A good case does not require long argument. It can be put concisely. The need for acute hospital services in the Ballymoney, Moyle, Ballycastle and Coleraine areas is beyond dispute. I should make it clear for the record that Moyle hospital is not in the Moyle district council area. It is in Larne, and I give my wholehearted support to the campaign to keep that hospital as an acute hospital, just as I should like the Waveney hospital in Ballymena retained as an acute hospital.

In 1987 there was a population of about 88,000 people in the Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Coleraine districts. That was estimated to rise to about 94,000 by the year 2002. At the height of the tourist season, the population peaks at more than 150,000. It is agreed that 320 beds, plus psychiatric provision, are urgently required.

The history of coming to grips with meeting the hospital requirements of the area is tragic. Promises have been made and broken. Decisions have been arrived at after long debate, only to be overturned and overruled, sometimes in an unconstitutional way. But the time has come to take a new step forward to meet the need, and that is what this debate is about.

We need unity. All the past rivalry between members of the medical profession in Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Coleraine districts has been laid to rest. A Northern health and social services board resolution, which was supported by 41 votes to two, support the building of a new, purpose-built acute hospital to replace the workhouse buildings on the Route hospital site in Ballymoney and the piecemeal development on the Coleraine site.

The councils in the areas concerned have now also united and the Ulster Unionists, the Democratic Unionists, the SDLP and the Alliance parties have given their wholehearted support, as have the Churches.

The present proposal is to spend £20 million on the Coleraine hospital. After visiting that hospital, the Under-Secretary of State, Lord Skelmersdale, said that it was a shambles. We do not want to be involved in the partial rebuilding of a shambles. The proper course is to build a brand new hospital to meet the urgent need. The cost of doing that, according to data in the report of Ceefa Services Ltd.—that report was prepared by the board and the Department of Health and Social Services—would be only 10 per cent. more than the partial rebuild of Coleraine. The board has now decided on an option reappraisal. Talking about money, the Eastern board has been over-funded by £14·75 million, while the Northern board has been under-funded by £8·5 million. Some money is owing to the Northern board.

Therefore, we call on the Minister to ensure that the DHSS in Northern Ireland will back the board and its administrative officers and, recognising the acute hospital requirements of our districts, will join us in promoting their urgent development in accordance with the wishes of a united community and in keeping with decisions that have already been made in favour of building a new hospital.

The infrastructure of the Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle district will remain incomplete, and at times dangerously inadequate, until the new acute hospital has been constructed. The year 1997 must become the target for completion and cease to be put forward as a tentative date for commencing the new hospital which we so badly need. Tonight my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. W. McCrea) will contribute to the debate and make other important points.

2.40 am

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I support the plea that the Department of Health and Social Services might give its backing to the Northern board in developing a new hospital in the north-east of Ulster and particularly in the Northern board's northern area. As I come from the Eastern board area, naturally I would not suggest that it was over-funded, because it has the problem of regional specialties. However, I recognise that planning has gone on for a long time. It is said that he who pays the piper calls the tune, and one is always suspicious of consultancies and appraisals which produce what the Department might want.

The harsh reality is that, five years ago, the then Northern Ireland Consultative Assembly advised that money should be given to the Northern board to develop that hospital because it was badly run down. The rivalries that normally exist between small towns that want to maintain their own hospitals have been resolved by the community coming together and plumping for a central hospital that is more convenient to the population. That in itself is a reason why the Department and the board should consider not having another appraisal but getting on with the job.

The tragedy is that, if the board had finally decided to go ahead with the updating of the Coleraine site, there would be no demand for another reappraisal which is a waste of money. With the modular plans now available for the Antrim hospital, there is no reason not to proceed with the development of the basic hospital in a green-field site.

Strangely enough, at times the Department can pull money out of the hat like a conjuror. At one stage, the board was told that £11 million would be available for upgrading. When it was considering a green-field site, it was told that £20 million could be made available for the upgrading of the "shambles" site—I use that term in tribute to Lord Skelmersdale, who is responsible for health matters in Northern Ireland, and who described it as a shambles.

The harsh reality is that the site is too narrow, too confined. The work necessary to upgrade it would result, in the long run, in a situation similar to that which arose in south Belfast, where work on a confined site took many years. I plead that time be not wasted, that a decision be taken to go for a green-field site, where work on putting in the modules could start now. The Route and Coleraine sites could then be sold, to the financial benefit of the Health Service.

2.45 am

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I support my hon. Friend the Member for North Antrim (Rev. Ian Paisley) in his efforts to have a new acute hospital for the Coleraine-Ballymoney-Ballycastle area erected. In 1977, the Northern health and social services board, with the approval of the Department of Health and Social Services, decided that a new acute hospital should be built in this district. Thirteen years later, we have outdated hospitals in Coleraine and Ballymoney and uncertainty as to the future of hospital services in the northern section of the Northern health and social services board area. As a former member of the Northern Board, I am absolutely convinced that the only rational way to ensure the highest standards of acute services in the area, with its widespread rural hinterland and extensive coastline, is by the provision of a purpose-built acute hospital on a green-field site between Coleraine and Ballymoney.

For many years, the attempts to rationalise acute services in this vast area were wrecked by factional wrangling, rivalry and conflicting interests. However—much to the credit of the medical profession, with its vision, and of elected representatives—a united approach, in the best interests of all, has been forged. The lead given by the medical profession is overwhelmingly endorsed by the community, which, as my hon. Friend has said, is united in its demand for the rejection of workhouse buildings on the Ballymoney Route hospital site and the piecemeal development on the site of the Coleraine hospital.

It is essential to have all hospital services on one site if there is to be proper provision of patient care, if increasingly expensive and sophisticated technology is to be properly used, and if there is to be concentration of professional expertise. There is therefore a unique opportunity to achieve a cohesive hospital service for the whole district.

Throughout the community in the Northern board's area, there is great concern lest the Government force upon it a second-rate acute hospital programme that will not meet present needs, never mind the challenge of the 21st century. The current service is inadequate and inconvenient. The partial-rebuild option ignores the fact that the population is expanding, as well as the Northern health and social services board's commitment to the area 13 years ago.

The good will that would be engendered in the Coleraine-Ballymoney-Ballycastle area by the provision of a purpose-built hospital would hold out exciting possibilities for the future. The patch-quilt approach will never give the north-east corner of the province up-to-date medical facilities such as are enjoyed by the people of the areas covered by the other boards. That is why I join my colleagues in the call for proper hospital provision in the area.

The option appraisal must be carried out as a matter of urgency. I trust that the Minister will regard 1997 as a target date for completion of this new hospital. Money earmarked for the provision of acute services in the district must be carefully guarded to ensure immediate action on the erection of a new acute hospital on a green-field site between Ballymoney and Coleraine. I know that the Minister will have the whole-hearted support of this House if the go-ahead is given. The group campaigning for a new hospital has stated:

> "A new hospital is now a practicable consideration, and not an impossible dream."

Like my hon. Friends, I urge the Minister to grasp the nettle. If he goes ahead with the provision of this hospital he will be remembered as someone who was forward-looking, someone who did not favour continuation of what Lord Skelmersdale called a shambles.

2.49 am

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will appreciate from the fact that four Northern Ireland Members have spoken that we all have an interest in the debate. Large chunks of my constituency and of that of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) are served by this hospital. The new green-field site hospital will almost certainly be situated in my constituency.

Hospitals are important. I wish that we had more time to debate them in depth. They are necessary to provide the health care that the community needs. Such care is costly, so money must be spent to the best advantage. That means that the location of their most costly items must be at key points. Those locations are primarily decided by geography and population. The Northern Ireland framework, after much debate and argument, was decided long ago. I believe that the relevant geography is the most distant point from the hospital, not the distance between hospital and hospital, which is sometimes used.

The need for a hospital of a high standard in Coleraine was recognised and accepted as a vital component in the framework of hospitals for Northern Ireland. It was understood by people in the area to be served that there would be a queue for capital resources and that Coleraine would have to wait for a while. We expect our place in the queue to be honoured, and in all fairness Coleraine should be at the front of it.

No one denies the need for better facilities at Coleraine. The argument is about whether to rebuild on the existing site or on a green-field site. An option appraisal will decide which is best, and that appraisal should be restricted to those two possibilities.

I am amazed that appraisal is necessary, after so many years of debate. The list of facilities needed, and the detailed cost of such facilities, should have been defined years ago.

Three things need to be decided: first, what facilities; secondly, the area of land needed for the hospital; and, thirdly, the comparative cost of new build and rebuild.

Will the Minister ensure that the option appraisal will be made quickly and in depth, and that its conclusions will be definitive? Will he undertake to accept those conclusions and make the funding available, so that the hospital can be completed by 1997, or at least so that it can be a long way down the road to completion?

The endless delays in hospital provision in Coleraine are making many people wonder whether the Government intend to avoid building an acute hospital there. They are wondering whether this large, important and growing area of Northern Ireland will be discriminated against in regard to the life-saving facilities that it so sorely needs.

My constituents and I are fed up with waiting; it is a time for action.

2.52 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I add my support to the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) to the former hon. Member for Upper Bann, Mr. McCusker.

After four years as Minister with responsibilities for health in Northern Ireland, I am glad that at last we can agree that a major acute hospital is necessary in the northern area of the Northern board. That is a welcome change from the past arguments about Antrim. I noticed that the hon. Member for Antrim, North had not altered his position on Waveney and Moyle hospitals, but it was welcome to hear that other hon. Members now accept the need for a major new acute hospital, without which we cannot concentrate services and do all the things that I have been trying to persuade hon. Members to accept for most of the past four years.

I am equally delighted that the hon. Member for Antrim, North is now arguing so strongly for a green-field site at Coleraine, which he so bitterly resisted for Antrim. It tends to lead me to the belief that politicians are not the best guardians of these decisions.

As the hon. Gentleman said, 1977 was the time when a decision was taken by the Northern board on what to do. It was decided at that time that Antrim would come first and that there would then be a redevelopment of Coleraine. We have followed that decision since.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Minister not accept, however, that he is on very dangerous territory when he refers back to what happened concerning the Antrim hospital? He will have to confirm that in fact the Northern board, of which I was a member, made certain decisions one day, and then, because they did not suit the Government at that time, went around to find out what deals it could do to get the Antrim hospital accepted. I think it would be far better if the Minister stayed away from the history of that, because it is certainly very muddy water.

Mr. Needham: I regret having given way. We have a great new hospital at Antrim, which is always first in line for the Northern board's capital scheme, and we are now talking about what we intend to do at Coleraine. As I say, the decision made in 1977 is now being followed.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) made the point, quite rightly, that we have to consider money in all this. The reason that Ceefa Services Ltd. was taken on was to do an appraisal of the two options—the green-field site and the redevelopment of Coleraine—and see which was best in value-for-money terms. If hon. Gentlemen were part of the devolved administration they were talking about earlier, I am sure that they would have done nothing different from the Government to make sure that the money that was being proposed was being properly spent. CSL found that the green-field site would cost some £40 million, whereas a redevelopment of Coleraine would cost some £11 million.

Rev. William McCrea: Nonsense.

Mr. Needham: I have found some nonsense in a document I have received recently, to the effect that the difference was only 10 per cent. According to the analysis, the green-field site would be £1 million more per year in annual equivalent cost—that is, 10 per cent. per year for every year of the life of the project.

Having said that, I understand that the board voted for the green-field option and to enter into a discussion with the Department of Health and Social Services to consider the green-field option. The Department quite rightly told the board that, if it felt that the CSL findings were to be set aside because they were, as the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster so eloquently put it, nonsense, it would have to show evidence of that.

It seems to me to be slightly inconsistent when the argument is made in this document that the CSL option appraisal is a lightweight report—a statement that I do not accept—and then the next statement is that we do not need another appraisal. We cannot have it both ways.

From the Government's and the public's point of view it is very important to ensure that we make the right decision and do it on the basis of the best value-for-money option. My noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale said that the Coleraine site is at present a shambles, but no one is suggesting, least of all him, that if it were to be adequately and properly redeveloped it would not be able to provide as good a quality of service as any green-field site.

I must make the point that, if the capital costs are to be compared, Coleraine would have to rise to over £30 million before the green-field site became a viable alternative. Having made its decision for the green-field site, the board rightly decided that it should go for an appraisal and that it should appoint some consultants who were capable of doing that. I believe that we can all agree —the board would certainly wish me to say this—that everyone accepts that matters should proceed as speedily as possible.

As Minister responsible for health, I was the person who decided that the debate on the hospital should be brought forward. It had always been agreed that Antrim would go first and that Coleraine would follow. If it had not been for me bringing the debate forward, we should not have started talking about the Coleraine redevelopment until 1993. I welcomed the fact that we brought the debate forward, and we should now try to reach as speedy a conclusion as we can to decide which site to choose. However, we must make certain—most importantly, it is the board which must make certain—and show the Department and the public that if there is to be an alternative, it is properly costed and worked out.

From the capital programme that is available to the Department, it would be possible to start redeveloping the existing Coleraine site in 1993. It seems extremely unlikely, if not impossible, that we could start a brand new, major project post-Antrim until 1997. In any event, I accept that all of us must work as fast as we can to come to a speedy conclusion so that we can do away with the current uncertainties.

Mr. William Ross: Is the Minister not aware that, at an early stage, before he arrived in the Department, it was understood that Antrim and Coleraine would go ahead at the same time? It was only because we came down to money problems that Antrim was allowed to go ahead at that time. Can he further assure me that the criteria that are now being applied to Coleraine have been applied to every other hospital that has been built in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Needham: I am afraid that I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments. I accept that he was there and I was not, but I have looked back through all the papers. The 1977 board decision clearly stated that Antrim came first and Coleraine second. We have proceeded on that basis ever since. As I said, we are now debating this case because I decided, when I became the Minister responsible, that it was right that we should bring the debate forward to try to get on with the matter and to get the problems out of the way as quickly as possible.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Minister accept that the difference between Coleraine, Ballymoney, Moyle, Ballycastle and the Antrim hospitals is that there is unanimity on the new provision at Coleraine? I support those who seek to achieve a new hospital on the green-field site. Will the Minister concede that there is not, was not and is unlikely to be agreement about an imposed decision on hospital provision with regard to Antrim hospital? I assure the Minister tonight that we in Larne want a hospital in Larne. We shall have our own appraisal to present to the Minister shortly on acute services for Larne.

Mr. Needham: That is a ludicrous argument. What we have to provide in the Northern board is not an imposed decision. We have to provide proper acute care in the most modern facilities, using the very best staff with the most up-to-date equipment. It is ridiculous to suggest that, just because there is no agreement in the south of the Northern board area, Coleraine gets the facility that it requires and that such a facility does not exist in the southern part of that area because an agreement does not exist between the politicians and the medical profession.

Our job, as it is for anyone in the Government, is to ensure that we achieve the highest possible quality of care in the southern part of the Northern board area, in the northern part and anywhere else in Northern Ireland. That is what we have done up to now, and what we shall continue to do.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will not the Minister look forward? I could say many things. It was promised first that Waveney hospital would be an acute centre, and that was overlooked. As the constituency representative, I cannot forget that. I sympathise with the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), because I used to represent his area, and still do in another place. The Minister should realise that we need to move forward quickly with the provision of proper actute services in the Ballycastle-Coleraine-Ballymoney area. The medical profession says that there should be a new hospital. Should we not move with the professional men who are supported by the whole community?

Mr. Needham: The board has to reconsider the option appraisal. That is the right way forward for the board. I agree with hon. Members that we should do what we can to get a new acute hospital——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 16 February 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Student Loans

9.34 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to present a petition signed by Mr. Paul Wilkinson, president of Bradford university students union, and more than 1,000 people in Bradford, including a large number of students. They state in their petition

that any proposals to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees and student loans, whether partially or fully, will further limit access to higher education.

The petitioners know that the Education (Student Loans) Bill, which passed through the House in the early hours of this morning, is a friendless orphan. No one wishes to adopt the Government's child and the Secretary of State for Education and Science appears exceptionally embarrassed when accused of the paternity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must know that this is a petition. He cannot repeat a debate which took place earlier this morning.

Mr. Madden: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners strongly believe that the scheme will limit access to higher education, especially for young people from working-class backgrounds.

Wherefore your Petitioners Pray that your Honourable House do reject any proposals to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees or student loans

and look forward to being able to see the end of this scheme at an early stage.

To lie upon the Table.

Playgroups

9.36 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of and collected by the Powys pre-school playgroup association. The petition contains 1,380 signatures of the people of Powys who demonstrate their concern at the Children Act 1989 which involves the payment of annual inspection or registration fees by playgroups. These fees are described as nominal, but nevertheless threaten the existence of playgroups as they cannot be afforded in remote rural areas, such as Powys, where the numbers of children in playgroups are small and incomes are low.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will exempt such groups from this charge.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Sexual Offences Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.37 am

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has two main purposes. The first is to make life more difficult for kerb crawlers, and I shall explain how I propose that should be done. The second is to remove the present legal presumption that boys under 14 are incapable of sexual intercourse. For some time the Home Office has been concerned about the matter and I am glad to be able to include it in my Bill. I should like to thank the Home Office and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for their help and co-operation.

In an Adjournment speech last year I said:

"Over the past few years, a plague—a pollution—has struck a part of my constituency. Certain streets have become red light areas. At night, they swarm with prostitutes. I accept that that is not unique to Streatham, although it is unique to the residents there."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1989; Vol. 144 c. 1092.]

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who is present, is also worried about the matter. I am glad that he managed to return from Belgium yesterday. I know he was there because I have been unable to pair with him for the past two days.

The problem is a plague and a pollution, but in a recent survey in the press that asked the public to list in order of importance the crimes that most trouble them, prostitution and kerb crawling came low on that list. I understand that because that crime and nuisance affects only small areas, but if one questioned the residents in those areas they would put that problem top of their list. People not affected by the problem have no conception of the distress caused. For those living in the affected areas it is a plague and a horror. Their wives or daughters are solicited as they return from the bus stop. Life is most unpleasant for them.

Last year a traffic count was taken in a quiet, tree-lined residential road in my constituency. Between 5 pm and 6 pm, rush hour, 12 cars passed along the street, but between midnight and 1 am, 124 cars were clocked going along it. Imagine trying to sleep, especially in the summer with the windows open. Constituents and friends have told me that in the summer they must move from their main bedrooms in the front of the house to one of the bedrooms in the back, or they must keep their bedroom windows closed.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): The Sexual Offences Act 1985 was introduced to deal with problems just as great as those described by my hon. Friend. As it appears that problems remain as bad as they were, has that Act had no effect?

Sir William Shelton: My hon. Friend has put his finger on it. When I was fortunate to win a high place in the ballot for private members' Bills I decided to introduce this Bill because of that failure.

A local resident has described the problem in the following terms:

"The noise is endless as the cars screech around the roads, viewing the prostitutes as they stand on the corners. The noise

[Sir William Shelton]

of the prostitutes screaming among themselves or at their clients. The pimps and their cars; the harassment of residents as they walk down their own streets."

It is intolerable that that should happen.

I was contacted by a constituent who was deeply distressed when his small son wandered in one morning, having popped outside to look around, carrying an empty hypodermic syringe that he had picked up behind the bushes of his garden. If that boy had pricked himself with the syringe the family would have been deeply worried because there is a high incidence of hepatitis B among prostitutes and even some cases of AIDS.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As one who normally lives in the quiet countryside of Scotland, but who must live in London during the week, I persistently have difficulty sleeping because of motor cars. Whether they are after prostitutes or not makes no difference to my disturbance. Why should the ordinary citizen living in a town be capable of distinguishing between a motor car that is kerb crawling and a motor car that is not? To make an improper suggestion, of whatever form, to someone who is not a prostitute, even, "Go to hell", or, "I don't like the look of your face", is an offence known to the law of Scotland. Is it not known to the common law of England?

Sir William Shelton: I reassure my hon. and learned Friend that the Bill does not apply to Scotland, but to England and Wales. It does not relate to the tranquility of Scotland. I accept that all traffic is a nuisance, but the average motorist does not leave empty hypodermic syringes in one's garden.

Various things have been done in Streatham recently to rid the area of the problem. In April 1988 a vice squad was formed and, possibly because of my Adjournment debate, the squad now has its own van rather than having to rely upon the general purpose police van. In 1987, 239 prostitutes were prosecuted; in 1988 the figure rose to 803. However, in 1988 only 180 kerb crawlers were summonsed under the Sexual Offences Act 1985—it is not an arrestable offence. The police, as in other areas, send letters to people seen circling around. Any kerb crawlers who happen to read this debate should note that they may find a surprising letter on the breakfast table one morning. Yet still the kerb crawlers come back.

I have great praise for the police, but the vice squad consists of only six officers. I was surprised to learn that in Wandsworth, next door to my constituency, where the problem is less acute there are 12 officers in the vice squad. I intend to raise this with my right hon. Friend the Minister and with the helpful deputy assistant commissioner, Mr. Metcalfe, whom I shall meet in a few weeks' time.

A traffic management scheme was eventually introduced by Lambeth council it took three years to introduce it. Although it is a nuisance to residents to drive round and round to reach the main road, it has helped and the traffic flow has been reduced in some areas. Is it not absurd, however, that money must be spent and residents incommoded as roads are blocked off just to stop the problem? I am also told by the police that a new kerb crawling route has developed on the other side of the High road. Although the traffic management scheme is good, it does not represent a solution as kerb crawlers still come back. Hon. Members must accept that this is a grave problem and that something must be done to solve it. The House has a responsibility towards our citizens.

Mr. David Martin: Does my hon. Friend believe that reducing the requirements of the law by repealing the words "persistently" and

"in such a manner or in such circumstances as to be likely to cause annoyance to the woman (or any of the women) solicited, or nuisance to other persons in the neighbourhood"

is sufficient to make a significant difference to the law?

Sir William Shelton: Yes. There are other actions that could be taken which, for reasons that I shall explain, are not included in the Bill.

The House will know that my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) also won a high place in the ballot in 1985 and introduced the Sexual Offences Act 1985, which was earlier known as the "Kerb Crawlers Bill". It was the first time that kerb crawling was made a criminal offence. The Bill's intention was to make it an offence to solicit a woman from a motor vehicle or in the immediate vicinity of the motor vehicle belonging to the man soliciting a woman. However, in Committee in the other place, the Bill suffered some amendments, one of which was the inclusion of the word "persistently", which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir Nicholas Fairbairn) mentioned. It became an offence for which one could be summonsed for a kerb crawler persistently to solicit a woman or more than one woman. A man had to solicit "persistently", or it was not an offence.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I appreciate that the Bill does not apply to Scotland, but I should like an answer to the question that I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) at the time of her Bill. Surely to go up to a woman who is not a prostitute and to proposition her is an offence in common law. It is an assault. To go up to a woman who is a prostitute and to proposition her is not, I presume, an offence in English common law. Why should it be an offence to do so from a motor car when it is not while standing on the pavement? If it is not an offence under English common law to go up to an ordinary woman and proposition her, there is something odd about the common law in England.

Sir William Shelton: I am coming to that point in a moment. It is indeed an offence in England and, no doubt, in Wales for a man on foot to solicit a woman persistently. The difference, as I shall explain to my hon. and learned Friend, is that the soliciting from a motor car should not have to be persistent, because a motor car is a nuisance at I am if it is driving round and round, especially when the driver honks its horn and flashes its lights and people shout to and from it. That nuisance element does not exist when a man is walking along the street, except that he creates a nuisance to the women whom he persistently solicits.

The inclusion of the word "persistently" for kerb crawlers has made the 1985 Act almost ineffective in summonsing and stopping kerb crawlers. Under the present law, the police can stop a kerb crawler after he has solicited a woman. He can say, "Yes, I am a kerb crawler and I did solicit that woman, but I did not annoy her, I created no nuisance and I solicited her only once". The police would be unable to do anything about that under the present law. Both the police and the Crown

prosecution service say that the present kerb crawling offence cannot readily be enforced. The reason is that, theoretically, two separate approaches by the kerb crawler, either to the same woman or to two different women, are required to establish persistence. However, it is likely in practice that a prosecution will succeed only if three or four approaches have been noted by the police. In acute areas, such as in my constituency, it is unusual for more than one approach to be needed. The House must accept that it is difficult for the police successfully to follow a motorist undetected while he makes several approaches.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The 1985 Act says "persistently" or so as to "cause annoyance" or "nuisance". One approach which causes annoyance or nuisance does not require persistence. My hon. Friend has not understood the words of the Act. Under the Act, if a person goes up to a woman and causes her annoyance or nuisance, he has committed an offence whether he does so once or more than once.

Sir William Shelton: If my hon. and learned Friend, whose interest in the Act I appreciate, reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will understand that I said that if a kerb crawler is stopped by the police and says, "Yes, I am a kerb crawler; I solicited this woman only once and I did not cause her nuisance nor annoyance", he cannot be arrested. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will agree that I am right.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The real problem in Streatham—we share a common boundary—is not whether offence is given to prostitutes or to other women walking along the street but that the offence and nuisance is caused to people who live there. Whether there is nuisance for the contracting parties is not the point. The problems are the condoms, the noise and the hypodermic syringes. That is the nub of the matter and we want to get rid of those problems.

Sir William Shelton: The hon. Gentleman is right and that is what I have been saying. It is the presence of the motor car that makes the kerb crawler distinct from the pedestrian. That is why I want to take the word "persistently" out of the legislation on kerb crawlers.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross mentioned the woman who is not a prostitute. Great nuisance can be involved for her. As I said, wives and daughters are solicited. The woman who is not a prostitute is usually very reluctant to come forward and would usually have difficulty identifying the driver. Unless the police are to hand, the offence goes unreported and the kerb crawler goes unpunished.

As a result of the wretched word "persistently", the police have had to fall back on showing that kerb crawlers, under another section of the 1985 Act, are causing a nuisance to others in the neighbourhood by soliciting.

In Streatham, the police had to ask residents to note the number plates of cars that circled round. Those were reported to the police, on a special telephone number and the police would note down the registration numbers. When a particular driver stopped to solicit a woman, even if only once, the police could secure a conviction on the ground that he was causing a nuisance to the neighbourhood in pursuit of soliciting. What a way for people to spend the evening! They had to sit in their homes, peering through the windows and noting down car number plates as cars passed. That is nonsense. However, they secured prosecutions and I congratulate them.

There was a recent case in Nottingham where the police, from a vantage point, noted the number plates of cars going round and round. When a car stopped for the driver to solicit a prostitute, the driver was summonsed. The police there secured some convictions in that way, but it is an uncertain way to secure convictions and it is enormously time-consuming for the police.

The consequence of the flaw in the 1985 Act is that in 1988, just under 10,000 women—9,183—were prosecuted for soliciting, with 8,829 convictions. In the same year, there were 578 prosecutions for kerb crawling and 521 convictions. There is clearly an imbalance between the number of prosecutions of women offenders and men offenders. The Act is not doing what it was meant to do—redress the imbalance created by the fact that the prostitute was criminalised while the client got off scot-free. I am quoting from an article in *The Independent* of 9 February.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am most obliged to my hon. Friend, whom I am trying to assist. My hon. Friend's Bill would remove from the 1985 Act the words

"in a street or public place while in the vicinity of a motor vehicle . . . cause annoyance to the woman . . . or nuisance to other persons in the neighbourhood."

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) pointed out that that is the gravamen of the nuisance. The words that my hon. Friend would remove already constitute an offence under the 1985 Act—the very offence of which he complains: nuisance to the residents.

Sir William Shelton: I am grateful for my hon. and learned Friend's help in this matter, but perhaps he has not followed what I was saying. Because the police could not arrest kerb crawlers for soliciting, they had to fall back on a cumbersome procedure which entailed dozens of residents sitting up until 2 am noting down number plates. I cannot believe that even my hon. and learned Friend would think that a good way in which to implement the law, when it can be perfectly satisfactorily implemented by arresting kerb crawlers—without getting hundreds of residents to ring up the police to complain of nuisance at 1 o'clock in the morning. This is only common sense.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the legalistic hair-splitting of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) has merely demonstrated the need to simplify this offence?

Sir William Shelton: I entirely agree. My hon. and learned Friend raised more or less the same objections on Second Reading of the 1985 Act, but I quite understand his seriousness and his purpose.

As I was saying, the Act does not redress the imbalance which leads to the criminalising of the prostitute yet lets the client off scot-free. I understand that prostitutes do not have to solicit persistently: they can be charged after just one solicitation. So the word "persistently" applies not to the prostitute but to the kerb crawler, which is why about 8,000 or 9,000 prostitutes were prosecuted in 1988, but fewer than 600 kerb crawlers were. That is unfair.

Clause 1 would amend the 1985 Act to remove the word "persistently" as it applies to prostitutes. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake has written me a letter apologising

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that she cannot be here today because of urgent engagements in her constituency. She has asked me to tell the House that she is delighted with the terms of the Bill. It has her full support and she regrets the watering down of her original proposals in Committee.

Mr. Fraser: I support the change in the law because I know of the problem in Streatham. But there is sometimes a difficulty. When these cases are brought in the magistrates court the prostitutes are never called as witnesses. The only witnesses are police officers. The problem is how to deal with a case brought against a person who may vehemently protest his innocence of having, as a police officer may say, propositioned a prostitute on one occasion—but there is no proof that the woman was a prostitute. She is not called as a witness, yet the man's entire reputation can be destroyed. That has happened to judges in Nottingham and London, and it is one difficulty inherent in striking the right balance.

Sir William Shelton: I entirely agree. I hope to persuade the House on this matter when I come to it in more detail later. But in motoring offences, it is also the word of the police against that of the driver. If prostitutes could be present in court, they would be; but I cannot believe that they would turn up and give evidence in court. In any case they would probably deny that the man being charged had been soliciting.

Mr. David Martin: There may be a similarity with driving offences, but this offence is much more serious for a man's reputation. It would certainly be taken more seriously by newspapers than if a man were charged merely with a motoring offence.

Sir William Shelton: I agree. I was merely pointing out that for a number of offences it is the police officer's word against that of the defendant.

The change suggested in my Bill and in the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake is exactly that recommended by the Criminal Law Revision Committee in its 16th report, published in 1984. I think that the House would recognise the eminence of those who served on the committee. Paragraph 40 states:

> "We now recommend that it should be an offence for a man to use a motor vehicle in a street or public place for the purpose of soliciting a woman for prostitution. The object of the offence is to stop the man who goes out in a vehicle to look for a prostitute."

Nowhere does the report mention the word "persistently". Straightforward solicitation is the offence.

I have read the *Official Report* of the proceedings on the 1985 Act and I appreciate the anxieties expressed about the proposals to remove "persistently". They were expressed in 1985 and have been expressed again since. Some hon. Members may have received a letter from the Campaign Against Kerb Crawling Legislation, which claims that such legislation infringes civil rights. The letter was sent to me by a QC, and the campaign is apparently made up of anti-rape, black and civil rights organisations, and of probation officers, solicitors and trade unionists. I believe that it was started by the prostitutes collective.

I dismiss the suggestion that my Bill in any way infringes civil rights. In so far as they are involved, they are rights of my constituents to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of their homes from evening to dawn—rights that they are being denied now.

It might be argued that if a single offence rendered a kerb crawler liable to prosecution it might be easy for the police to frame someone, but if they wanted to do that, they could do so under the present law, claiming that they had seen a person solicit twice. I do not believe, in any case, that the police would ever do anything like that. I hear my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross laughing. Perhaps he thinks that the police frame people. As I said, if they wanted to do that they could do it under the present legislation just as well as under my Bill.

It might also be suggested that the police could act as agents provocateurs. However, that would be in direct contravention of the police standing orders. If the police wanted to do that, again they could do so under the present legislation just as easily as under the legislation that I propose. I dismiss that argument, too.

Hon. Members have also raised the objection that the provisions would make it easier for the police to make a mistake because they might summons someone who merely stopped to ask the way. It is not impossible that someone might stop twice to ask the way, in which case that person could be prosecuted under the present legislation. I take this objection seriously because it is the nub of the argument. I have discussed the matter with the police and with the Home Office. When I pressed the police on this point, they told me that kerb crawlers are easily recognisable. They flash lights, sound horns, chat to prostitutes and open their car doors. The police usually do not stop them until the girl gets into the car. They are absolutely sure that they would give the benefit of the doubt to anyone who claimed that he had stopped to ask the way. In any case, if someone stopped to ask the way and the police came up and said, "Look here, sir, what are you doing", that person would say, "Well, I am going to such and such a place". There is no reason why the police could not go to that place to determine whether he was expected.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. As legislators, should we not ensure that there is no opportunity for error, mistake or misjudgment by the police by framing the legislation in such a way that the courts can always ensure that somebody will not be convicted wrongly? Is that not what we should be doing, rather than relying on the discretion of the police?

Sir William Shelton: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. If I can continue my speech, perhaps I shall be able to reassure him a little more.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Although my hon. Friend has just said that he wishes to continue his speech, does he agree that it is relevant not merely that the police might or might not give a suspected person the benefit of the doubt but, more importantly, that a court would do so? A court has a duty to acquit unless it is satisfied about the guilt of the accused person beyond all reasonable doubt. The sort of case to which my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have alluded in the past few minutes would bring that consideration into play. does my hon. Friend agree that that is the answer?

Sir William Shelton: Yes, exactly. My hon. Friend has pre-empted me. I was just about to say that.

When the Sexual Offences Act 1985 was discussed, the Crown prosecution service was not in existence. However, we now have an independent Crown prosecution service which would never—or which would be extremely loth to—summons and prosecute a person about whom there was any doubt. The fact that the Crown prosecution service was not in being in 1985 was one reason given by those who spoke in the various committees as to why the word "persistently" should be included.

As the Crown prosecution service now exists, I ask the House to remember, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said, that the prosecution must show beyond all reasonable doubt that a man was soliciting for the purpose of prostitution. Therefore, it is not a matter of police discretion. That is merely the initial barrier. Two other barriers must be passed. The first is the independent Crown prosecution service and the other is the court itself where, I repeat, the man has to be shown to be soliciting for purposes of prostitution beyond all reasonable doubt. That reassures me completely and I very much hope that it will reassure the House.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The debate is interesting, but many of the interventions could be made in Committee. We are discussing the broad principle of a proposed Bill. The points that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) rightly made should properly be dealt with by amendments in Committee. They should not be discussed in the detail that we are getting into in this Second Reading debate. I hope that my hon. Friend will resist too many further interventions on points that are Committee rather than Second Reading points.

Sir William Shelton: I concur with my hon. Friend. If the Bill is fortunate enough to get into Committee, I have no doubt that we shall spend a considerable amount of time arguing these points. I do not exclude the possibility of finding a better solution, but the inclusion of the words "persistently soliciting" are not a better solution to the problem.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am grateful for being found irresistible. I appreciate the thrust of the Bill and admire and support what my hon. Friend wishes to do. However, has he ever been to a magistrates court to see a prosecution under the 1985 Act? Has he seen policemen giving evidence where there has been a denial of the offence? Perhaps if my hon. Friend had done so, he would not be quite so sanguine about the two hurdles that he has described as foolproof.

Sir William Shelton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Yes, I have been to a magistrates court and seen prostitutes being charged, but I have not seen kerb crawlers being charged. I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point. I shall follow his advice and see whether I can do that. The only problem is that under the present law very few kerb crawlers are charged, so one might have to wait a considerable time before one found such a case.

To sum up on this important point, it was a credit to the House and the other place that they adopted such a cautious approach in 1985, when the Crown prosecution service was not in being, and when, for the first time, kerb crawling was made a criminal offence. I hope that everyone, whatever their views, will accept that the present Act has not worked as intended. I feel strongly that the offence that was originally proposed by the Criminal Law Revision Committee is the best solution because, as I said, we now have the Crown prosecution service and because a great deal of distress is being caused to law-abiding citizens. If we want the police to deal with the problem, they must be given the power to do so. Therefore, I urge that this problem be rectified.

I must hurry along because I have taken rather a long time so far. Clause 1(3) would make life more difficult for kerb crawlers by proposing an increase in the maximum fine from the present £400 to £1,000. I recommend that increase because the average fine imposed on convicted kerb crawlers in my part of the world is about £100, although it has now increased slightly. If we have a maximum fine of £1,000, I hope that the average will increase to £300 or £400.

I very much hope that we shall move to the excellent system recommended by the Home Office and adopt unit cost fines, of which hon. Members will be aware. Under the system of unit cost fines, I should like a rich man to be fined the £1,000 if the court thought that correct.

Mr. Fraser: Under the new system of fines, is it not clear that an unemployed youngster in Lambeth between the ages of 16 and 18 could never be fined anything?

Sir William Shelton: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will answer that point when he replies—

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am used to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser).

Sir William Shelton: I now turn quickly to a few other matters. First, I am extremely worried about the pimps who swarm around in Streatham. If there are any real villains here, they are probably the pimps. When the press reported that my Bill included provision for action to be taken against pimps, I received some very strange phone calls from people saying that pimps should be allowed to ply their lawful trade in an orderly manner and challenging my proposal to discriminate against them.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, a man can be prosecuted only if knowingly he lives

"wholly or in part on the earnings of prostitution . . . or . . . exercises control, direction or influence."

That legislation probably successfully controls the situation in respect of brothels, but where a pimp drives a girl somewhere in the evening, picks her up at dawn, and takes the money from her, it is difficult to secure a conviction.

One police force in the midlands is securing convictions, but it is having to put one or two officers on to a single suspect for days to establish whether he has other sources of income, how long he spends in the girl's company, and so on. Police in my part of the world do not have sufficient manpower to do that. Even if an officer sees a girl giving a man money, and challenges him, the girl can say that the man is her banker and will be returning the money to her the next day. There have been remarkably few prosecutions of pimps. In 1988, only 75 of them were found guilty in the whole country.

The Home Office should consider framing some form of law that will make it easier to prosecute pimps. In an Adjournment debate in January, my right hon. Friend the Minister helpfully suggested that it might be possible to

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create the offence of receiving immoral earnings in the pursuit of immoral earnings, and perhaps that aspect can be examined in the context of some future Bill. It requires great thought and care, which is why I did not feel it appropriate to cover it in this Bill. However, if the Home Office can incorporate in future legislation a provision for the prosecution of the pimps who run the girls who are the object of kerb crawlers, I would welcome it.

I considered including as another purpose of the Bill giving magistrates the power to endorse the driving licence of a convicted kerb crawler, which would have a salutary effect. I have been persuaded that such a measure would not be appropriate because that penalty is reserved for serious driving offences. However, I understand that someone who drives a getaway car, even if he obeys every aspect of the law while doing so, can have his licence withdrawn. It is not like saying that if one is caught pick-pocketing, one's television licence should be taken away, as such a penalty would be irrelevant. But the use of a car in kerb crawling enters the realm of a driving offence. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will cover that matter when he winds up.

The prostitutes themselves are victims, although not so much as the residents of the areas that they infest. The average fine for a prostitute in south London used to be £35, but it is now about £75. The police inform me that a prostitute can make as much as £600 per night.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): And that is tax free.

Sir William Shelton: As my hon. Friend says, that income is tax free.

Prostitutes are back on the beat within half an hour of being taken to the police station. I agree that imprisonment is not an appropriate punishment, and its use was ended in 1983—and quite right, too. The use of the community service order stopped at the same time because it can be used only as an alternative to a custodial sentence. I do not know whether such a sentence could be invoked, but I shall not comment further on that possibility.

Perhaps it would be possible to consider the electronic tagging of persistent offenders, be they prostitutes or kerb crawlers. If a prostitute does not pay her fines, she risks a custodial sentence—but to impose one would, I think, be wrong. Tagging in conjunction with a curfew from dusk until dawn might be worth considering if the current Home Office experiment with tagging is successful, and new legislation would not be required.

Great problems are also created for the residents of my constituency when perhaps a dozen girls congregate in the street at 1 o'clock in the morning, laughing and shouting at motorists. Any chief superintendent who happens to read the report of this debate may like to know that the Public Order Act 1986 could apply in some cases. It states that it is an offence to use

"abusive or insulting words or behaviour . . . within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress".

So police officers may not after all be totally helpless in trying to move on people who cause such a nuisance.

The Bill's second purpose is to remove the presumption in common law that a boy under 14 years of age is incapable of sexual intercourse, which I understand is a matter of concern to the Home Office. The Bill would cover only boys aged 10, 11, 12 or 13, since children of nine or younger cannot be charged. The present law rules out prosecution for rape, assaults to commit rape, non-consensual anal intercourse and under-age sex.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Only in England.

Sir William Shelton: I assure my hon. Friend that that provision does not apply to Scotland. At present, a youngster accused of rape is usually prosecuted for indecent assault as an alternative. I repeat that no child aged under 10 could be prosecuted under my Bill.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that such an assumption has never been made under Scottish Law. I am sure that the House will be delighted if the measure that he suggests passes into the law of this country, so that after 500 years, English law will be as civilised as Scottish law. After all, Mary Queen of Scots was betrothed to the dauphin of France at the age of five, and there was an assumption that their marriage would be consummated.

Sir William Shelton: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. Again and again, regrettably, I find that Scottish law has something to offer the law of England.

Offences have shown that the present assumption is nonsense. One letter that I received, whose sender I will not of course identify, stated:

"My daughter was sexually assaulted by a boy last August. She was found to have lost her virginity by this boy, and yet in law I am unable to do anything about the attack."

The letter goes on to explain that the boy was aged only nine. Even that offence would not be covered by my Bill, but if there is a problem with nine-year-old boys, one may presume that there is with older boys.

It is difficult to know the extent of the problem because, as boys cannot legally be charged with rape at those ages, there are no central statistics. However, between 1984 and 1988 the numbers of 10 to 13-year-olds charged each year was a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 76. In Brixton, which is part of my constituency, in the past 12 months there were six cases where the police had to substitute indecent assault for rape, and they all involved girls under the age of 16. In north Yorkshire, I am told that there were about 13 cases, one of which was particularly unpleasant, when two boys aged 13 held the victim down by force.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Earlier my hon. Friend quoted from this disgraceful letter from the Campaign Against Kerb Crawling Legislation. Does he agree that we should condemn the rest of that letter which says that if this clause, affecting under-age boys, becomes law it will be

"a frightening prospect more likely to affect Black and other working class boys".

Does he agree that that is a disgraceful and racist slur from that organisation which should be widely condemned? It is all very well for the author of the letter—Mr. Ian Macdonald QC—to say that from his elevated position, but it is a slur against black and working-class people and it should be withdrawn.

Sir William Shelton: I am most grateful for that intervention. My hon. Friend is right. It is a disgraceful letter, and I am glad that he named the QC who signed it and sent it to me.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Perhaps my hon. Friend would consider forwarding that letter to the Bar Council and to

the Commission for Racial Equality so that they may decide whether this statement should have been made by one of Her Majesty's Counsel.

Sir William Shelton: I am grateful for that intervention, and I shall certainly consider and discuss that.

I must emphasise three points. First, no youngster under 14 can be convicted of any crime unless he knowingly committed the crime beyond reasonable doubt, as with an adult. Secondly, the youngster must understand that what he did was seriously wrong and goes beyond childish mischief.

There may be concern that this change could lead to more children appearing before the courts charged with unlawful sexual intercourse. I am advised that the law is not usually involved with what is termed "consenting adolescent sexual involvement", unless it is a special case. Therefore, we need not be concerned that more boys will appear before the courts.

I am advised, and I believe it to be true, that the effect on the sentencing—a care order or whatever—on the boy who is convicted would be neutral, whether the charge was rape or indecent assault. He would not get a bigger sentence. No doubt he would get a care order or, in the case of a bad indecent assault or rape, a care order to a secure place.

One may ask, why should we bother to change the law if it makes no difference to sentencing? There are two reasons. First, the law should not be seen to be demonstrably wrong and, secondly, and more importantly, there is the effect on the victim and the victim's family. The victim will be given anonymity in a case of rape, and the family will see justice to have been done, and will feel less aggrieved by the wretched business.

I have at last finished, and I am grateful to the House for letting me speak for so long. I commend the Bill to the House.

10.34 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate. I support the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton).

During the years that I have been in the House, soliciting and kerb crawling have been a major problem in the Balham area of my constituency, and I have made many speeches on the subject. I have asked countless questions about the issue, and the problems that it has caused and does cause to many of my constituents.

The constituency of the hon. Member for Streatham adjoins my constituency of Tooting. Bedford hill was one of the most notorious red light areas in London, and it goes from my constituency into his. We are obviously concerned about the effect that that has on our constituents, but I am sure that the problem that we are discussing here today also affects hon. Members representing many smaller towns, as they sadly now experience similar problems to those of large cities.

We often hear it said that prostitution has existed for centuries and that no one and no action will stop it. That may be true, but our constituents suffer. Whatever views some hon. Members may express in the debate, if they have never seen what happens and the problems that men and women face—especially women but some men—when they seek to protect their wives and girl friends, they know little about the deep concern felt by so many people about the problem.

The issue has to be tackled—for example, the continual abuse that people suffer when they seek to move prostitutes away from the areas in which they live; the cars that drive around hour after hour, from early evening to the early hours of the morning; the fighting that often takes place between the girls themselves, or, as the hon Member for Streatham mentioned, the pimps who look after them; the noise and the threats. My constituents have faced that day after day, for hours on end, and not just occasionally.

What about the women who live in our constituencies? Irrespective of the time of day, when they are seen walking along a street they are often taken for prostitutes. Any woman who walks along those streets, either at midday or in the early hours of the morning, is regarded by motorists who come into the area—they are not local motorists driving around—as a possible prostitute. Women have come to my surgery and appeared at meetings called by my constituents, and outlined in detail what has happened to them. Many of them now say that they will not go out in the evening because they know that they will be repeatedly accosted by kerb crawlers.

Bedford hill is about three quarters of a mile long, and women who live in the roads adjoining it have told me that, if they walk down Balham high road, to the local tube station a mile away, they may be accosted a dozen times by motorists.

In an earlier intervention, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) asked what the difference was between a kerb crawler accosting a woman and someone walking along the street accosting a woman. But if a woman is accosted by someone who is walking, she can say, "I'm not a prostitute, leave me alone," and cross to the other side of the road. She may see someone else walking along the road, and ask if she can walk along with that person. A kerb crawler in a car, however, may persist in following her.

I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Sexual Offences Bill in 1985. We discussed at length the effect of such legislation on the rights of individuals, and the possibility of people being charged in error. One oft-quoted example was that of the motorist who casually stops a woman to ask the whereabouts of a certain address. Such arguments did not impress me: I do not believe for a moment that the kerb crawlers who drive round and round an area are looking for an address. What they are looking for are the services of prostitutes, and they see any woman walking the streets as a potential prostitute.

The hon. Member for Streatham mentioned prisons. I have some knowledge of that subject: Wandsworth prison is in my constituency, and I have visited many others over the years. I have no wish to send men or women to prison for involvement in sexual offences; nevertheless, I am very annoyed by the way in which the courts view the problem. Fining is inconsistent: in one area the fines may be reasonable enough, but in another they may be pathetic. I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's claim that prostitutes can earn several hundred pounds a night, and such fines will not deter them.

Some years ago, I wrote to the then Home Secretary—Lord Whitelaw, as he now is—to say how appalled I was at the pathetic fines imposed in the South Western magistrates court. He replied, "I am sorry for you and your constituents, but I cannot do anything about it." He may not have been able to do anything, but I believe that

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Law Officers in this or the other House could have acquainted the magistrates with the deep concern felt not only by Members of Parliament but by the police, who spend countless hours obtaining evidence to take offenders to court, only to see pathetic fines being imposed.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Is not one of the problems encountered by the lay magistracy in particular the reluctance of Ministers and the Lord Chancellor to interfere? From time to time, the Lord Chancellor addresses meetings of the Magistrates Association: perhaps a copy of *Hansard* could be sent to him, to impress on him the need to make a speech suggesting that a toughening of the penalties would not come amiss.

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman has made some valuable contributions this morning. I fully support that suggestion.

On 17 January this year, I received some figures from the Home Office in reply to a question that I had asked. In 1988—I assume that to be the most recent year for which figures were available—517 motorists were convicted of kerb crawling in England and Wales. The present maximum fine is £400, but, according to the Home Office, it was not imposed in any of those cases.

Far be it from me to disagree with the hon. Member for Streatham, and I am not entirely opposed to his suggestion of an increase in the maximum fine to £1,000, but, if the present £400 maximum is not being imposed, what chance is there that the magistrates would impose a higher fine?

Sir William Shelton: I entirely agree. I wish that higher fines were imposed, and I only hope that increasing the maximum to £1,000 will at least make magistrates realise that such offences are more serious than they seem to think.

Mr. Cox: I accept that.

We often complain about the police—I complain about them myself somtimes—and, by and large, the police accept such complaints if they are justified. We should, however, be grateful for much of what they do. I pay the warmest possible tribute to the work of Chief Superintendent Tom Jones and his officers in my constituency.

In 1985, there were seven reported kerb-crawling offences; in 1989, the figure had risen to 52. In 1988, there were 346 convictions for prostitution; in 1989, the figure had fallen to 70. That may sound impressive, but, although my local police may have managed to reduce the number of convictions for prostitution, the women have simply moved a mile or so down the road and set up business in the neighbouring constituency of the hon. Member for Streatham.

Under the existing legislation, the police are prevented from doing work that they would like to do. I entirely support the removal of the word "persistently" from the 1985 Act. How often must women be accosted by motorists—once, twice, five times? Must we wait until it has happened 10 times before we say, "This woman has suffered too much: we must act"?

A long time ago, I asked the present Minister of State, Home Office—the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who was replying to a debate—how he would feel if he had gone home the previous evening and asked his wife what sort of day she had had, and she had burst into tears and said that she had been accosted and taken for a common prostitute by motorists as she went to pick up the children from school. I believe that the hon. and learned Gentleman realised then just how serious such offences are. I referred earlier to the fact that it is only women who are affected. In my constituency, and possibly in the constituency of the hon. Member for Streatham, husbands and boy friends who told people who tried to pick up their wives and girl friends to leave them alone were subjected both to abuse and, in some cases, physical action. That is another reason why the Bill is so important.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: If the hon. Gentleman cares to look at the 1985 Act, he will see that the matter to which he has referred is already an offence. It is an offence to cause annoyance to a woman or a nuisance to any other person in the neighbourhood. In other words, once is enough. What the hon. Gentleman seeks to do would remove that offence, which seems to me to be the very opposite of what he intends.

Mr. Cox: The hon. and learned Gentlemen's legal background and knowledge are extensive. What he says is what he believes ought to happen. However, what actually happens in the courts is very different. If he doubts that, all that he needs to do is to get in touch with the local police officers who control the areas that are represented by the hon. Member for Streatham and I and listen to what they have to say about magistrates' sentences. It sounds very nice when the hon. and learned Gentleman says, "In law, that is what it means", but that is not what is happening. That is why people such as the hon. Member for Streatham and I feel so strongly about the matter.

I have lived in my constituency for a long time. The area in which I live has never been troubled by the activities of prostitutes. I never see motorists driving round and round my area. However, in the Bedford hill area of my constituency, one sees them doing it seven nights a week. If one says they do not do it in the area where I live, so why do they do it in another part of my constituency, the answer is abundantly clear to us all: that that is the area which prostitutes frequent.

I do not decry traffic management schemes and better lighting. Such schemes have been introduced in my area, and they have helped to some extent, but what is the good of helping my constituents if, because of the action taken in my area, half a mile down the road people who previously never suffered from the problem are confronted with it?

The hon. Member for Streatham referred to those who live on immoral earnings. There were nearly 9,000 convictions for soliciting in 1988. In the same year, only 29 males in England and Wales were found guilty of living on immoral earnings. It is a little hard to believe that, with 9,000 convictions for soliciting in 1988, only 29 men were guilty of living on the immoral earnings of prostitutes.

The hon. Member for Streatham referred to the need for more vigorous police action. Men who live on immoral earnings are often the most brutal individuals. They terrorise women, many of whom do not want to be prostitutes. Faced with enormous financial problems, they thought that prostitution would help them to get out of their difficulties and that they could then return to a normal job and a normal life style. Often, however, those who live off their earnings force them to continue as

prostitutes. The action that can be taken against such individuals must be strengthened by the courts and by Parliament.

Without doubt, the hon. Member for Streatham has introduced a much-needed Bill. Apart from the great support that he will receive from both his constituents and mine, he will find that many people who, sadly, have been terrorised year after year by the activities of kerb crawlers will warmly welcome the Bill. It will help to protect them, their families and the whole community from the activities of these people. I pledge my total support to the hon. Member for Streatham.

10.55 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I begin where the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) left off—by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) on introducing the Bill. When it is enacted, it will provide great protection and relief for many of his constituents, particularly for young women who are plagued by these activities. It will also protect residents and young women in many parts of the country.

Ordinary people in ordinary areas are affected by such activities. No matter what the kind of area in which people live—on council estates, in middle-class areas—this plague can be found. It has certainly come to the constituencies of the hon. Member for Tooting and of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham. It has not yet reached my constituency, and I hope that it will not. If it does not, my constituents will be able to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham for the Bill that he has introduced today.

I agree that the person we want to get at is the pimp. When the Bill is considered in Committee, I hope that it will be strengthened so that that person can be caught. I am sure that that would be welcomed. As drafted, the Bill evens up the measures that can be taken against prostitutes who are treated as criminals and those who kerb-crawl and who are causing the real nuisance.

I refer to the letter against the kerb-crawling legislation. It is appalling. It casts a slur on black and working-class young boys. It is even worse than that. It can almost be described as the Sinn Fein apologia for the pimp. These people have decided to defend pimps instead of those who try to go about their lawful business. The letter says:

> "We write this because we are concerned with human, legal and civil rights and we oppose Sir William Shelton's Sexual Offences Bill."

To whose civil rights does the letter refer? It does not refer to the civil rights of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham, or to the civil rights of the constituents of the hon. Member for Tooting, or the citizens of Wolverhampton, Norwich and other cities who have been plagued by this problem and who have written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

I hope that the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham will be able to answer one query about those who solicit on foot. The policy advisory committee on sexual offences said that this matter caused it concern when it considered the problem. If we stopped the kerb crawlers but allowed those people to get out of their cars and solicit on foot, thereby continuing the problem but in a different form, we should have won a pyrrhic victory.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will consider that matter in Committee. I warmly congratulate him on the Bill and I hope that it will have an unruffled passage through the House. It will certainly have my support.

Mr. Speaker: Two seconds early. Would it be for the convenience of the House if I asked the Foreign Secretary to make his statement now?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I could raise a point of order to fill in.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is always very helpful.

Mr. Skinner: Last night, Mr. Speaker——

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Hong Kong

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about constitutional development in Hong Kong.

When I came back from Hong Kong on 17 January, I told the House that I hoped to be able to announce a decision on the introduction of direct elections to the Hong Kong legislature in 1991 in a matter of weeks. In view of intense press speculation in the past few days, I have decided to make the announcement now.

At the time of the signing of the joint declaration in 1984, there was no elected element of any kind in the legislature. In February 1988, the Hong Kong Government announced that 10 directly elected seats would be introduced in 1991. It has been clear for some time that the people of Hong Kong want to see a more rapid rate of progress. The question we have had to decide is what new starting point would be right.

We wish to establish in Hong Kong, before 1997, a system of government which includes from the outset a substantial element of democracy, and which can endure and further develop after 1997. That is what Hong Kong wants, and that would be the best outcome for the territory.

If the outcome is to be achieved, the start which we make in 1991 must be carried through in the arrangements set out in the Basic Law. With this objective in mind, we have entered into discussions with the Chinese Government about the provisions relating to the political structure after 1997 to be included in the Basic Law for the future Hong Kong special administrative region.

In those discussions, we have pressed the case for a faster process of democratisation in Hong Kong than that set out in the second draft of the Basic Law. We have also made it clear that the new proposals which emerged from the meetings of the Basic Law drafting committee, which took place in Canton in December and January, would not command general support in Hong Kong. We have stressed the importance not only of achieving a steady progression in the number of directly elected seats, but of arrangements for the political system as a whole which Hong Kong people will find acceptable.

The final plenary meeting of the Basic Law drafting committee has been taking place in Peking this week. The meeting has not yet finished, and the outcome is not yet certain. We shall want to study carefully the draft which emerges from that meeting. There are, however, indications that the draft will provide for 20 directly elected seats in 1997 and for further increases to 24 seats in 1999 and 30 seats in 2003. The rate of progress would not be as rapid as many people in Hong Kong, or we ourselves, would have liked to see, but it would be a considerable improvement on the position reached in December. It would reflect a willingness by the Basic Law drafters to respond to the representations which we and others in Hong Kong have been making.

We are following closely the recommendations which are emerging from the plenary meeting on other issues of importance to Hong Kong. The key issues are voting procedures; the composition and constitution of the grand electoral college which is to return a proportion of the members of the legislature; and restrictions on the nationality of members of the post-1997 legislature.

If, as I hope, the plenary meeting resolves these matters in a satisfactory way, and if the figures for directly elected seats which I have mentioned are confirmed, we would regard that outcome as one which, although not ideal, I could reasonably commend to the House, and to the people of Hong Kong, as a basis for the future.

On that basis, and in the interests of the continuity which we believe is what most Hong Kong people want, the Hong Kong Government will make arrangements to introduce 18 directly elected seats in 1991. There would thus be a continuous upward slope of development from 1991 to 2003, with the possibility that full direct elections could be introduced in 2007.

As for 1995, when the last elections under British Administration are due to take place, we plan to increase the number of directly elected seats to at least 20. If we then decide to introduce the electoral arrangements envisaged in the Basic Law, it will be possible for members elected in 1995 to carry on over the 1997 barrier to 1999.

Those who suggest that whatever we do now China would be obliged to accept in 1997 are out of touch with reality. The measures which we are introducing will preserve the concept of one country, two systems, which is the basis of Hong Kong's future success. We shall continue to press the case for a faster pace of democratisation. Opinion in Hong Kong and policy in China on this matter have both moved a long way since 1984. There will be further evolution between now and 1997.

This will be a substantially greater first step towards democracy in Hong Kong than was planned two years ago. That is the first important requirement. This arrangement offers the prospect of further such steps to be enshrined in the Basic Law, both in 1997 and thereafter. That is the second important requirement. I believe that, taken together, the arrangements make good sense for Hong Kong.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's statement will be greeted with dismay in Hong Kong. In December, the right hon. Gentleman stated in the House that he was anxious that

"the last main chapter in the story of this country's empire . . . should not end in a shabby way."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. 368.]

What he has said today, if he keeps to it, ensures that the chapter will end in a shabby way, for he has caved in completely to China.

Although the right hon. Gentleman told the people of Hong Kong last month that Britain alone was responsible for governing Hong Kong until July 1997, his surrender to China on elections to the Legislative Council has given China a decisive voice in what happens in Hong Kong not in seven years time but now. He has allowed the Chinese completely to dictate the pace of progress such as it is next year, right up to the end of British rule.

Only last week, the Foreign Secretary told me in the House, referring to the consensus of Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils:

"We must take that seriously".—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1990, Vol. 166, c. 877.]

He said that we must take seriously the OMELCO consensus, yet he knows well that it calls for 20 elected members next year and 30 in 1995. He has rejected the OMELCO consensus for 1991 and for 1995.

The right hon. Gentleman has gone back on what he said to the House only nine days ago, and he has certainly

gone back on what his predecessor, the present Leader of the House, who is sitting next to him, told the House last July in the most specific terms. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"the pace of development should reflect the wishes of the whole community. The unanimous view expressed by OMELCO on 24 May was a significant step towards the establishment of a consensus in Hong Kong."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1989; Vol. 156 c. 1170.]

The OMELCO consensus calls for 20 elected members next year, not 18, 30 in 1995, not 20, and a fully elected Chamber by 2003. By 2003 all that the right hon. Gentleman hopes for is a 50 per cent. elected Chamber—the limit laid down by China. Although he talks about the possibility of a fully elected Chamber by 2007, I should be grateful if he would provide the evidence for that hope. If the right hon. Gentleman fears that accepting the OMELCO consensus would offend China, he must be well aware, for Dame Lydia Dunn and Allan Lee of OMELCO must have told him as they told me only a few days ago, that the people of Hong Kong are ready to take that risk. If they are ready to take that risk, why has the right hon. Gentleman caved in to China?

Moreover, he must explain to the House what has happned to the Bill of Rights. His predecessor announced its introduction with a great fanfare in the House on 5 July, but there has not been a word about it today. What has happened to it? Has it been dropped? Is this yet another cave-in to the Chinese?

The Government's policy on Hong Kong is in complete disarray. Their half-baked plan to provide British passports to 50,000 Hong Kong heads of household has provided no confidence. An opinion poll in Hong Kong last week showed that 90 per cent. of executives, professionals and entrepreneurs—the people whom the passport scheme is designed to impress—doubted whether the package will achieve its objective, and 86 per cent. of younger Hong Kong residents regard the passport plan as irrelevant.

It is still not too late for the Secretary of State to change his mind and to implement the OMELCO consensus. I urge him to do so and, even now, not to betray the people of Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman, not for the first time, is way out of touch with reality. He reflects some of the headlines in the London press today, but no doubt a little later he will be able to obtain translations of the Chinese language press in Hong Kong.

If the British Government had done what the right hon. Gentleman says—if we had simply caved in and surrendered to whatever the Chinese wanted—we would have accepted what the Chinese wanted, which is what we proposed in the different circumstances of February 1988—to start with 10 directly elected seats. That has been the Chinese preference.

We take seriously the OMELCO consensus, which was to start with 20 directly elected seats. We are starting with 18—two fewer than the OMELCO consensus, but eight more than the Chinese preference. That puts the position in perspective.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to Dame Lydia Dunn, who lives in Hong Kong and feels some responsibility for the territory's future. A few hours ago, she said that, although the result that I have announced had fallen short of the OMELCO consensus,

"major uncertainties for the territory's future had been removed."

She further said:

"What we must do now is put our efforts into making the 1991 elections a success."

That is entirely different, and much more constructive, from the vapourings of the right hon. Gentleman.

I pay tribute to Dame Lydia Dunn, to the people who would have liked us to go further and to the people who worked out the OMELCO consensus. Hong Kong is much in their debt. They will accept this outcome with a mixture of disappointment and relief. That is the tone of Dame Lydia Dunn's statement, which I commend to the right hon. Gentleman and to the House.

The Bill of Rights, which the right hon. Gentleman legitimately asked about, is alive and well and proceeding through the Hong Kong procedures. It is being examined by the Executive Council. When it is finished, it will be published as a consultation document and anyone will be free to give views on it. The Hong Kong Government hope to carry through the Hong Kong procedures during the rest of the year.

That concept was announced last summer by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. It is a Hong Kong document, and it is proceeding through Hong Kong's procedures. The relevant United Nations convention is already embodied in the draft of the Basic Law for after 1997.

I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has measured the difficulty of the situation or appreciates the tightrope that we have had to walk. We have tried to find an answer to respond to the two feelings that were expressed to me so often when I was in Hong Kong not long ago. The first is a feeling among a growing number of politically conscious people, who want a faster pace of democracy. The second stresses the damage done by constant collisions with the Chinese Government during the interim period. It has not been easy, and it will not be easy, to reconcile those two messages that are coming from Hong Kong all the time. I hope that the arrangements that I have announced are a reasonable effort to do so.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that I do not need to remind the House that this is a private Members' day. I ask for brief questions on this important statement.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): With his usual skill, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is trying to handle an agonising dilemma—maintaining confidence in Hong Kong and maintaining a relationship with a sullen and difficult China. He deserves the understanding of the House, which I hope he will get—he does not seem to be getting much from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

Will my right hon. Friend concede that the Basic Law is China's decision on how Hong Kong should be governed after 1997? We have advised the Chinese on it, but we are not bound by every detail. One understands the need to proceed in the careful way that my right hon. Friend wants, but what is the latest date by which the regulations must be laid that finally cast in concrete the number of 18 for the 1991 election, on which my right hon. Friend says the Hong Kong Government have now decided? Will he give an assurance that the numbers for

[Mr. David Howell]

1995 will at least be kept open for further review and discussion, bearing in mind that we, not the Chinese, govern Hong Kong until 1997?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I have been conscious of the work and recommendations of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs which he chairs.

The electoral regulations for 1991 need to be produced and carried through in Hong Kong during the summer and autumn. The time has come to announce a decision for 1990-91, which I have done, subject, as I carefully set out in my statement, to the outcome of the present discussions in Peking being indicated to me. The figure for 1991 is two fewer than the OMELCO consensus, but eight more than the Chinese would have preferred.

My right hon. Friend will have noticed that I deliberately have not fixed a figure for 1995; I have simply said that it will not be below 20. I hope that it will be more, and that opinion and policy in China will continue to evolve in that direction. I am keen—anyone who thinks seriously about the democratic process in Hong Kong would be keen—that those who are standing for election in 1995 should be able to see Hong Kong through the transition in 1997 and retain their seats until 1999.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On reflection, surely the Secretary of State must agree that the sentence in his statement that opinion in Hong Kong has

"moved a long way since 1984"

must rank among one of the greatest understatements of the year.

The international community does not understand why the Government have adopted such a craven posture before the Chinese Government. What should have been said bluntly to them was that the demand for greater democracy and greater assurances on nationality in Hong Kong are entirely the responsibility of the Chinese Government because of their actions in Tiananmen square. If we had made that clear and adopted that posture, international opinion would be wholly behind us. The statement falls far short of the requests of OMELCO and of the Select Committee for 50 per cent. elected membership by 1995.

Mr. Hurd: We have had a very blunt discussion with the Chinese Government, not just on numbers but on other aspects of the draft Basic Law, about which we have made representations to them. That is one reason why the discussions have taken so long.

If the right hon. Gentleman were aware of the nature of the discussions, he would agree that we have bluntly put the reasons why, in our view, opinion in Hong Kong has shifted since 1984. That is why the position of the British Government has shifted. Our main interest is the interests of Hong Kong; we have no other major interest in the matter. Our opinion has shifted, as the numbers reflect, with opinion in Hong Kong.

Opinion in, and the policy of, China has also shifted. It has not done so as far as we should have liked, but we shall continue the task of persuasion. In my view, it has shifted far enough, as the contrast with the figures for last December show. Last December, the Chinese were talking about starting with 18, with no changes for 10 years thereafter. There has been a considerable shift—I would not put it higher than that—and we hope that that evolution will continue.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those who have taken the trouble to understand Hong Kong better than the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will know the impossibility of satisfying all the main strands of opinion in Hong Kong in this sensitive matter and that there are powerful arguments in favour of the prudent decision that my right hon. Friend has taken? Is not the basic problem the change in the line taken by China since the events of June to a much more difficult stance? Does my right hon. Friend see any prospect of China returning to the more flexible line that it adopted before June? Is he satisfied that people in Hong Kong recognise the importance of making it clear to Peking that Hong Kong is not, as Peking appears to suspect, becoming a hotbed for subversion of China?

Mr. Hurd: I think that my right hon. Friend is right. The events of last June have both increased the appetite and feeling in Hong Kong in favour of democracy and made the Chinese Government defensive, and, to use my right hon. Friend's word, "difficult". Our job is to continue to try to persuade the Chinese Government that Hong Kong's future in China—two systems, one country—depends, if it is to be successful, on keeping alive the spirit of enterprise and freedom in the territory. This measure is part of that. It is a start to democracy, not, as some headlines in today's press suggest, an end to it. It is a more substantial start than was envisaged previously.

On my right hon. Friend's specific point, he is perfectly right to say that the matter is one of the Chinese preoccupations. We must explain to the Chinese Government that the Hong Kong Government and this Government have no intention of using Hong Kong as a springboard for changing the system under which China is governed. We must also explain that, equally, people in Hong Kong have rights of free expression and free demonstration. That is part of the Hong Kong system and not something that we, or the Hong Kong Government, can snuff out.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that he is all too painfully in touch with reality, under the heel of Peking? The humiliation of the Westminster Government may not matter to him, but humiliating the Hong Kong Government matters very much. This issue will vitally affect the interests of the people of Hong Kong, not only before 1997 but afterwards.

The calculation is not just what will happen after 1997, but what the effect will be up to 1997—a period for which the Government are responsible. It is not only a question of the proportion of directly elected seats in the Legico, but the relations between the Executive and the legislature, which are potentially much more important both up to and after 1997. Considerable benefit can be gained from more effective arrangements.

Has the right hon. Gentleman sought any support from the United States, which is in a stronger bargaining position because of China's concern about sanctions, for a stronger line in establishing a strong democracy in Hong Kong? Is he aware that the action that he has announced

today will have consequences for the progress of the immigration legislation that he will shortly bring before the House?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I think that it will be beneficial. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's main point. We would have achieved a better reception from the Opposition and the London press if we had planned for a break, a dead end, for Hong Kong in 1997. We would have got more immediate applause but I am sure that in Hong Kong it would have died away quickly.

People in Hong Kong simply do not want a series of collisions and controversies if they can be provided. They are anxious to make a start to democracy and we are providing for that. They are anxious to keep their freedom of expression and we are defending that. They do not want to proceed on the basis of constant collisions, which will not be good for confidence in Hong Kong or the future prosperity of the territory.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that neither this Government or this country nor world opinion have any way of imposing their will on China, except through patient and constructive argument and negotiation of the kind in which he has been engaged? Would it not be a folly and a cruel deception on the people of Hong Kong to give them a system, before 1997, that was unacceptable to the Chinese Government on takeover? Has my right hon. Friend received any assurance from the Chinese Government that Hong Kong citizens holding British passports, with the right of abode in Britain, will be qualified to stand for elections and vote in them?

Mr. Hurd: On the last point, the Basic Law drafting committee has, as I understand it—this is one of the points of whose outcome we are not yet certain—increased from 15 to 20 per cent. the proportion of people holding foreign passports who will be able to sit in the Legislative Council. That is an important point and there has been some improvement.

I agree with my right hon. Friend's first points. It is important to proceed as far as possible after, to use his words, patient and constructive discussion, with the Government in Peking. We have our responsibilities, and they know that. That is why we have moved to the figure of 18. It does not make sense to proceed on the basis of a breakdown, a dead end, in 1997.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): After the horrendous massacre in Tiananmen square, it was inevitable that the Chinese and British Governments would not agree on the pace of democratisation. Surely, the question for the House and the Foreign Secretary to determine was whether to go on patiently negotiating or have a confrontation and a battle of face that could have led to a calamitous fall in confidence in Hong Kong. Is the Foreign Secretary aware that he has taken a realpolitik decision of some courage and should not be too concerned about the talk of cringeing and cravenness from people who are not facing the realities?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who has visited Peking recently and studied the position with considerable care and a sense of responsibility.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are two categories of critics of the Government's stand on democracy in Hong Kong? The first category consists of well-meaning people who, in their natural anxiety to expedite democracy in Hong Kong, overlook the difficulties of dealing with a country of 1 billion people which is not in a noticeably co-operative mood. The second category consists of people, exemplified by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who cynically use the issue of democracy as a pious smokescreen to cover their own unwillingness and inability to reassure the people of Hong Kong over passports.

Did my right hon. Friend note in the question of the right hon. Member for Gorton his statement that the Government should be prepared to "take the risk"—he used the word "risk"—of a conflict with China? He thereby implied that the Opposition were prepared to risk the future of 4 million people in Hong Kong for their own political purposes.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Oppositions can, for some time, live in an unreal world. The right hon. Member for Gorton has put himself in a completely unreal world, in which the constitutional development of Hong Kong can be divorced from 1997 and considered in isolation from it, and no thought is given to the people who will be encouraged to come forward to stand in 1991 and 1995. An Opposition can dwell in unreality for quite a long time, as long as they do not pretend or claim that they are fit to govern.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I have seen the realities of Hong Kong recently and am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the vast majority of Hong Kong citizens will regard his latest plans as a slow boat to China. Is this not part of an overall sell-out, evidenced by a document sent by him to all hon. Members, stating that the people who are to be allowed here under his other plans are almost all ethnic Chinese? Are there still no arrangements to be made for others—for example, the 10,000 Indians—who live there? Surely the right hon. Gentleman, who usually tries to be so fair, must realise that the Hong Kong people, in their context, will see him as selling them up the Yangtse Kiang river?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman, while searching for old-fashioned phrases, has missed the point entirely. He is on a different point about the non-Chinese in Hong Kong. As I explained when I made my statement before Christmas, non-Chinese will be covered by the nationality proposals, but there will not be separate and special provision for them. On the hon. and learned Gentleman's specific point, I repeat that the Opposition can toss these phrases about and get some immediate applause for them. As the hon. and learned Gentleman watches the response in Hong Kong, reads what is written in the newspapers that the overwhelming majority of Hong Kong people read, considers what is happening to the index there and the reactions, I think and hope that he will find that what I said earlier is true. The reaction will certainly be one of disappointment against politically conscious people, but also one of relief.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Does my right hon. Friend accept the overwhelming reality that, however much we may want democracy in Hong Kong, there is no point on earth in going ahead in a state of confrontation with China? Will my right hon. Friend utterly reject the remarks of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton

[Mr. Peter Temple-Morris]

(Mr. Kaufman) about a craven posture and the rest of it? If Labour Members have some secret ingredient to solve a difficult and delicate situation, will my right hon. Friend ask them to put it before the House? Finally, does my right hon. Friend agree that, under one country, two systems, the best way for Hong Kong to proceed is to make its system work and perhaps concentrate less on the other system in mainland China?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's final point. The Opposition's policy on Hong Kong, where it is not obscure, is irresponsible.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Whatever the difficulties, in the end is not democracy indivisible? Therefore, does not the Secretary of State's statement about a substantial element of democracy mean a substantial element of autocracy? If we are in favour of democracy in eastern Europe and crave it for South Africa, why is it not also appropriate for Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: Everybody who has studied or worked on the problem of the future of Hong Kong knows that the problem is unique and the solution has been unique. It is not easy to operate. The Government, the House and the people in Britain who are responsible for Hong Kong will be walking a tightrope for some years yet. I am not pretending that the solution will be easy. Equally, no purpose is served by letting others forget the unique nature of the problem. That is understood in Hong Kong and the OMELCO consensus. The discussion has been where to start on a steady progression.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Faced with the unreal expectations in Hong Kong, which have been reflected today in the Chamber, and the intransigent mood in Peking, should not the Government be congratulated on reaching a reasonable settlement in all the circumstances? Is it not highly likely that, following events in eastern Europe and bearing in mind the age of the curent leadership in Peking, a far more flexible mood will develop there long before 1997? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Hong Kong stock exchange has risen 70 points in anticipation of his statement this morning?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that last point. That is one measure in the territory, where the confidence of people who do business is extremely important for general confidence. His point is entirely valid, and I am grateful to him for it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not the truth of the matter that these negotiations between Britain and China on Hong Kong have been a charade from beginning to end? The Government talk about democracy and propose a mini-House of Lords arrangement for Hong Kong in the hope that, by the year 2009, the Chinese will import some more? Why do the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister go rabbiting on about one person, one vote in eastern Europe, yet cannot put those arrangements forward where they have at least limited power? What will de Klerk say in South Africa when he hears this message and their talk about one person, one vote in South Africa? He will say, "I think I'll take my line from those people in Britain who don't have the guts to get one person, one vote for the people of Hong Kong."

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Foreign Secretary not realise that something happened in Tiananman square? Why did he not go to the Chinese and say, "All bets are off. We'll start again"?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman was so busy polishing up his question that he failed to notice that his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) had just asked exactly the same question in rather better language. I have answered it as best I can. I am rather glad that I did not choose the hon. Gentleman as one of our emissaries to Peking.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is it not clear that the best service that this House can provide to Hong Kong is to behave with bipartisan prudence and the worst to excite expectations that we have no chance whatever of fulfilling? Should we not remember that no one is immortal?

Mr. Hurd: That is rather cryptic. None of us is immortal, as my hon. Friend says. I am grateful for his observation. I hope that opinion and policy in China will continue to evolve, as I hope confidence in Hong Kong will develop. The Chinese will increasingly understand that the huge prize of which Hong Kong consists, with its plans for the future which will make it even more prosperous and more important for the economy of south China, depends on their understanding the importance in Hong Kong of free institutions and progress towards democracy, of which this arrangement is the start.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): The questioning of my right hon. Friend so far reflects the limited recognition that the House has given to the fact that the stamp of our political idealism and institutions has a far greater influence than that of our national power. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend that, for a substantial development towards democracy, we must, to use his phrase, be patient and look to a perspective of the year 2007. If by then the democratic conditions that we have asked for from the Chinese Government and the people of Hong Kong have not been fulfilled, would he consider it appropriate that the sanctions that are now being placed on South Africa to achieve those conditions virtually immediately, should be placed on Hong Kong or China? If not—I am sure that he will say not—is that in itself not an adequate and wholly convincing argument why that dangerous precedent should be stopped straight away?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is ingeniously leading back to a matter which the House debated two days ago. It is better to accept that the problems of, and, therefore, the solutions to, Hong Kong are unique and not easily comparable with those in other parts of the world.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm a report in today's *Financial Times* that the Chinese propose a change in the Basic Law to prevent persons who have a right of entry into any other country from holding any of a series of top legislative and executive posts? If that is true, does it not mean that, even by his test of preserving the future prosperity of Hong Kong, his proposal possibly to allow 50,000 Hong Kong Chinese into this country is a failure even at this stage?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is mistaken. There has always been a number of senior posts—a few dozen at the most—which, under the arrangements with China, it is agreed will be held by Chinese citizens. That in no way negates or defeats the purpose of the wider scheme affecting many more people, which I proposed to the House before Christmas.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): My right hon. Friend will acknowledge the almost inevitable feeling of disappointment that has come as a result of this statement. On the other hand, he will have been sustained by the congratulations that he has rightly received on what has been achieved. Does he agree that it is of immense importance that the rather unattractive sucking up to the red Chinese for major contracts in Hong Kong is not allowed to continue and that British interests and British corporations are firmly and wholly entrenched in the colony ahead of 1997?

Mr. Hurd: It is important that British companies should ensure that that is so. They, like their competitors, should realise that the opportunities in Hong Kong are not decreasing, but increasing sharply. The first responsibility rests with British firms themselves. It is also the British Government's job to ensure that British interests in the territory are fully represented and protected. That is why we build up the scope and seniority of the trade representative. The Government of Hong Kong must ensure that there is a level playing field, and that British firms which submit proposals of the right quality and price have as good a chance as anybody else.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon) *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Gentleman present for the statement?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Yes, for the statement.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps we should return to the Sexual Offences Bill.

Sexual Offences Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

11.39 am

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): We return from great international issues to the type of subject that we commonly debate on a Friday. The train of the debate has been somewhat lost, but no doubt we shall be able to change down to a suitable gear for a Friday debate.

One of the attractions of Fridays is that we leave behind us the great issues, such as German reunification or the future of South Africa, and discuss parking, consumer guarantees, or kerb crawling. Perhaps we flatter ourselves if we believe that it is our role to discuss great issues over which we have no control. The minor matters that we tend to discuss on Fridays are of more immediate concern to our constituents and often they are issues over which we have some control.

I once asked a friend of mine who had a successful marriage what the recipe for it was. She said that she let her husband decide all the important things such as who will be the next Prime Minister and the rate of money supply, whereas she decided the unimportant things, such as where they would live and where they would go on holiday. Perhaps that is the appropriate role to adopt when considering problems that concern our constituents. I suspect that kerb crawling and such like has more relevance to them than the great issues of the day, about which we tend to get rather excited.

The most common problem that I hear about at my surgeries is that of bad and inconsiderate neighbours, which causes an enormous amount of distress. There is no ready practical remedy for it. It is also clear from today and from the record of the 1985 debate that kerb crawling is a problem experienced in many constituencies. I hope that we can go some way to finding a practical solution to a practical problem. It is interesting that, so far, no one has adopted a high moral tone in this debate—the House is at its least attractive when that happens. Hon. Members recognise that this is a practical problem of nuisance caused to residents in some areas.

The Bill has two main objectives. The first is to increase the effectiveness of the law dealing with kerb crawling and the second is to remove the serious limitation in the law that prevents the conviction of boys under 14 for the offence of rape.

It is difficult to obtain convictions for kerb crawling because the police or the prosecuting authorities must prove that the soliciting was persistent or that it caused nuisance or annoyance. The offence was created by the Sexual Offences Act 1985, but that Act does not appear to be much of a deterrent. That is because it is difficult for the prosecuting authorities to prove persistence, nuisance or continuing annoyance.

The Bill also introduces a much higher fine for the offence and it is right that the courts should have the discretion to impose such a fine. I appreciate the argument for relating the fine to a person's income, but that represents an extremely dangerous end of the wedge. One could argue that because a sentence of one year's imprisonment would be devastating to certain people, they should be sent to prison for less time than the hardened individual for whom five years' imprisonment might be more appropriate. That would be unfair. Those involved

[Mr. John Maples]

with the criminal law and criminals in particular recognise that sentencing is arbitrary. If personal circumstances were taken into account when imposing a fine one could quickly get into deep water.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I should have thought that the doctrine of res ipsa loquitur applies. If someone propositioned someone else and asked her if she was a prostitute, that would annoy and it would be a nuisance. If that person was a prostitute there might be a burden of proof on her to suggest why it caused annoyance, but if an innocent person were so addressed it is inevitable that offence and annoyance would be caused. There would be no need to prove that as it is obvious.

At present the courts sentence recidivists to longer imprisonment than those who, if sent to prison, would lose their livelihoods and their ability to support their families.

Mr. Maples: I accept what my hon. and learned Friend says about the difficulty of proving the annoyance caused. My legal studies took place a long time ago, but I believe that the doctrine of res ipsa loquitur applies to civil, not criminal law. In England one must prove the elements of the offence in criminal cases. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that it is sensible to sentence a repeated offender to a longer term of imprisonment than someone who has committed his first offence. If, as a matter of law, the courts were invited to fine relatively wealthy people more than less wealthy people, we would get unto great difficulty, especially if we translated that doctrine to other areas of sentencing.

A respectable city figure of 40 years' standing who commits an insider trading offence might find one year in gaol devastating. It would probably ruin his marriage and his livelihood, especially if he spent all his resources on legal fees. The hardened east end criminal might find one year in gaol a doddle. He would be prepared to take that sentence in exchange for £50,000 gained from an armed robbery. If one starts to draw such distinctions one is in dangerous territory. The present arrangements are too arbitrary, as is the proposal about fines.

I do not intend to deal in detail with the abolition of the presumption that boys under 14 years cannot commit the offence of rape. It is clear that they can and my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) is on to a good point.

There is no doubt that great nuisance is caused to people in neighbourhoods where kerb crawling occurs. It is interesting to note from the 1985 debate how many hon. Members said that kerb crawling was a serious nuisance in their constituencies. When my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) introduced her Bill she said:

"From the point of view of ordinary women who live in that area or who have to pass through it on their way to work, it can be an extremely embarrassing and unpleasant experience to be accosted . . .

That is becoming more and more intolerable, because it brings secondary nuisances into play. Quarrels arise where a prostitute and a man do not agree on a price, car doors bang and there are traffic problems"

Those problems were shared by many other hon. Members. The debate covered a wide swathe of the country and political opinions.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said of my hon. Friend's Bill:

"She will be giving great hope also to communities such as the one which I represent, where local residents have had to suffer year after year the abuses, threats and noise that arise when an area becomes the haunt of kerb crawlers . . . Motorists are to be seen driving around for hour after hour looking for prostitutes . . . any woman who walks along the streets of some areas . . . will be seen as a potential prostitute. They can be young school girls or elderly ladies . . . They can be walking home from school or going home from work. I have even been contacted by women to tell me that they have been stopped by motorists when taking their young children out. They have been seen as potential prostitutes."

It is clear that kerb crawling is a great nuisance in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham. Apparently the 1985 Act has not had much effect in diminishing the incidence of that nuisance and that suggests that more needs to be done.

In the 1985 debate the former Member for Battersea, Mr. Alfred Dubs, said that he welcomed the Bill. That constituency is close to Streatham. He said:

"Since I first came to the House in 1979, I too have received a continuing stream of complaints about kerb-crawling men from women in the area. Some of the complaints are extremely bitter. I was once told by a mother that her schoolgirl daughter aged 14 was afraid to walk home from school in the afternoon because she was being harassed . . . I have received millions"—

No doubt that was an exaggeration, but he obviously felt strongly about the matter—

"of complaints about what it is like to walk home on dark afternoons and evenings and to be subjected to such intimidation".

Similar problems were experienced in other constituencies. The former Member for Nottingham, North, Mr. Richard Ottaway, described the problems in Nottingham. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) described what was happening in that area and spoke of the problems in Wandsworth when he was leader of that borough council.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) made similar complaints about Birmingham where, he said that

"kerb crawling has reached epidemic proportions and we cannot wait much longer for legislation to control it."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 1241-88.]

He then read out letters from his constituents making that point.

In 1985, there was clearly a serious problem of nuisance in a widely differing range of towns and cities. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham has put the case strongly about what has been happening in Streatham, and the hon. Member for Tooting has dealt with similar problems in his constituency, the problem clearly occurs in many other areas. I have a copy of a letter from Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council in 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) which says:

"You are probably aware of problems relating to Prostitution in the All Saints Area of the town. The Housing Services Committee have been concerned for some time about the effect upon residents in that area . . . It would appear that operating under existing legislation with the existing resources available particularly to the Police Authority, there is little more that can be done to reduce prostitution."

Somebody from Norwich wrote to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary when he was Home Secretary saying:

"Would you please consider making our lives a lot easier and happier by a change in the law, to prevent soliciting in residential areas, not just in Norwich but nationally."

That letter was written in June 1989.

It seems clear that the problem is continuing. I do not know whether the changes that my hon. Friend proposes will make it easier to obtain convictions for the offence. We often do not achieve the effect that we have set out to achieve in legislation. Although, on the face of it, the Bill would appear to make convictions easier to obtain, I should be interested to hear the views of my right hon Friend the Minister.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham seeks to remove from the elements that are necessary to prove the offence the aspects of persistence and annoyance and nuisance. I realise that the first and the second two are really alternatives. Under the 1985 Act, a man commits an offence

"if he solicits a woman . . . in a street or public place"

for the purpose of prostitution

"from a motor vehicle . . . or . . . in the immediate vicinity of a motor vehicle that he has just got out of or off."

Under the Bill, it would no longer be necessary to prove that he had acted "persistently" or had caused nuisance or annoyance. That would seem to make the offence easier to prove. Does my right hon. Friend consider that that is the view of the police, or is the problem simply a question of police priorities and resources? The prevention of kerb crawling may not be high on the list of police priorities.

I should also be interested to hear my right hon. Friend deal with a matter that has been raised by one or two hon. Members—the potential for convicting innocent people. The police seldom fit people up, but it is far from unknown, and several recent cases are extremely disturbing. We should not want to make that easier or encourage it by anything we do in the House. However, if corrupt police officers decide that they want to fit people up with convictions, it is pretty easy for them to do so already and I am not sure that the changes proposed by the Bill would make it easier.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham also seeks to remove the presumption that a boy under 14 is incapable of committing rape. Events about which we know have made it clear that we should support my hon. Friend's proposal. Clearly, such offences are committed by people under that age, although it would still be necessary for the prosecution to prove that they knew that what they were doing was wrong and there would not be a presumption, as there is in the case of someone over 14, that they intended to cause the natural consequence of their actions. As my hon. Friend said, nobody under the age of 10 could be convicted of the offence.

If the Bill were passed, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham would succeed in simplifying section 1 of the 1985 Act by removing the qualification of persistence, and a man would commit an offence if he solicited a woman for the purpose of prostitution from a motor vehicle while it was in a street or in a public place, or in a street or in a public place while in the immediate vicinity of a motor vehicle which he had

"just got out of or off".

Ending a sentence with two prepositions and a conjuncton takes some doing. Perhaps the legislation could be polished up in Committee to avoid that as it is an ugly piece of construction.

What my hon. Friend seeks to do seems to be achievable. He would make the offence simpler to prove in court. Persistence is clearly difficult to prove unless, as my hon. Friend said, police officers follow a particular individual and can themselves give evidence of persistence. The other aspect of the present offence is that it has to be committed in such a manner and in such circumstances as to be likely to cause annoyance to the woman concerned or nuisance to others in the neighbourhood.

It is difficult to prove nuisance to the woman concerned. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) suggested that that would be self-evident. However, evidence is still required and it is extremely unlikely that the prostitute in question will give evidence herself. If an innocent bystander is accosted in this way, she can give evidence, but those circumstances are relatively rare. When it happens, the woman is probably reluctant to go to court and to be cross-examined on how she got herself into the situation. She may lay herself open to various unsavoury allegations.

We are still left with section 2 of the 1985 Act which says:

"A man commits an offence in a street or public place if he persistently solicits a woman . . . for the purpose of prostitution."

The distinction here is that the offence does not involve the use of or proximity to a car. I should be interested to know why it is felt that the word "persistently" is appropriate in that offence, as it makes the previous offence difficult to prove.

The changes spring from the Criminal Law Revision Committee, which reported back before the 1985 Act. The committee clearly felt that some changes to the law were necessary. It said:

"We have found it impossible to separate the question of kerb crawling from the more general question of men accosting women for the purpose of prostitution . . . We were, however, in favour of creating a specific offence to prohibit kerb crawling."

I am not sure of the logical connection between those two statements. Nevertheless, the committee concluded that a specific offence relating to kerb crawling was necessary. It proposed three separate offences, which dealt with different aspects and all were reflected in the original draft of the 1985 Bill. The amendments that qualified the offences in a way that my hon. Friend seeks to change today were introduced in Committee. If the Bill is passed, we shall return to the position of the 1985 Bill as originally drafted and the position that was proposed by the Criminal Law Revision Committee. It suggested:

"It should be an offence for a man to use a motor vehicle in a street or public place for the purpose of soliciting a woman for prostitution. The object of the offence is to stop the man who goes out in a vehicle to look for a prostitute. We are not of course drafting the offence—this would be task of the Parliamentary draftsman."

It did not consider it appropriate or necessary to have the qualifications of persistence, or of causing annoyance or nuisance. Those qualifications were added to the Bill at a later stage.

I should be grateful to hear what my right hon. Friend has to say on that aspect of the Bill. Will it make it easier to obtain convictions? Has the problem of obtaining convictions been caused by the qualifications in the 1985 Act, or by reluctance on the part of the police to prosecute or to give the matter a sufficiently high priority? There is a practical problem of nuisance to people living in many areas of our cities. If anything, the problem is becoming worse. It has not been helped substantially by the 1985 Act and, on the face of it, the Bill is likely to go a long way towards improving that. Subject to what my right hon. Friend says, if the Bill will have beneficial effects, we should support it.

11.58 am

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I want to join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) on introducing the Bill. It gives the House the opportunity to review the Sexual Offences Act 1985 and to consider what might be done to improve it. There is no dispute in the House that kerb crawling is a despicable act. We should all like it to be eliminated, primarily because it impairs the quality of life of those in the red light districts whose homes suffer as a result of it.

The other major part of the Bill concerns the charging of boys under the age of 14 with rape. That measure is long overdue, and the hon. Member for Streatham has our unequivocal support for it.

The 1985 Act was introduced because it was felt at the time that there was no modern legislation that could effectively get to grips with the problem that was so enlighteningly outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). There is kerb crawling in my constituency, but on a much smaller scale than in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting and of the hon. Member for Streatham.

The 1985 Act has failed, probably mainly because of the evidential requirements, which were so stringent that the Act is now difficult to enforce. It must be established that the kerb crawler was persistent, or that his actions caused nuisance or annoyance; to find the evidence for that is clearly difficult—a difficulty that the Crown prosecution service and the police have had to face.

This Bill makes it possible for a kerb crawler to commit an offence by soliciting only once. That must make convictions easier; the task of gathering evidence will be correspondingly lessened. Those who are so dramatically affected by this disease would welcome a simpler, more effective mechanism for bringing charges.

It has been said today that kerb crawling degrades parts of our cities, and hon. Members have given vivid descriptions of the huge numbers of cars that travel around certain areas. We have read reports of people's gardens being used as urinals. The hon. Member for Streatham told us an horrific story about syringes. Many drug pushers and junkies who have reverted to prostitution hang around these areas.

In addition to the environmental decay that has stemmed from these practices, I am sure that hon. Members who are married men would find it grievously offensive if their wives were persistently solicited when walking the dog, bringing a daughter home from a party or going to the local shop. Effective action must be taken to stop that.

The intentions behind the 1985 Act were good, but it has failed to deal with the problem. While the police and the courts have been using that defective legislation, however, local authorities have been taking action. The traffic management schemes to which the hon. Member for Streatham referred have made a difference—but there is no single simple solution to the problem. Any solution must embody many elements.

The police have also taken various initiatives. For instance, they observe kerb crawlers driving around and then send letters to their homes telling them that they have been seen cruising in a red light district. Other police forces have written to employers of those whom they believe have been driving around red light areas persistently.

I find such practices rather dubious. If a wife opens a letter sent to someone's home—it happens in some families—a broken marriage could result. A man's career could be wrecked if an employer read a letter from the police and decided that his kerb-crawling employee should no longer work for the company. In such cases, the police are taking action on their own against people who could be perfectly innocent: they have been neither charged nor convicted. The practice should be discontinued.

I have read the Bill with great care, and I do not believe that it will solve the problem satisfactorily. Certainly, it is not the complete answer. But any legislation would have to be taken in conjunction with other innovative measures, such as the road traffic schemes that I have mentioned. The House would be mistaken to believe that this legislation would eradicate the problem.

Clause 1(2) is central to my reservations about the Bill. Under the 1985 Act, an offence is committed if a person persistently solicits, but under this Bill he would have to solicit only once to commit an offence. I should like to examine in a little detail, even though we are on Second Reading, the way in which the police catch kerb crawlers.

I refer the House to an article in *The Independent*, dated 7 December 1988 and entitled, "Kerb-crawlers targeted in a nightly game". It is instructive to discover how the police operate already, and then to square that with the measures in this Bill.

The journalist who wrote the article sat in the back of a police control car. Sergeant Eddie Rich was the officer in charge and, according to the article,

"is blessed with remarkable night vision and a good memory. The registration number of each passing car is mentally logged.

The punters drive around the particular circuit of roads—twice past the police suggests a punter, three a certain bet for tailing to see if he is persistently soliciting . . .

The rules of the game are strict: the man has to be observed persistently soliciting. It is no good just seeing him driving slowly. Sometimes, the punters are overtaken and waved to a stop after having picked up a prostitute. . .

Normally the punters are cautioned: two cautions and they are 'current'—liable to arrest under the Street Offences Act . . .

The driver is asked to get out of the car, informed pleasantly that he is in a red light area, asked if he knew the girl he had just picked up was a prostitute . . .

'Some deny it—the stories are variations on a theme of "I was just giving her a lift" or "she's an old friend".' The man is usually informally cautioned and sent on his way by Sgt. Rich with a cherry: 'I won't tell your wife if you don't' . . .

Persistent soliciting, repeatedly approaching women who do not respond or being caught several times in the same night in the company of prostitutes, leads to a summons under the Sexual Offences Act."

I thought that a useful illustration. In summary, the police take the numbers of the cars going around if they have been past them three times. Next, they see a man get out of a car. Thirdly, they see the man talk to a woman and, fourthly, the police then decide whether the man was soliciting a prostitute. That is essentially the practice.

It is clear that clause 1 would give the police considerable powers to bring charges—appreciably more than currently exist. The police would need to know that the woman was a prostitute, but I do not believe that that is too difficult, because many of the women will have been to court. They will be known and some will even have pleaded guilty. However, how will the police be able to establish that the man was soliciting a prostitute? It is unlikely that the police would have overheard the conversation between the prostitute and——

Mr. David Martin *rose*—

Mr. Randall: If I can just finish my little bit of logic, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

It is unlikely that the police would have overheard the conversation between the prostitute and the man. Furthermore, the prostitute would be unlikely to deny that she was solicited by him. Therefore, on what grounds will the police proceed?

Although as I have already said, I support the motive behind the Bill, I am concerned that we might be creating legislation that could result in innocent people being convicted. I should like to give an example of that, but before I do so, I give way to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin).

Mr. Martin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I understood him to say—I assume that he is basing this on the Sexual Offences Act 1985—that a woman has to be a prostitute before there can be proceedings. That does not seem to accord with the Act, because all that the man has to be seen to do is to solicit "persistently or, subject to section 5(6) below, in such manner or in such circumstances as to be likely to cause annoyance to the woman (or any of the women) solicited, or nuisance to other persons in the neighbourhood".
Therefore, we do not need proof that the woman is a prostitute. All that needs to be proved to show that a man has committed an offence is that he has solicited a woman for the purpose of prostitution. It does not matter whether she is a prostitute. He is doing wrong by assuming that she might be, and by the fact that that is the purpose in his mind.

Mr. Randall: I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I was directing my argument to cases in which a man gets out of a car and solicits a prostitute. The hon. Gentleman is right to bring that point to the attention of the House, because that part of the legislation protects women who are not prostitutes. On those grounds, I support what the hon. Gentleman has said 100 per cent.

I should like to give an example of the sort of case that is helping me to decide whether we should give the Bill a Second Reading. We have heard about how the police operate, but let us take the case that I outlined to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting in the Library yesterday. I believe that he obliquely referred to it.

I refer to the example of a man who is visiting a friend who has a flat above a shop in a red light district. The visitor has never been to that area before and is having difficulty in finding the flat, which does not have a conspicuous entrance. He is lost and drives around the block two or three times to try to find the flat. The police have noticed that he has passed them two or three times and that he has been staring out of the window of the car towards the pavement. He still cannot find the flat, and after looking for some time, he gets out of the car to seek advice. He goes on to the pavement and a young lady readily comes towards him. He asks her about the address of his friend. The visitor does not know that she is a prostitute. However, by now the police will have got into their car and assumed that he was kerb crawling and soliciting.

As a friend of the police, I always weigh in their favour, but, as legislators, we have to take into account the fact that the police report could say, "I did not hear what was said, but I believe that the man was soliciting." No corroboration is needed. We all know that in such a case the visitor is an innocent man, but it is clear that he would be vulnerable to being charged in accordance with the 1985 Act, as it would be amended by the hon. Gentleman's Bill.

I hinted earlier in an intervention that I believe that, as legislators, we have to be careful what we create. The cry of civil liberties is often raised, but we must take it into account and ensure that innocent people are protected. I believe that that case is realistic and fear that the clause needs careful attention. The matter should be considered in Committee so that we ensure that we have legislation that not only eliminates the disease of kerb crawling and prostitution, but which also ensures that we have a balance.

The hon. Member for Streatham is aware that the other place included the word "persistently" in the Act for the very reason that a new piece of legislation was being introduced that might result in heavy convictions. That is why there is doubt in my mind; although I want powerful legislation that is easy to operate, I want to ensure that we shall not convict innocent people.

Sir William Shelton: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern and welcome what he has been saying. Perhaps I can help him with the example that he gave of a visitor who might have got into trouble, because I understand that it is a cause of concern. However, under the 1985 Act, that person could still have got into some trouble.

I remarked earlier that Nottingham police have secured convictions by noting the number of a car seen to be driving past two or three times and stopping, and because the driver had a conversation with a prostitute. However, that takes a lot of police manpower, and a prosecution is not certain.

Even under the present legislation, a person in the situation described by the hon. Gentleman might find himself in difficulty with the police—but not if he was a genuine visitor. He would only have to say, "I was visiting my aunt. She has just moved to a new flat and I am not sure where she lives. I have her address and telephone number." The police only have to go to that address and knock on the door, to find it opened by a lady saying, "Yes, where's my nephew?" I do not believe that a genuine visitor would find himself summonsed.

Mr. Randall: That returns us to the earlier point, that prosecution would be at the discretion of the police and the Crown prosecution service.

Other legislation could be invoked, but the 1985 Act was created specifically to deal with the problem of kerb crawling and prostitution and with the horrific problems that we heard about. We are trying to create legislation directed specifically at kerb crawling and prostitution and to make it work so as to achieve a balance between securing a conviction with reasonable ease—by removing the necessity for evidential requirements that are too stringent—and ensuring that there are never any wrongful convictions. I would welcome the Minister's comments on the risk of misjudgment, for I know that he will have put a lot of thought into that aspect.

Clause 1(3) contains the proposal, which we support, that penalties should be raised from level 3 to level 4, from £400 to £1,000. A penalty of £400 is absurdly low for such a serious offence. To put it into perspective, a level 3 fine is imposed on people who attempt to evade paying their

[Mr. Randall]

tube train fare. Clearly, that offence can hardly be compared with the nuisance and annoyance caused by prostitution and kerb crawling.

Labour's policy document, "A Safer Britain" stated that fines should be means-related, to ensure that people on low incomes are able to pay the fines imposed on them. The last thing that we want is to put people behind bars because they cannot pay.

Mr. John Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Randall: The Minister nods, and he addressed the same point in the Government's recently published White Paper, which appeared after our own policy document.

Raising the penalty to level 4 will mean that both rich and poor will, at least under Labour's proposals, regard their fines as a real punishment. I understand that many kerb crawlers are reasonably well-off and probably do not even notice that their bank account has been debited by the amount of the fine at its current level.

Clause 2 will enable charges to be brought against a boy below the age of 14, against the current assumption that such a boy is incapable of rape and cannot have sexual intercourse. We fully support that notion and believe that the present law is unrealistic. The situation was best summed up by the Home Office Criminal Law Revision Committee's "Working Paper on Sexual Offences—October 1980". Paragraph 27 of that document states:

> "Under the present law, as we have already stated, a boy under 14 cannot be convicted of . . . rape . . . whatever his actual physical capacity. Boys under this age . . . do in fact commit acts which would be rape if they were over 14 . . . Cases of this kind occur in what have become known as 'gang bangs', that is a series of sexual assaults by a group of youths on a girl. Such cases are very serious indeed as the girl often suffers severe emotional injury as well as physical harm . . . The older boys will be convicted of rape and punished severely, while a boy under 14, who may have had a leading part in the rape, can only be treated as having aided and abetted."

Such a scandalous situation should not exist in modern law.

It is difficult to assess the extent of rape offences by boys aged below 14. We know that in 1988, extraordinarily enough, 45 boys under 14 were prosecuted for indecent assault, and that a further 290 were cautioned. Our posture is that rape is so serious, and its effect on women so great, that men should be severely punished, whether or not they are below the age of 14—provided that they knew that what they were doing was wrong.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will give the Bill a Second Reading but in its present form, it will not succeed any more than the 1985 Act in seriously limiting kerb crawling. We must take a broader look, beyond legislation—which cannot by itself do the job. There are many elements to the solution, and they must be carefully considered in Committee, where I hope that we shall have an opportunity to add to the proposals of the hon. Member for Streatham, in helping the people living in red light districts who have to endure horrific problems, in the hope that they will be able to enjoy a decent environment in future.

12.24 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting the debate, but I seek your clarification as to how I may pursue an urgent matter that has just come to my attention. Apparently, on 11 February the Hinkley Point nuclear power station was, as a result of storms, out of action for 20 minutes, during which time it had no cooling—which could have led to a serious meltdown and a major nuclear incident.

I understand that the Secretary of State for Energy was notified of that incident. An investigation into whether or not such an event did occur is, I am sure the House will agree, a matter of considerable urgency and public concern. Will it be possible, through your good offices, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to alert the Secretary of State and to request that he makes a statement to the House or outside it about whether such an incident did occur and to propose steps to resolve the matter—or to give a reassurance that it did not? My information suggests that there was a serious incident in which the station's lights and cooling system failed, and that there was considerable disorder and anxiety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but there is nothing that I can do directly to help. Doubtless what he has said will be listened to and notified to Ministers.

12.28 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) on his fortune in securing such a high place in the ballot, and on introducing the Bill. My hon. Friend is well known for the assidious way in which he looks after his constituents. Kerb crawling is a great problem in his constituency, and he has rightly grabbed with both hands the opportunity to deal with the problem.

Kerb crawling and prostitution are a plague—a localised plague but nevertheless one that covers quite large areas. Once an area has a reputation for such a thing it is difficult to get rid of it. Different areas have different reputations. For example, Belgravia has a reputation for large stucco houses, and that is why people go there. Islington has a reputation for a famous street market, and my constituency has a reputation for the longest street market in Europe and for an extensive area of public open space—Walthamstow marshes. It is also well known for including an area of Epping forest. Those are good reputations, but part of my hon. Friend's constituency has a thoroughly bad reputation, and possibly because it is so bad, it is all the more difficult to get rid of.

Other areas suffer from kerb crawling and prostitution. I lived in Islington for many years, and I know that Finsbury Park was a notorious locality. It is very pleasant—close to a park—with nice houses and wide streets, but it had that reputation and the local council had to work hard over a number of years to eradicate the problem.

Kerb crawling is an unpleasant activity, except for the person indulging in it. However, by indulging in that activity people make an area unpleasant for others. Take an area such as King's Cross, which at one time had a reputation for kerb crawling. I do not know whether it still has, but at one time it certainly did. Around a major railway station, there are a lot of people coming and going,

They may include strangers, people from abroad perhaps, and it cannot be pleasant for them to arrive at King's Cross station, to wander out into the street to look for a cup of coffee or something to eat and to be accosted or see someone obviously kerb crawling.

I have seen kerb crawling in the King's Cross area. I saw a large, black Mercedes with diplomatic plates crawling around the back streets, and it was clear what the driver was up to.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) offered a note of caution about lost strangers, and I think that that is a valid point which will have to be closely considered in Committee. Some areas of cities have the most complicated one-way systems. Harking back to Islington, the Barnsbury one-way system is notorious. Once in it, it is almost impossible to get out without the services of a guide. Even taxi drivers do not like to go there. I am not insinuating that that area suffers from kerb crawlers—I am sure that it does not. However, if one does not know the area and gets stuck one can go round and round. The car may start to overheat, and the driver may get hot and bothered and not know which way to turn. He may come up against a no entry sign, which means that he has to turn round and find another way. In the end, drivers are sometimes forced to go the wrong way down a one-way street because it is the only conceivable way of getting out.

If a driver is unlucky enough to find himself in a one-way system in an area known for kerb crawling there may be the possibility of an error. I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said about that, but it is nevertheless a possibility, and perhaps it could be considered in Committee.

Urban areas suffer increasingly from disturbances. Hon. Members with town and city constituencies know that only too well, as they are receiving more and more complaints. During last year's long hot summer most people kept all their windows open, and the weather was taken as an invitation to be sociable and give parties—which nowadays seems to mean people arriving at any time up to 4 am, often with much screeching of tyres, revving of engines and blasting of music from car radios. The hosts of such parties sometimes seem to hold open house: word gets round, and people come from miles away. I have received complaints about such problems in two streets in my constituency; they are very difficult to deal with.

As all hon. Members know, it is unwise to become involved in disputes between neighbours, but it is difficult not to when the inhabitants of an entire street arrive in despair at our surgeries. As soon as I see the dark rings under their eyes, I know all too well what the problem is: they have been kept awake at night, perhaps throughout the week.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham pointed out, kerb crawling compounds the problem. People who sleep in front rooms are forced to sleep at the back of the house to get away from the noise. Groups of prostitutes sometimes congregate at 1 am, screaming, shouting, chattering and laughing; people arrive in motor cars and hoot their horns. The disturbance must be terrible. On top of all that, there is the distress caused to women and their daughters as they go to and from school and the shops or engage in entirely legitimate recreations. They must dread coming home sometimes, knowing that they will be accosted.

I am glad to learn that the penalties will be sharpened. The Bill proposes an increase in the fines from scale 3 to scale 4: not being a lawyer, I did not have a clue what that meant, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham for spelling it out. There is, of course, a danger that heavier fines may simply encourage prostitutes to work harder to recover the money that they have had to pay, and we should make it clear to the courts that prostitutes must really feel the effect of the penalties imposed on them.

Kerb crawlers must also be deterred. Once they are convicted, the story of their shame must be spread across their local newspapers. If a kerb crawler comes from the north of England, *The Northern Echo* should know about it, and should spread the story across the centre pages with a whacking great photograph in the middle and the caption, "This man was convicted of kerb crawling". He must be held up to scorn and ridicule.

That sort of penalty will make people think twice about committing such offences. Fines are chickenfeed to rich business men and even foreign diplomats, who simply write out a cheque or take the money out of petty cash. They will value their reputation far more than just having to write out a cheque. If they know that the story will be spread across the local newspapers, together with their photograph, it will act as a strong deterrent.

How do we tackle the problem nationally rather than locally? I do not believe that the French system would be acceptable here. If we legitimised brothels from scratch, if I may put it that way, where on earth would they be sited? If people saw in their local newspapers an application for planning consent for a brothel in the neighbourhood, they would not be very happy.

Mr John Patten: Or there might be planning application for change of use.

Mr. Summerson: Yes, indeed. One wonders to what use a warehouse in an established industrial area might be put. Could it be said that a change to use by prostitutes is a legitimate industrial activity? We are skating on thin ice.

Other countries have attempted to solve the problem by heavy-handed and brutal means. When I went on a long journey round South America about 12 years ago I was approached by a girl in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay. Fortunately for me, just at that moment a police car came round the corner and she fled, or she might have left me holding the baby. I should have found myself in serious trouble. Paraguay's prisons are not the most pleasant of places.

When I was in Buenos Aires I went to the docks area, purely for the purpose of travelling across the river Plate to Montevideo. Exactly the same thing happened. A couple of girls suddenly popped out of the building and gabbled something at me. My Spanish was quite good in those days, but I could not follow what they said. However, they did not have to say anything; what they meant was perfectly clear. Again, fortunately, just at that moment—my guardian angel must have been wearing a police helmet—a police van appeared. However, the two girls dragged me into the house, slammed the door and bolted it. I thought that I was going to be in the most desperate trouble. I looked through my passport to see whether I had the name and address of our consul in Buenos Aires. Fortunately, all that the girls did was to take me upstairs where there appeared to be a perfectly

[Mr. Summerson]

legitimate restaurant where I spent a happy and convivial evening. They did not attempt to take me downstairs again.

In such countries, the problem is solved by the use of police brutality. Nothing would induce me to suggest that that is the way to solve our problem. The Bill is on the right lines. However, it needs to be considered further in Committee. Its provisions will result in cleaning-up the area where my hon. Friend's constituents are suffering. All hon. Members must believe that that is the right way to proceed.

12.43 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. In particular, I most warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) on introducing a Bill that attempts to deal with a most difficult, awkward and, frankly, unpleasant subject. It is not a subject for the squeamish. My hon. Friend has shown considerable courage in introducing the Bill. Both the House and the country are in his debt.

My hon. Friend described some ugly and disagreeable scenes in parts of Streatham. I must say that I have never heard of kerb crawling taking place in my constituency, in Twickenham, Teddington, Hampton or Whitton. My hon. Friend said that in his constituency it took place only in certain districts and neighbourhoods and that it did not happen in many other constituencies. I cannot claim that all my constituents are entirely innocent of all crimes. Constituencies are affected by their geography: as mine is near Heathrow airport, there have been cases of drug smuggling; and there have been other serious crimes, ranging from murder and rape to burglary.

It is something of a mystery why prostitution should take place in this day and age. It seems rather odd that people should pay for what can be obtained free, but it does happen.

What causes offence is the open display and the banging about. Hon. Members have spoken of the nuisance and the annoyance, and have referred to doors slamming. Over the years, I have protested about aircraft noise, which is a major nuisance in my constituency as it is close to Heathrow. However, one old lady wrote to me saying that she did not mind the noise of the aircraft as she liked to think of people going for rides in aeroplanes, but what she could not stand was neighbours' car doors slamming at night.

One can well imagine that, in kerb-crawling areas, the noise of doors slamming, loud conversation, people calling out from cars, cars circling round and brakes screeching at all hours of the evening and the night must be very annoying to many people.

I accept what my hon. Friend says—that the enforcement of the 1985 Act is difficult because of the way in which it is drafted. It is significant that, in the last year for which statistics are available, there were only 521 cases of men prosecuted for kerb-crawling, yet there were more than 8,000 cases of women prosecuted for soliciting—about 16 times as many.

I am rather doubtful whether the proposed increase in the maximum fine from £400 to £1,000 will act as much of a deterrent unless it is fully applied by the courts. The £400 fine is now seldom imposed: I am told that the average fine is about £100. Unless the courts take notice of the increase and impose high penalties, I am sceptical about the deterrent effect of increasing the maximum fine. The courts are too lenient in respect of many different criminal offences, and this is probably one of them.

I should like to ask my right hon Friend the Minister of State whether the motor vehicles referred to in the Bill include motor cycles. We have to anticipate the law applying into the next century, when the North sea oil runs out and petrol will be more expensive and more people will turn away from the use of cars and use motor cycles.

I should like to be assured that the proposed amendment to the law on kerb crawling will include motor cycles, because it would be possible to kerb-crawl for the purpose of soliciting prostitutes by motor cycle. Motor cycles might be even noisier than cars. The engines of motor cycles might make even more noise than the slamming of car doors. It is not convenient for everyone to travel on motor cycles. Some people who are solicited—the younger ones, if not the older ones—may be prepared to ride pillion.

The threat of AIDS adds importance to the debate. The House debated AIDS the day after my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham had an Adjournment debate in January 1989 on kerb crawling. Since that time, the threat of AIDS has increased. Within the past few days, Health Ministers have given new warnings on the increasing risk of AIDS being spread through sexual intercourse between men and women. Prostitution increases that risk. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said that some prostitutes in Streatham may be suffering from AIDS or hepatitis. In that context, it is right to intensify the attack on kerb crawling.

Clause 2 rightly abolishes the presumption that theoretically a boy under the age of 14 is incapable of committing rape. An extract from *The Daily Telegraph* of 5 September 1989 is headed: "Hunt for boys aged 12 and 14 over sex attack." It reads:

"A boy aged about 12 and another believed to be between 14 and 16 years old were being hunted by police in Leeds yesterday after subjecting a 29-year-old married woman to a horrifying sexual assault at knife-point. More than 40 police officers were drafted into the Garforth area where the woman was attacked early Sunday evening after being dragged into bushes between two busy roads and ordered to strip naked.

She was raped by each of the boys as the other watched, using a Stanley knife with which she was repeatedly threatened.

The attack lasted more than 15 minutes.

A detective inspector said

"She was now being treated by a police surgeon and was likely to be admitted to hospital because she was still in a serious state of shock.

'In all my experience, I have never seen such an attack to be committed by someone as young as 12, but from the evidence we have there is no doubt that one of these boys is no older than that . . . We are treating this as an extremely serious attack on this lady and we are anxious to apprehend these two boys as quickly as possible.

' Under our law people under the age of 14 cannot be tried for the crime of rape so we are describing this as a serious sexual assault.'"

The age of 14 was set in the 19th century, partly by statute law and partly by case law. It is a known medical fact that the age of puberty for girls and boys has gradually reduced. Boys and girls mature earlier than they did a century ago. I do not know the reason for that; it may have something to do with improved and balanced diet.

The tendency to violent crime is augmented by violent and pornographic scenes depicted on video or sometimes on television. I hope that, in addition to enacting the Bill, the House, through the Broadcasting Bill and other measures laid before it, will tighten up on pornographic and violent videos. The combination of those videos and the gradually reducing age of puberty have contributed to some boys aged under 14 committing crimes that should come within the ambit of the Bill.

I hope that the Minister will listen to what I am saying. I hope that the House will give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading and that it continues to progress as rapidly as possible.

12.54 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I was listening carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel); if he wants to cross-question me afterwards in a sort of "Mastermind", I am sure I shall be able to answer his questions. I am glad to join in the congratulations that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) on the excellent Bill that he has introduced today.

I am grateful for this opportunity to outline the Government's position. Before doing so, it is incumbent on me, on behalf of the House, to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham wholeheartedly. All hon. Members who have spoken have been in favour of the Bill. I congratulate him warmly both on his success in the ballot and on introducing a Bill that strengthens and rationalises the law in a way that will be understood and welcomed not only by his constituents, but by people throughout the country, particularly where the nuisance of street prostitution and kerb crawling exists.

The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham are fortunate to have his powerful voice in this place. My hon. Friend has previously discussed the nuisance that so affects his constituents. The fact that he has struck a resonant chord with the House can be recognised by the strong support that he has received from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and from my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), subject to one qualification that I shall attempt to deal with later.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham certainly enjoys the support of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), also subject to one or two qualifications that I shall attempt to deal with. If the Bill receives a Second Reading, we can deal with those reservations in Committee. We heard a powerful speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). I only wish that he had gone on longer with his tales from Argentina, but perhaps we can discuss them on another occasion in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham also received congratulations from my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham in a powerful speech.

Almost exactly a year ago, I was on my feet replying to a speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham on the Adjournment. In his speech he represented, with his customary courtesy and clarity, the need to modify the wording of the Sexual Offences Act 1985. He gave us a treat today by reading some extracts from the speech that he made on that occasion. I often feel that my own speeches read quite well when I look back on them. Certainly, the extract that my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham gave read extremely well. It has worn well in the passage of time.

At that time, I said that I agreed with his arguments, some of which I was unfamiliar with. I gave a clear hint that the Government would favour a reform as soon as they had a suitable opportunity to look again at the issue. My hon. Friend has taken me at my word, and I am glad to be at the Dispatch Box again, almost exactly a year after he raised the issue on the Adjournment, honouring what I said to him then and offering the Government's support for what he seeks to do.

My hon. Friend raised a number of broader points, which he has not chosen to put into his excellent Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the excellent drafting of the Bill. He made points that he felt deserved an airing. He spoke of what we should do about pimps and pimping and the men who live so vilely on the often young, simple and deluded women, who ply their trade. He has made some important points and the Government must consider that issue in future, although not within the Bill's context, unless my hon. Friend seeks to amend the Bill later in Standing Committee. I think that perhaps he will not.

My hon. Friend asked whether men who were convicted of kerb crawling should have their driving licences removed as an additional penalty to drive home the lesson of conviction. It is an interesting idea, but the main purpose of imposing disqualifications from driving following convictions for road traffic offences is to remove bad drivers from the roads. That is why we have that offence. That would not be the purpose here if we were to take up that suggestion.

We could also remove or endorse the driving licences of people as an additional penalty. There is an additional penalty for offenders who use motor vehicles in committing more serious, indictable offences—for example, robbery. Only the Crown court can disqualify an offender on those grounds and only when convicting the person of an offence punishable with more than two years' imprisonment. Kerb crawling is not on a par with that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham specifically asked whether someone kerb crawling from a motor bicycle would be caught by the Bill; the answer is yes. It covers any form of motorised vehicle. I hope that that satisfies him.

A couple more interesting points were raised about the use of electronic monitoring and curfews as a possible form of punishment for prostitutes to keep them off the streets. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will certainly bear in mind what has been said. The House will be aware that, in my right hon. Friend's White Paper, which was announced last week to such universal acclaim, the Government's intention that we should move towards making curfewing more available to the courts was not just floated, but stated. That is an important issue, and if we have a criminal justice Bill, we shall have to consider the use of curfewing a a power to be made available to the courts in this context.

The Bill has two separate purposes, and it is right that each should be considered fully and individually on its own merits. The first is to increase the effectiveness of the law in dealing with the appalling and persistent—I use the word carefully—nuisance of kerb crawling. The second is to remove a serious limitation in the law, which prevents the conviction of any boy under 14 of a sexual offence involving penetration.

[Mr. John Patten]

This morning, we have heard a great deal about the first purpose of the Bill set out in clause 1. I propose to begin by saying a little more about the second purpose, about which we have heard rather less. It involves a reform which merits closer attention than it has been given hitherto.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham explained, the abolition of the presumption about the sexual capacity of boys under 14 was recommended by the Criminal Law Revision Committee in its 15th report. There was unanimous support for the proposal To that extent, clause 2 is short, to the point and just what is wanted by the committee and most sensible public opinion today.

As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West reminded us, it is important when we legislate to understand what we are doing and why we are setting out to do it. I have studied the Bill carefully to see the import of clause 2. It is important to be absolutely clear why my hon. Friend wants clause 2 and to remove some evident misconceptions about what the Bill may do in respect of clause 2.

The first misconception is that we are just talking about rape. The sexual offences that the law says such boys cannot commit are not restricted just to rape. Obviously, I must go into some detail, but I intend to spare the House as much unpleasant detail as I can. It is important to appreciate the effect of clause 2 before the House decides to give the Bill a Second Reading, as I hope it will.

The offences that the law says boys under 14 cannot commit include all those crimes that involve the offender's capacity, physically and unlawfully, to penetrate a victim. All the various acts and attempted acts of rape and of buggery are involved. It is important that the House understands that.

The second misconception that might arise from clause 2 is that boys under 14 just do not do that type of thing. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham has already given us a graphic account of an incident in Leeds, from which it is clear that boys have committed the exact offences under consideration.

The other misconception is that, if boys under the age of 14 commit such acts, the numbers are too small for the law to be involved. That fallacy is aided by the fact that, because such offences are not recognised, statistics on them are not collected. Unless the House decides to change the law we must, for now, depend upon the necessarily anecdotal, but powerful, evidence from the police in Leeds and elsewhere.

Statistics tell us, however, that in the four latest years for which figures are available, nearly 300 boys aged between 10 and 13 years were proceeded against for indecent assault on a female. That is a pretty shocking statistic. In 85 of those cases, the assaults were committed not on young girls—not that that makes it any better—but on victims who were older than 16, in some cases women in their 20s or even older. Therefore, in a substantial number of cases adult women were the victims.

The lesser charge of indecent assault had to be substituted in those cases because the law does not allow for the offender to be capable of doing what he did. Those cases are not concentrated in London, and they are exceptionally distressing. In the past 12 months alone, in West Yorkshire there have been 12 cases involving boys under 14. There were half a dozen in Brixton, one small area of London, and others around the country.

It is important for the House to realise the nature of the offences. In one, the victim, aged four, handicapped and epileptic, was raped by the boy next door, aged 13. In another the victim was aged five. A victim aged 10 was gang-raped while visiting friends by 13-year-old boys who dragged her upstairs. The last of the litany of distressing examples that I could give the House was a sickening multiple attack on a married woman in her late 20s, a mother of three, by schoolboy rapists under the age of 14.

Any hon. Member who has received, as we have received in the Home Office, letters from the parents of a violated child who has gone through the most awful physical pain and, as hon. Members have said, who may suffer persistent mental trauma for many years, will know the pain and the consternation that they feel, not only because the act has happened, but because the law is adding to the injury of a vicious rape or a brutal act of sexual assault the insult that it did not happen. The law says that what manifestly happened and can be proved did not happen. That is grossly unsatisfactory for the statute book.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham has homed in sharply on that point. The House and I should be grateful to him for dealing with the matter. Our criminal justice system is entitled to the confidence of victims just as much as to the confidence of criminals. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is right when he says that we should put the victim first on every occasion. The victim and the victim's relatives need the help and support of the law.

I come now to a closely related matter which arises out of the argument that I have used in support of the Bill, but which has not been picked out in this morning's debate and which affects adult women in particular. The names of juveniles who are the victims of rape or other offences are, of course, protected absolutely by law. It is wrong to suppose that the Bill would make no real practical difference to the adult victim.

This is an important issue. At present, the adult woman victim of an under-14 rapist is not protected by the anonymity provisions which would be afforded to her were the alleged assailant aged over 14. Surely that is wrong. The issue concerns me as chairman of the ministerial group on women's issues. If the offence is rape and can be recognised as such, all victims, however young their assailants, will from now on benefit from the provision guaranteeing anonymity.

In particular, non-juvenile victims will be guaranteed anonymity by the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and I served together on the Committee that considered that Bill. We were equally happy, as was the Labour Front Bench, to agree to the extension of anonymity to a woman who was an alleged rape victim from the moment that she reported the rape, whether it was ever brought to trial or conviction. It is clear that, unless we change the law concerning boys under 14, we cannot extend that provision to women. Should the Bill receive a Second Reading and go into Committee, that protection will be extended. People will be tremendously grateful to my hon. Friend for making that possible.

My hon. Friend's provision is important to the parents of young victims in that they are seeing that justice is done and that it is recognised that an offence has been committed when it manifestly has been.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): That will be a relief not only to the parents of victims, but to the parents of those who may perpetrate such acts. It will deter those youngsters from getting into trouble.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right about parental responsibility in this respect. It is a theme on which she has addressed the House on a number of occasions and I agree with her entirely.

This provision is extremely important to the adult victim of an under-14 assailant. She may now have the protection of anonymity to help her through the hurt and trauma of rape. It is a significant provision for a small group of victims.

Clause 1 may be of more significance to more people and seeks to amend the kerb crawling offence in section 1 of the 1985 Act.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if, as I believe is right, younger boys are to be prosecuted and convicted of offences of rape and other penetrative offences, it will be important to examine the way in which they are dealt with after conviction? Is the Home Office looking into appropriate ways of dealing with these young boys, who tend to be peculiarly mixed up and from appalling backgrounds?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who is responsible for policy matters governing the care of young offenders in this category, are considering these matters all the time. It is a disturbing fact that those who assault have often in their turn been assaulted physically or sexually, or both, in their youth. There seems to be something, if not hereditary, at least connected to family circumstances, which leads some of these young disturbed people to behave as they do. But we cannot forgive them in the first instance for the dreadful acts that they have committed. We hope to reform and rehabilitate them as soon as possible thereafter, while, of course, protecting the victims.

I turn now to the first provision of the Bill, to amend the kerb crawling offence in section 1(1) of the Sexual Offences Act 1985. A good many hon. Members have experienced complaints from their constituents: my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West, the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), the hon. Member for Tooting—he made a powerful speech on which he was rightly congratulated by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West—my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), and for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter); and lastly, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West who made a perfectly timed four-minute intervention before the statement at 11 am. I understand the anxiety that some hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, have voiced about this provision.

Anyone who has looked into the history of the 1985 Act will know that my hon. Friend's Bill deletes from the kerb crawling offence in that legislation the qualifications of persistence, nuisance and annoyance which were added to it during its passage to the statute book. The insertion of those qualifications reflected the caution with which Parliament, understandably and perhaps even rightly, approaches proposals that may affect the liberty of the individual. But there was no real argument back in 1985 about the need to grant powers to deal with severe local problems and the nuisance caused by kerb crawling.

So far, the debate today has not been about what may or may not be morally reprehensible but about which activities pursued by prostitutes' clients should be restricted because of their effects on residents and ordinary women. The House has to strike the right balance between dealing with the problem effectively and removing this persistent stain on the lives of many, and safeguarding the interests of the innocent. This morning we have heard one or two powerful examples of how innocent people might be convicted. I do not think that likely, but that is the sort of issue that we need to discuss in more detail in Committee.

There is a crucial difference between today's debate and the debates of five years ago. Today's takes place against the background of the all-too-evident failure of the offences finally agreed upon in the Bill brought in by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) to catch the nuisance. That point was powerfully made by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) in one of his interventions.

In the last three years for which figures are available —1986, 1987 and 1988—the total number of convictions for the section 1 offence for the whole of England and Wales is only 955. The annual average for the whole country is probably less than the number of kerb crawling incidents seen in one week—or perhaps in one night—in some hon. Members' constituencies.

The offence as specified in the 1985 Act—this was not the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Drake, who tried so hard to make the provisions work at the time —has neither caught nor deterred offenders in the way in which many hon. Members hoped that it would. The reason for that failure is not difficult to find. Because of the changes made in Committee, the Act was blinded to the real nuisance of kerb crawling. I can advise my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West, who raised a point earlier on this issue, that the Act is not as effective as it should be.

My hon. Friend asked specifically whether the police feel that they need more powers. The answer to that is a clear and unequivocal yes. Those who have to live with kerb crawling or who have spoken to those beleaguered people or to the police who try to deal with the nuisance, know that the real nuisance is in the sum of the activity, not the individual incident—a point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham. In such areas, there is no shortage of prostitutes. Even if a man does not solicit persistently, when his activities are added to those of others, a persistent nuisance definitely emerges.

Hon. Members who represent some of the worst afflicted areas, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham and the hon. Member for Tooting, will readily agree that whole neighbourhoods continue to live with a dreadful infestation of slow-moving cars trailing girls. Many women are in fear of going about in those areas. Feelings range from unpleasantness to outright fear.

It is said by some that, where there is no witness to testify, there cannot be a victim. I do not find it at all difficult—I do not know of any hon. Member who will find it difficult—to identify the victims in this respect. The

[Mr. Patten]

victims of kerb crawling are the constituents of Streatham and elsewhere, who suffer from the nuisance. Frankly—this is why I personally support my hon. Friend's Bill—I do not think that we have given the victims of kerb crawling enough attention. Many of those victims have made representations to hon. Members of all parties, to the Home Office and to the Metropolitan and other police forces.

Of course individuals have been upset by isolated incidents, but I reckon that the Criminal Law Revision Committee go it right. When the committee published its report in 1984, I hope that its members were not too put out by the fact that its recommendations were not acted upon immediately, although some hon. Members tried to ensure that they were. I hope that the members of the Criminal Law Revision Committee—they are a distinguished group assisted by distinguished secretaries and assistant secretaries—now feel a bit more cheerful, because it eventually looks as if their advice will be accepted, albeit belatedly. I do not know whether any member of the CLRC has ever read any W. H. Auden, who was right when he said

"Time will show nothing but I told you so."

The CLRC will be able to sign up to what Auden wrote.

The CLRC examined the whole subject in detail and concluded clearly and correctly in 1984—this has been borne out by the passage of time—that by its very nature, kerb crawling is a nuisance, irrespective of whether the manner in which it is carried out may or may not cause a nuisance on any particular occasion. The CRLC said:

"The law should not be too difficult to enforce. It must deter. Evasion should not be easy . . . An ineffective law would be worse than useless."

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the proposal to increase the maximum fine from £400 to £1,000 is unlikely to be effective if magistrates impose an average fine of £100?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right to say that fines must be set at the right level to be an effective deterrent. I hope that, when members of the Magistrates Association read the report of this debate in *Hansard* and other accounts of the Bill's progress through Parliament, they will take note of my hon. Friend's emphasis on the need to impose fines that really bite on those people who cause such a nuisance. If that is not done, the Bill will not have the effect that it should. I agree very much with the spirit of the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham.

The problem with the existing offence is that the prosecution has to show not merely that a man was soliciting from a car for the purposes of prostitution but that that activity was repeated. I do not need to rehearse the arguments that my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham made most effectively. There has been a hint in comments made about the Bill, not in this Chamber, but publicly, that there is a lack of confidence in the police and that a person should never be convicted of kerb crawling or of any other offence on the evidence of a policeman alone.

Would the same argument be made if the policeman was the sole witness to an armed robbery or to a rape in the street? Surely not. The lack of confidence that some people have in the ability of the police to pursue such offences properly is illogical and wrong, and does no credit to those who display it. The laws of our country allow a court—the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, who sits as a recorder in the courts of our land, will correct me if I am wrong—to convict on the evidence of one credible witness in all except a very few cases.

Those who have criticised the ability of the police to provide satisfactory evidence are suggesting that the sole evidence of any adult witness may be relied upon to secure a conviction—unless that adult person happens to be a police officer. That is ridiculous, and I utterly refute any suggestion that the police cannot and would not properly enforce the law. That is their job, and the one that the public expect them to do.

I am not insensitive, and no right hon. and learned Member should be, to fears about the possible use of techniques to entrap men into committing offences, and it is important that civil liberties are properly addressed. Government policy is clear, and was spelt out to the Home Affairs Committee in the course of its recent inquiry covering the investigation of drugs offences. British police operate under strict guidelines on the incitement of offences. Officers are instructed:

"No member of a police force and no public informant should counsel, incite or procure the commission of a crime."

Quite right too. We have no intention of changing those instructions.

The basic question is whether kerb crawling is to be tackled at the root—that is, on the basis of the act of soliciting. As I said, our intention in supporting the Bill is to ensure that the problem is dealt with at the root, locally.

While I appreciate the concern expressed by some—though not by many right hon. and hon. Members today—that the section 1 offence should retain its qualifying elements, I ask the House to reject that proposal. The principal nuisance is kerb crawling, and to continue to allow car drivers to pick up women provided that they make only one approach each time or cannot be proved to have caused nuisance or annoyance will not cure the serious problem experienced in so many inner-city areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham asked a penetrating question about why, in his area, only six police officers are apparently concerned with what one might loosely term vice squad activities, whereas in next-door Wandsworth, 12 officers are available for those activities. I understand that in Streatham there is a team of one sergeant and four constables dedicated to combat prostitution, but that may change from week to week, and month to month.

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is well aware of the seriousness of the problems. The deployment of police manpower is a matter for the Commissioner and not for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. However, no doubt the Commissioner, who does such distinguished service in the capital, will take close account of what has been said today, because the *Official Report* will be drawn to his attention.

At this stage, as I am dealing with police enforcement, I should mention the point raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) in his earlier intervention, when he described something which is not an offence at common law. He suggested that approaching a woman could be an offence at common law. I have to tell him that an assault at common law will be committed only if the woman who was the victim was struck, or put in fear of being struck.

These nuances of the differences between Scottish, English and Welsh law are lost on me, and I must take more instruction from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross.

The letter that some of us have received from the Campaign Against Kerb Crawling Legislation, has been satisfactorily, and rather fiercely dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West and in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate.

This has been a most interesting debate. The Government feel that my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham will bring about two important reforms in the Bill. One reform affects a small number of people—women attacked by boys under 14. The other affects a much larger number of people, whose lives are made miserable by street prostitution and kerb crawling.

We need to get the law right for the whole country, so that the appropriate offence can be charged for the appropriate mischief. I support my hon. Friend's Bill, the Government support my hon. Friend's Bill, and I think that the whole House has supported it. I hope that it gets a richly deserved Second Reading, and a good passage through Standing Committee to the other place and on to the statute book, where it deserves to be.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committee of Bills).

Agricultural Holdings (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.32 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am most grateful for the all-party support that I have received. As hon. Members will see from the Bill, it is a lawyer's dream and I am a lawyer. As such, it gives me great pleasure to move the Second Reading.

This is more than merely a technical Bill. It is intended to be, and I hope will be, of importance to secure the position of farm tenants. Farm tenancies are a scarce commodity. They are vital in our agricultural system because they enable young people to gain a foothold on the farming ladder. They enable people to become farmers who cannot raise capital from inheritance or financial institutions—the sort of capital needed to start a farming business these days if one has to buy land. Many successful tenant farmers go on to succeed as owners of farms.

To succeed, tenants need reasonable security of tenure. There are many tenant farmers in my constituency and tenant farmers there have brought home to me the importance of this modest measure.

I acknowledge a considerable debt to the National Farmers Union—nationally and in my constituency—as it has assisted me with the Bill. I also acknowledge my gratitude to the Minister and to Baroness Trumpington who sent me my only Valentine on 14 February, but a welcome one none the less. She told me—I hope that we shall hear the same from the Minister—that the Government regard the Bill as a sensible precaution for the benefit of farm tenants.

I must touch on some technical issues to explain the Bill. Case B of schedule 3 to the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 states that a landlord can give notice to quit if the land is required for non-agricultual use, either where planning permission has been granted, or where it is not required other than by virtue of the town and country planning legislation.

Until July last year the consensus of legal opinion was that that second provision referred only to the Crown as being exempt from the requirement of planning consent, and that any private landlord wishing to resume possession of tenanted land for normal agricultural use could not do so without having first obtained planning permission. The case of Bell *v.* McCubbin, however, turned 40 years of legal thinking on its head. Any hon. Member can read about the case if he pops into the Library and looks up page 54 of (1990) 1 All England Reports, which, I am sure, is everyday reading for us all: I have a copy with me. Bell *v.* McCubbin, heard in the Court of Appeal, altered the understanding of those who deal in agricultural holdings law, and in doing so altered—dramatically—the circumstances of tenants.

The court held that a landlord could serve a valid notice to quit all or part of a tenancy under case B of schedule 3 to the Act if the land or buildings in question were already being used for a non-agricultural purpose, and the landlord wished to resume possession for the same purpose. In Bell *v.* McCubbin, the landlord wanted to resume possession of a farmhouse that was being sublet as a residential dwelling. He also wished to let it as a residential dwelling; thus no change of use was involved, and planning permission was not required.

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

Many tenants have taken advantage of Government-encouraged schemes for their farms. A number have diversified and set aside land, using parts of it for non-agricultural purposes that bring them a portion of their income. Although a landlord's ability to serve a notice to quit part of the land is limited for technical reasons, most modern tenancy agreements contain a clause enabling him to do so. If, for instance, a tenant is using a building for holiday letting, and his tenancy agreement contains a clause specifying that the landlord can resume possession of part of the holding for non-agricultural use, the landlord can serve a valid notice to quit, provided that he does not wish to change the use of the building. Once he has regained possession, however, he may change its use at a later date.

The knock-on effect of Bell *v.* McCubbin is that landlords may use the precedent as a technical mechanism for dispossessing tenants. That may not be confined to cases in which only part of the land is required. It could provide carte blanche for unscrupulous landlords and, above all, to the minority of estate and land agents—I emphasise that they are a minority—who are sharks, and could help an unscrupulous landlord to get a tenant out at any cost and on a technicality if possible. Such agents smile wryly when they find a new technicality, however much injustice it will cause.

Tenants could be dispossessed of their entire holdings if the landlord wished to resume possession—for example, for shooting purposes. Shooting rights generally cover all the land. If a landlord purported to wish to use all the land for that purpose, no change of use would arise. Therefore, no planning consent would be necessary and the tenant would be out. One can think of many other examples whereby a landlord might, on entirely spurious grounds, obtain the land, although his intentions may be disingenuously expressed.

Where a tenant is dispossessed of land under case B, statutory compensation is currently payable. However, it is only a maximum of five to six years' rent. That is wholly inadequate, given the drastic reduction in the availability of tenanted land in recent years and bearing in mind current land values.

In my constituency—which I believe is, statistically, the one with the most agricultural land in the United Kingdom, with a higher proportion of its work force employed in agriculture—it is almost impossible to find a tenanted farm. Whenever such a farm becomes available, there is a long list of applicants. Shortlists are drawn up and the interviewing procedures are harsh. They are not unfairly harsh, bearing in mind the scarcity, but they are harsh for the many able people who fail to acquire a tenancy. If a dispossessed tenant receives only statutory compensation, it is almost certain that he will not have sufficient capital to buy another holding. He will face financial disaster and unemployment and misery for his family.

There is a call from certain sections of the farming industry for a reduction in security of tenure for tenants. There is a call from some quarters for fixed-term tenancies. There is undoubtedly room for genuine debate about the future of the agricultural holdings law. I do not want for one moment to discourage that debate, which has only recently started to gather momentum. I hope that we shall review carefully the agricultural holdings law. Our aim should be to start from the status quo as it was understood before Bell *v.* McCubbin and try to create agricultural holdings law that will ensure that tenancies are a vital and living part of an industry that allows farmers to develop at all stages of their lives, and at all levels. The Bill in no way prejudices the longer-term view of the agricultural tenancy law. As I have implied, I should like to take part in that review, if such an opportunity presents itself in the House.

As my proposal in no way prejudices future reviews, I should be unable to understand any opposition to the Bill. I believe that it will do perhaps more than it deserves, to be honest, to boost confidence among tenants. It would give me a great deal of pleasure if, with the support of right hon. and hon. Members, the Bill reached the statute book.

1.43 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I thank the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) for introducing this excellent measure. I was appalled when I read the Appeal Court's decision. It upset all that we had previously believed. I very much hope that the Government will fully support it.

1.44 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I support the measure.

I hark back to my days at the royal agricultural college, before Argentina. In those days—some time ago now, I am afraid—our studies revolved around the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948. I well remember our lecturer dinning it into our ears time and again that there were seven deadly sins whereby a tenant could be dispossessed of his land. One was the death of the tenant and there was no argument about that, but another was using land or buildings for non-agricultural use.

The importance of the tenanted sector in agriculture is not sufficiently realised. It has been the backbone of British agriculture for centuries. Many people thought that the 1948 Act would establish the structure and framework for British agriculture in the post-war period and indefinitely thereafter. But the 1948 Act created its own problems. It was very narrow and restrictive and had the effect that people who might have let their land decided not to do so, for many good reasons, the major reason being that if a tenant has security for life, the landlord has no prospect whatever of getting the land back.

As a result of that Act, well-intentioned though it was, the tenancy sector has continued to decline. Today, with agriculture under great pressure, all too often tenants do not have assets to fall back on. All too often tenants' assets consist of machinery, much of which is probably old and outdated and would not fetch very much, and livestock, which would have some value, but as the tenant does not own the land he does not have that capital base to fall back on. In these difficult times, some landlords may well find that their tenants have failed. That is not a happy position for the landlord, let alone the tenant. The landlord may find that a farm which has come back to him unexpectedly because his tenant has failed is in bad heart. There may be a list of dilapidations as long as his arm and he may have to spend more capital on putting them right and on returning the land to good heart.

Of course, ingenious people are always trying to dream up schemes to keep the tenanted sector going. Of course,

there are such options as share farming and farming for fixed periods. The future probably lies in such schemes. Nevertheless the tenanted sector remains under great pressure.

One of the results of that pressure is that tenants are having to seek diversification. Indeed, they are being urged to diversify and that is one answer to their problems. I am sure that we can all think of examples where a tenant may have a range of redundant farm buildings that were constructed some time ago. The buildings tend to have low eaves and perhaps brick pillars at intervals—the type of building which in the old days one would back one's Fergie 35 into or where one could dump one's little two-furrow plough, but that is not the case today as farmers tend to have rather larger machines and the old ranges of buildings fall into disuse and disrepair.

Sometimes the tenant may decide to diversify and to put such buildings to a non-agricultural use. The tenant may well be able to set up small business units to accommodate people who may be setting up a business for the first time and are desperate to find premises—perhaps they come from the nearest town five miles away. The accommodation may be pretty basic; nevertheless they have a roof over their head and as long as there is a supply of running water and electricity, those buildings can be put to some use. The income that the tenant gets from those buildings means that he can repair and improve them and perhaps he can build up a thriving business. But of course it is not agricultural use. That comes back to the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). No one thought that the court could reach the decision to which the hon. and learned Gentleman referred. Nevertheless, it happened. It was not a welcome decision, and as a result the hon. and learned Gentleman introduced the Bill.

That decision is not welcome for tenant farmers, who are under pressure and are seeking to boost their income. An unscrupulous landlord will see a great opportunity to divest the tenant of part of his holding.

Planning laws have been relaxed. The grade of agricultural land is no longer taken into account when assessing planning applications. There is more pressure for alternative land use, such as the set-aside scheme and the idea of environmentally sensitive areas, which were originally introduced to reduce overall agricultural output and to attain certain environmental objectives.

That is all very well, but in practice such schemes are not available to all classes of farmers. Many diversification schemes involve proposals that fall outside the legal definition of agriculture, which means that they are subject to the landlord's consent. I do not want to give the impression that all landlords are wicked—far from it, there are many good and supportive landlords—but some have refused consent to otherwise reasonable propositions that would not have affected their long-term interests. The tenant has no power to challenge such a refusal. Some tenants feel too vulnerable even to consider such a scheme, and some landlords' agents—we all know about landlords' agents—have been known to send threatening letters when a tenant has gone only as far as registering his eligibility for set-aside.

The Bill should find a welcome among hon. Members. The court decision that I mentioned was unwelcome, but I hope that the Bill will correct that anomaly.

1.52 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): It was amusing, given that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to the Valentine that he had received in the form of a message of support from the Minister, that we heard a speech in support of the Bill from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) who, as all hon. Members know, is an incurable romantic.

In addition to being an incurable romantic, the hon. Member for Walthamstow is a chartered surveyor. I am sure that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery will have appreciated the support that he received from the hon. Gentleman.

I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery on winning a reasonable position in the ballot for Bills and on his good sense in introducing a measure that has broad, cross-party support. By introducing the Bill, he is doing a particular service not only to his constituents but to farmers in Wales and throughout Britain. That is reflected in the fact that the National Farmers Union has written to many hon. Members urging their support for the Bill.

I am pleased to say that, without reservation, the Labour party will support the Bill, which the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery referred to as a technical but an important measure.

The hon. and learned Gentleman made a lucid and compelling case in support of the Bill. It is supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). Therefore, representatives of England, Scotland and Wales support it.

I am sure that the Bill will be given a Second Reading, and I wish the hon. and learned Gentleman well in a successful Committee stage and on Third Reading.

1.54 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I, too, congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on being successful in the ballot and on bringing forward the Bill. Not only has he all-party support in the sponsorship of the Bill, but support today from both sides of the House.

I shall take this opportunity to set the Bill in its historical context. I shall speak about the development of the tenanted sector and the prospects for the future, as well as explaining the Government's attitude to the Bill. I shall do so because the hon. and learned Gentleman said that he would welcome a good, broad debate on the future of the tenanted sector. I cannot supply that wide-ranging debate today, but I can set out some of our thoughts.

As the House will know, at the end of the last century about 90 per cent. of agricultural land was tenanted. Since then there has been a steady decline, and it now accounts for no more than 37 per cent. The main reasons for the decline have been socio-economic factors such as the redistribution of wealth, economic depression and changes in the class structure of our society. They were also due to the effects of capital taxation, the value of vacant land and legislation giving increased security of tenure to the tenant and making it less popular to let land.

The effects of the socio-economic changes are the province of the historian, but they are relevant and must be considered. In the 19th century most land was owned by

[Mr. David Maclean]

private landlords who let it to tenant farmers. However, the loss of capital and income following the Wall Street crash in 1929, and the great depression of the early 1930s, forced a number of traditional land-owning families to sell land to cover their losses. That, coupled with the social changes following both world wars, led to major changes in the structure of our rural society, with a surge of relatively small owner-occupiers farming their own land. Some of them were former tenants.

Successive Governments' fiscal policies and, particularly, capital taxation have also had a significant effect on the structure of estates. As the name implies, capital tax was imposed on the value of the estate rather than its ability to produce income. Land is a low revenue-earning, long-term investment. Estates comprising let land are particularly vulnerable because the owner's asset is not easily realisable and the income derived is low in relation to its taxable value. With marginal rates of taxation of capital assets rising as high as 75 per cent. under capital transfer tax, landlords have had to sell land to meet a large liability.

Changes in capital taxation introduced by this Government have been warmly welcomed by the agricultural industry. A major reform of capital gains tax has been instituted and the severity of inheritance tax has been considerably reduced by increasing its threshold and replacing the previous four rates of tax by a flat rate of 40 per cent.

Throughout the century, land sold with vacant possession has attracted a premium, fetching up to twice as much as tenanted land. In addition, agricultural land with vacant possession attracts 50 per cent. relief from inheritance tax on a land transfer, whereas tenanted land attracts only 30 per cent. relief. Those factors are obviously important to a landowner who is contemplating a sale. He may decide to keep land in hand to keep his options open.

We must consider the effects of legislative changes. It must be admitted that the progressive increase in the protection of tenants has brought about a change in owners' attitudes to letting land. Compensation for eviction without just cause was introduced in 1923. The Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 gave tenants security of tenure for life and the Agricultural (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 gave successive rights to two eligible and suitable successors. As a result of the 1976 Act, any landowner letting land risked abdicating effective control for more than 100 years.

It is difficult to say to what extent each of these factors —social, fiscal or legislative—has directly affected the tenanted sector. The fact is that there has been an increase in the size of the owner-occupied sector. A change in that direction was probably inevitable and it echoes the pattern of the residential sector. However, some landowners who do not want to farm the land themselves have been disinclined to let and have looked for other forms of contractual arrangements to maintain value and income. Partnership and share farming agreements have gained in popularity. Not only do they preserve the capital value of the land, but they offer a higher potential return with a more favourable income tax statement.

The latest figures in the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers' annual tenant farms survey show that although the provision in the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948, which disapplied the succession provisions in respect of new tenancies created after that date, has encouraged more private landlords to relet land that falls vacant on short-term arrangements, it has not stopped the downward trend in the amount of land held on a full tenancy. One can conclude only that to many land owners, letting land on a full tenancy is not a sufficiently attractive option.

I shall look briefly at one or two aspects of the landlord-tenant system from the tenant's point of view. We recognise that farming is going through a difficult period of rapid change. I shall consider what has happened to the tenanted sector historically when farming has gone through bleak spells.

With steadily increasing security of tenure since the early part of this century the established competent tenant has been able to weather the various depressions of the past 70 years. During the agricultural depression of the 1920s the Government imposed restrictions on the rents that landlords could charge, which led to a large number of landlords selling farms to sitting tenants. Subsequently, that trend has continued, particularly when further constraints have been placed on landlords. In effect, provided that a tenant is not too heavily in debt, he is often in a better position than owner-occupiers who have recently purchased farms and face interest payments in excess of the rents paid by the tenants. When a tenant farmer is highly geared his lack of collateral may encourage the banks to recall funds, whereas an owner-occupier may be given more time to restructure his business. Apart from that disadvantage, the system has generally served the competent tenant fairly well.

Rents are always a vexed question. Therefore, it is worth asking whether rental levels have mirrored the fortunes of farming. Historically, the prosperity of the industry has been influenced by technological advances and by Government or now, European Community policy. In the past two centuries, the agricultural revolution and the Corn Laws had as profound an effect on the fortunes of agriculture as modern advances have had in recent years.

As one or two colleagues may remember, 30 years ago the Agriculture Act 1958 introduced a rent formula under which the holding might reasonably be expected to be let on the open market by a willing landlord to a willing tenant. There was a risk that that would emphasise key money value and scarcity value rather than reflect solely the true productive and earning capacity of the holding, if the supply of tenancies did not keep pace with the demand. Many would argue that that happened in the 1970s and that rents were out of step with farmers' incomes. It was also the period of accession to the Common Market. Some take the contrary view, arguing that the high levels of tender rents being offered then were partly a reflection of farmers' perception of the returns that they could make, rather than key money. If one accepts that argument, rents followed the fortunes of the industry during the 1970s, but I suspect that the answer lies somewhere between the two extremes.

Certainly in the early 1980s when farm incomes began to fall back, rents continued to rise by between 30 and 40 per cent. at each review. Although to some extent that could be explained by the inevitable time lag, because rents

cannot be changed overnight while the cost of labour and capital can, it suggested that the old formula was unsatisfactory.

All hon. Members will know that a new rent formula, based on a proposal put forward by the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association, was introduced by the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984. It required arbitrators to take account of all relevant factors, including the productive capacity of the holding and its related earning capacity.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Minister agree that as a result of the declining profitability of farming systems, landlords have decided to sell assets such as houses of high value? That means that the holdings have been split up. That is an undesirable state of affairs and one reason for the Bill. If farming was more profitable the need for landlords to sell their assets would be reduced.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. Now that we have price restraint in the EC, I recognise that a farmer might not get a better return from farming than if he sold his land for a golf course, hotels or housing.

Mr. Livsey: The holding is split up.

Mr. Maclean: First, the landlord must get the land back to split up the holding. I do not believe that the great danger is posed by landlords reclaiming their land to split up their holdings, but by what happens when farms in owner-occupation come to the end of their lives. When a farmer dies and he has no sons or daughters who want to continue that farm, it is split up. Land agents would be the first to suggest to the heirs and successors that the farm should be sold off in lots—the house to someone from the City and the buildings converted into flats. The next-door farmer might tut-tut about the land being split up, but he will be the first to put in the highest bid for the fields adjoining his boundary.

Mr. Alex Carlile: That is not good for farming.

Mr. Maclean: I accept that, but I do not see how one can stop that inevitable trend. The solution would be to introduce legislation to say that someone cannot sell his land in lots or to introduce punitive taxation against someone owning more than X acres of land. I do not believe that that would be acceptable to the House or to the EC.

The new formula that was introduced in the 1984 Act has been in operation for about five years. Information from the Ministry's survey into farm rents in 1988 showed that rent settlements are responding not only to the general decline in the profitability of the industry, but to the profitability of different sectors within agriculture. On a national basis, in 1988 more rents stood still or fell than rose. Comparing cereal areas and dairying areas shows that in the east midlands and East Anglia 78·37 per cent. and 71·75 per cent. of rents were static or fell compared with 44 per cent. in the south-west.

The average rent increases show the same picture. In Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire the average increase was 1 per cent. compared with Cheshire, a noted dairying area, where the increase averaged 6·3 per cent. The national average was 3·6 per cent. Although it may come as a surprise to some hon. Members, those figures show how the new rental formula is having the desired effect of fine-tuning rents. That is certainly good news. The 1989 survey will be published soon.

Despite its imperfections, the landlord-tenant system has served tenants well. It is still a basically good system for those who are fortunate enough to rent a holding. The problem lies in the future, because the system is not sufficiently attractive to landlords. The continued decline in the agricultural tenanted sector is disappointing in view of the legislative changes introduced after much effort in 1984. I suspect that there is still insufficient flexibility in the system to encourage the letting of land and further changes would seem to be necessary.

The issues are extremely complex and conflicting views have been expressed by various sections of agriculture. I am the first to recognise that it may be difficult for landowners, aspiring young farmers and existing tenants to reach a consensus on any proposals and I appreciate that it may not be possible to reach a consensus at all. My colleagues and I will be looking for some signs of agreement on the measures to be taken as the debate unfolds in the coming months.

Even more important is a proposal that genuinely addresses the problem and is likely to be effective in increasing the amount of tenanted land.

Mr. Ron Davies: Before the Minister leaves that point, can he tell us how he intends to proceed with the consultations? Will he produce a consultative document or will he consult the National Farmers Union and the other farmers' unions in the normal way? I ask that because I want to take the opportunity of letting the Minister know that the Opposition share the concern about the point that he has just made and, if at all possible, we should like a cross-party solution to the problem.

Mr. Maclean: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman has said. A cross-party solution to the problem would be ideal. I have no intention of publishing a consultative document, a White Paper or a Green Paper at this stage, but I know that the Country Landowners Association has certain proposals and that the National Farmers Union has certain concerns about them. The union is to consult with us and to give us its opinion. I am also keen to hear the views of the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, which has some sensible ideas. I am always impressed when I hear what it has to say about the future of agriculture. We shall also want the Tenant Farmers Association to say what it thinks. Everyone in agriculture has seen that the 1984 Act has settled down. They know that there is still insufficient land coming forward in the tenanted sector and they all have some ideas about how the matter should be approached. They know that we are keen to hear their views and I am happy to put it on record today that we are doubly keen to hear what they have to say. We shall take all their views into account.

I also want to make it clear that on this occasion, as opposed to the early 1980s, we shall not let the lack of total consensus stop us. I know that in the early 1980s, before we came forward with the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984, my predecessors took the view that unless there was complete unanimity in agriculture and all the unions could agree on a proposal, we should not legislate. Now we shall not let the lack of total consensus stop us from legislating. The difficulty would be to find a legislative slot if we came up with a solution that was acceptable to many in

[Mr. Maclean]

agriculture and to the House. It would, of course, be helpful if we had all-party agreement on what needed to be done.

I have no intention of undermining the status quo. The argument must proceed from where we are now and there would be no question of obtaining all-party support if one were to try to unscramble any of the previous legislation. If we are looking for modest improvements in allowing more land to come forward for letting, we must start from our present position.

Apart from the major issue of finding more flexibility to persuade landlords to enter into agreements with tenants and to make a bit more land available under arrangements different from those that we have now, individual cases occasionally arise which provoke criticism of the existing legislation. The current legislation is intended to balance the interests of landlords and tenants. It will never be wholly satisfactory to one side or the other and there will always be some exceptional cases.

As the House knows, legislation on agricultural holdings is an extremely complex area. Nowhere is that more true than in the case of notices to quit. Schedule 3 to the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 deals with notices to quit where the consent of the agricultural land tribunal is not required, which are known as incontestable notices to quit. There are eight categories. The agricultural holdings legislation aims to strike a fair balance between the often conflicting interests of landlords and tenants. The satisfactory tenant farmer is given security of tenure, but the legislation recognises that there are circumstances in which the landlord should be able to regain possession.

Case B in the schedule is where a notice to quit is given on the ground that the landlord needs the land for a use other than in agriculture. Case B(a) covers the situation where the landlord has obtained planning permission to use the land for a non-agricultural purpose. This is not always an easy concept, but it should be remembered that the landlord is the owner of the capital asset and should, in common with other owners of property, be entitled to any increase in value that may accrue from possible development. He has elected to enter the land market with all the risks that that involves, which in some cases can mean a low return and falling land values, where there is no development potential, or the land is of poor quality.

Case B(b) deals with the position where no planning permission is required. This is the aspect of the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 with which the hon. and learned Member's Bill deals. It was always widely held that case B(b) related only to the Crown. It was available, for example, to the Foresty Commission if it needed to obtain possession of land for the purposes of afforestation.

On 13 July 1989, in Bell *v.* McCubbin, the Court of Appeal ruled that under case B(b) a private landlord could recover possession of a farmhouse which had been sublet by the tenant for residential purposes to persons employed outside agriculture and was required by the landlord for his own, non-agricultural use. The extent of this loophole has not been tested in the courts, but the ruling has caused considerable concern to tenants. They fear that it could have widespread implications and reduce their security of tenure. The hon. and learned Member has ably explained the reasons for those fears and there is no reason to repeat them. We think that the repercussions of the ruling are likely to be much more limited than has been suggested. Nevertheless we understand tenants' worries, and we consider the hon. and learned Member's approach to removing them sensible.

The hon. and learned Gentleman has seen this morning the all-party support for his Bill, and I am pleased to add my support to it. He will appreciate that the drafting of the Bill needs to be looked at carefully. I hope that he will be willing to accept assistance from the parliamentary draftsmen in my Department so that the Bill achieves his objective, and I hope that the House will give it a Second Reading today.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committee of Bills).

Greyhound Betting Levy Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.17 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House know of my concern with this issue. I am pleased to see that the Minister of State, Home Office is here. I remind him that on 12 June 1989 he said that

"my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary hopes to announce his conclusions on an inquiry"—

into the racing and betting industries—

"before the House rises for the summer recess, or if not, in the spill-over session."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 683.]

It has not yet been done. Part of the purpose of today's debate is to ensure that it is done some time soon.

The purpose of the Bill is straightforward; it is to amend the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 to enable payment of a levy to the greyhound industry from moneys already deducted from punters for that purpose by the bookmakers in off-course betting establishments.

There is a great need for this legislation. Greyhound racing is the second most supported spectator sport in Britain. As census figures show, more than 5 million people support the sport by going along to tracks every week. They attend 83 tracks, 48 of which are independent and 35 of which are registered with the National Greyhound Racing Club. The membership of that club and of the independents now amounts to more than 15,000 greyhound owners. More than 20,000 greyhounds are registered and in training. At least 10,000 race meetings are held every year, accommodating over 120,000 greyhound races.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I have been reading the Bill, so I should like to refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 24(1) of the schedule on page 3, which states:

"There shall be a Horse and Greyhound Betting Levy Board . . . (referred to as 'the Levy Board') which shall be charged with the duty of assessing".

I do not see how that assessment is to be made. Will the hon. Gentleman explain how the duty of assessing will be covered by the Bill, if it is enacted?

Mr. Meale: Yes, certainly. I have only a short time, but I hope to get to that point later in my speech. I shall try to iron it out as I go along.

I return to the fact that greyhound racing is extremely popular. Two extremely popular daily newspapers, *The Sporting Life* and *The Racing Post*, produce individual newspapers on greyhound racing six days per week. Today, they include full coverage of the racing that is to take place at Bristol, Wimbledon, Shawfield, Wembley, Oxford, Romford, Brough Park and at many other race courses, at which betting will take place in off-course betting shops.

Unlike the horse racing industry, the greyhound industry receives no levy money whatever, although moneys are deducted at source in betting shops off-course, throughout Britain. That is a scandal of huge proportions because 10 per cent.—10p in every pound—is deducted from bets, under the legislation to which I have referred, with the purpose of 2 per cent. of that 10 per cent. coming back into the sport. Most punters are having that money deducted fraudulently because at present the only money that goes back into the greyhound industry returns via the Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Service, known as BAGS, which is a payment of about £2·8 million per year for 10 tracks, covering 620 individual race meetings. On my calculations, that works out at about £4,500 per meeting and £380 per race.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I like the idea of a levy on greyhound racing so that a lot of money can be raised. However, to what purposes will that money be put? Many of the greyhounds suffer enormous stress during racing. Will the money be spent on the veterinary aspects of racing?

Mr. Meale: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has raised that matter because that is, indeed, the whole purpose. We have just spent some time dealing with the farming industry and with the support that it receives. Indeed, some farmers are involved in horse racing. The fact is that a huge amount of money—about £38 million this year—will be paid to the horse racing industries via the Horserace Betting Levy Board, whereas nothing will be paid to the greyhound industry. That £38 million is not purely for the Jockey Club to spend as it likes, because much of it is to be invested in new equine research. The greyhound racing industry needs a levy so that the 20,000 greyhounds that are in training at present can reap the benefits from the research establishments and thus help people to enjoy the sport.

I am pleased that the Minister is taking great note of this. I have just referred to BAGS. Everybody thinks that £2·8 million a year is not a bad amount of money to pay for those services, given that 620 races are covered by the service. However, the problem does not stop there because six of those 10 tracks are owned by the big three bookmakers, who pay themselves £1·6 million for the use of the service. Therefore, in real terms the other four main greyhound tracks in Britain received only £1·2 million per year for the whole of the service.

Conservative Members might not appreciate the fact that 4 million people per day use and gamble in betting shops. The current value of off-course greyhound betting is more than 27 per cent. of all gambling in a multi-billion pound industry.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the Bill have any impact on right hon. and hon. Members? Conservative Members in particular take an interest in placing bets on the stock exchange. Could the Bill affect our behaviour?

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): What a frivolous remark.

Mr. Meale: It was not a frivolous question. There are many different ways of gambling. As my hon. Friend says, Conservative Members usually gamble on the stock exchange, while other right hon. and hon. Members gamble in other ways. I can give the House details of two gambles that I have undertaken in the past 24 hours. First, I gambled by going to the Members' Tea Room a short while ago, where I sat down and succeeded in ripping the trousers of my suit. I hope that the Serjeant at Arms will do something about that. Secondly, in connection with a social event in my constituency in support of the ambulance workers' dispute, I purchased a couple of bottles of whisky from the House of Commons Shop.

[Mr. Meale]

Unfortunately, when I left them on a cabinet outside the Members' Tea Room last night, they were purloined during the course of the evening. That gamble was also a terrible mistake that I hope the Serjeant at Arms will put right.

It is not good enough for the Minister to pop along for the last few minutes of a speech on a private Member's Bill on a Friday. There is a serious need for an inquiry into the greyhound racing industry, and an even greater need to stop the fraudulent acquisition by off-course bookmakers of a 2p in the pound deduction that is not going back into the industry.

Legislation is in place to ensure that a similar deduction benefits horse racing. Twenty-seven per cent. of all off-course betting is on greyhound racing, yet not one penny of that money goes back into the industry. Instead, it all goes into the pockets of bookmakers, who do nothing for that magnificent sport.

2.27 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I hope that it will be considered in order for me to welcome two guests of mine in the Strangers' Gallery——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make such references.

Mr. Marshall: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are guests of mine from Israel——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members must not refer to persons who are in other parts of the building or in the Strangers' Gallery.

Mr. Marshall: I apologise most sincerely for referring to those two individuals against the rules of the House.

Mr. Leigh: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marshall: No. I am trying to develop an argument. My hon. Friend must allow me to make a start, or we shall never reach the kernel of the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on his luck in the lottery for private Members' legislation. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on his very temporary stay on the Opposition Front Bench. It would have been appropriate had he remained there for the entire debate because Walthamstow stadium, which holds a large number of greyhound race meetings, is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

The hon. Member for Mansfield proposes the introduction of a levy that is really a tax. My advice to him, in the words of Edmund Burke, is,

"To tax and to please, no more than to love and be wise, is not given to man."

I hope that it is in order to give that quotation so soon after St. Valentine's day.

My late father always advised me that gambling comprises three activities. First, part of the stake money goes to the Treasury. Secondly, part of the stake money goes to the bookmaker—none of us has ever seen a poor bookmaker. Finally, the rest of the stake which had not gone to the Treasury or the bookmaker was redistributed among those who were fool enough to put it down in the first place.

It was with some regret that I heard the hon. Member for Mansfield say that about 4 million people gamble every week. That is a slightly lower figure than the number of people who gambled by voting Labour at the last election, and the number who may gamble by voting Labour at the next election, but it seems far too high a figure. I wish that the Churches, when they give a moral lead to the country, would tell people how stupid and foolish it is to squander resources on gambling. It is a feckless, stupid and ineffectual way of life.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on 23 February.

Private Members' Bills

ABOLITION OF WARRANT SALES (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [9 February].

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): With the permission of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill, Sir——

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 23 February.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 23 February.

REGISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL LOBBYING INTERESTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 23 February.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 23 February.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made and Question proposed,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 21st February, the Motions in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe relating to Public Petitions, New Writs and Private Members' Motions may be proceeded with until Seven o'clock; and at that hour, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall put successively the Question already proposed from the Chair and the Questions on such of the remaining Motions as may then be made, including the Questions on any Amendments thereto which he may have selected.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Ivory Trade

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): It is a privilege to speak in this debate on the ivory trade. On 17 January, the British Government announced that they had given approval for Hong Kong to reopen its markets in the ivory trade, and they have avoided debate on the issue in the House ever since. Until now, they have got away with that ignominious decision, but I have called this debate because elephants never forget. I support the ban on the ivory trade, along with all the major wildlife and environmental organisations, so that we can save the African elephant from extinction.

There is a risk of extinction because the numbers of African elephants are 50 per cent. down over the past 10 years. Last century, there were some 10 million African elephants. In 1970 that figure was down to 2 million. In 1979 it was 1·3 million, and now it is just over 600,000. That is a rate of decline of 10 per cent. per annum, and at that rate they will be extinct by the end of the century.

The poem by Edward Braithwaite contains two lines that are tragically appropriate:

"Horn of the Elephant; The Mournful Cry of the Elephant"

That mournful cry will not be heard much longer.

Last year, 100 countries got together at the convention on international trade in endangered species conference. They voted by 76 votes to 11 that the African elephant should be an appendix 1 specimen. That meant that it should not be returned to commercial utilisation in any form. The United Kingdom strongly supported that, and moved a resolution that was passed with overwhelming support to give immediate effect to the ban, which commenced on 18 January this year.

However, there is a get-out clause. Countries can register a reservation within 90 days, and the United Kingdom did that on the day the ban was due to commence. They have opened the door to the continued destruction of the African elephant.

The exception for Hong Kong means that there is a tremendous spur to poachers whose markets were to be closed by the ban. They now have a chance to cover up their sales from recent killings by claiming that they come from the existing Hong Kong stocks. Of the 670 tons of ivory in Hong Kong, it has been estimated by the Environmental Investigation Agency, that 570 tons came from illegal sources in the first place. There is already evidence that poaching has resumed.

This week Members of Parliament received a letter from Elefriends, the elephant protection group, which said:

"News from Kenya reports that over 20 fresh carcases have been found in the last 3 weeks indicating that, despite the efforts of a revitalised and dynamic Parks Service, the poaching problem is far from over."

Many other organisations have condemned the Government's lifting of the ban. George Medley, director of the World Wide Fund for Nature, said:

"The British Government has effectively created a major loophole . . . Poachers will simply step up their activities. Countless elephants will be slaughtered. We are right back to square one."

Mr. Allan Thornton, of the Environmental Investigation Agency, said:

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

"This will have a disastrous effect on elephant conservation. It will reward the same ivory syndicates the ban was supposed to put out of business."

Isabel McCrea, wildlife director of Greenpeace, said:

"It is very embarrassing in terms of international conservation. We are the only Western country to enter a reservation.

The Government's supposedly green credentials have been sullied".

William Travers of Elefriends said:

"This is devastating. Dealers, poachers and smugglers will rub their hands with glee."

Other countries have been more responsible than Britain. France imposed a unilateral ban on ivory imports in June last year. Japan, which is thought of as an eco-terrorist, and is in some respects—its treatment of whales, for instance—has stuck to the CITES ban, although it used to take 40 per cent. of the world's ivory. Kenya has publicly destroyed its stocks, and the United Kingdom should do the same to the Hong Kong stockpile.

Elefriends asks a number of questions that I think the Minister should answer. The Foreign Secretary said that the Hong Kong stockpile is legal. How can it be legal when ivory exports from the whole of Africa amounted to 200 tonnes in 1988, and in the same year Hong Kong imported more than that—260 tonnes? All the representatives of the conservation movement, including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Elefriends, the RSPCA, the Environmental Investigation Agency, the World Society for the Protection of Animals—which has observer status at the United Nations—and the international fund for animal welfare, have said that the Government's decision will undermine international efforts to protect the elephant and will increase poaching.

How can the Foreign Secretary say, as he did in the *Daily Express* on 18 January, that allegations that the British decision would condemn elephants to death were "nonsense"? What is the Government's response to the deputation—the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr.Greenway) and I joined it, as did many other hon. Members—that went to Downing street on 31 January, along with outraged people representing wildlife organisations worldwide? If the Hong Kong ivory traders cannot dispose of their stocks within the six-month reservation period, will the Government's policy be to allow them the 18-month extension that they have already requested?

There is a consensus in the conservation movement that the Government's decision will increase poaching pressure on Africa's remaining herds. What additional resources will the Government make available to the anti-poaching forces so that they can combat the effects of that decision —a decision that puts at risk the lives of rangers as well as elephants?

On 25 January, I asked the Prime Minister who had made the representations to thwart the ban. The Prime Minister refused to answer, saying:

"It is not my normal practice to release such correspondence."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 807.]

Why is there such secrecy? Why can we not know who is responsible and what their case is—a case that appears to be so powerful that it is more important than the survival of the African elephant?

I think that we were given the answer on the front page of the *Sunday Express* on 21 January, which spoke of an "explosive rift" between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment. It said:

"Environment officials have disclosed Mr. Patten's anger that the issue was taken out of his hands because of his likely opposition and handed over to Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd as part of a package to boost confidence in Hong Kong . . . One Whitehall insider said: 'If it comes to a choice between lining the pockets of a few Chinese millionaires or preserving the dwindling elephant herds, the elephant would win the people's hearts and minds every time.'"

That is quite right. Two powerful individuals—the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—have overriden a ban that has been overwhelmingly supported by hon. Members, by the people of this country and by world wildlife and environmental organisations. The Government have passed the problem from the Department of the Environment to the Foreign Office. The question is no longer conservation but political expediency.

If we are to tackle the problem, we need—if you will forgive the pun, Mr. Deputy Speaker—a two-tusked approach. First, we must back up the anti-poaching forces, since 80 per cent. of all trade in ivory is the result of poaching. Secondly, we must tackle the consumer market for ivory. That is why the ban is so important and it should be reinstated immediately. The Government's decision shows that capitalism and conservation do not mix. We must stop the bloody ivory trade. We must save the African elephant from extinction.

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Ealing, North.

2.40 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for providing me with this small slot in his debate. I congratulate him on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Is the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) making a contribution to the debate, or is he intervening? If he is making a contribution to the debate, am I correct in thinking that he and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) have permission to take part in the debate?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Greenway: I reiterate my congratulations to the hon. Member for Leyton. Like him and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I speak as a sincere Elefriend. Capitalism is, I believe, big enough to overcome the challenge presented by that valuable stock of ivory in Hong Kong. Those who own it are greatly tempted to sell it. I plead with them not to do so. If they were to sell that enormous stock of ivory, amounting to several thousand tonnes, the temptation to continue to kill elephants thus leading to their extinction, would be great. For many, the temptation would be irresistible.

The elephant has a unique place in the animal kingdom and in our world. The extinction of the elephant through greed, since its ivory can be used for necklaces and other decorative purposes, would be a tragedy, morally wrong and disgraceful. I hope that the Minister will give ground in the debate and will try to ensure that that stock of ivory is not sold. If he cannot do that, I hope that he will ensure that the profits from its sale are used to police those areas

of Africa where the elephant is in grave danger of extinction and that they are not used for man's commercial pleasure.

2.42 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on being lucky enough to secure this Adjournment debate. Our previous Adjournment debate on the plight of the African elephant and the disposal of Hong Kong's ivory stock was initiated by me on 26 May 1989. The Under-Secretary of State said:

"we will—

that is the Government—

be urging the European Community to take action together to ban the import of raw ivory prior to the decisions of the CITES meeting. Furthermore, when we go to CITES, we will make representations to the effect that, rather than wait the normal 90 days for the resolution to take effect, we should act immediately to preserve and protect the African elephant." —[*Official Report*, 26 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 1300.]

All hon. Members endorsed those sentiments.

Subsequently, the Government completely undermined that pledge. My hon. Friend referred to the fact that the Foreign Office shoved aside the Department of the Environment. It is using the Hong Kong ivory as a pawn in the game of politics that is unfolding in the Crown colony. The Government's disgraceful decision to enter a reservation on behalf of the 670 tonnes of Hong Kong ivory that are being allowed to come on to the market has boosted the ivory trade and world demand for ivory. As the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton said, it has resulted in further slaughter of the African elephant.

I plead—indeed I demand on behalf of all elephant lovers in Britain and around the world—that the Government rescind that disgraceful reservation that they entered on behalf of Hong Kong. They should go back to CITES and cancel the reservation. If they do not do that the Minister should describe to the House what regulations the Government will impose to ensure that no further illegal ivory enters Hong Kong and that when the ivory stock is disposed of there will be no question of further trade being encouraged by the Government. Despite their fine words on 26 May, the Government have let down the country and they stand condemned for it.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on securing this debate and on raising an issue of considerable international concern. It is an issue in which it has often been difficult to separate facts from emotion. At times, the argument strays some way from the realities of habitat management and animal conservation. I believe that everyone who has spoken in this afternoon's debate is agreed on one thing—the African elephant must be preserved.

The Government were among the first to recognise the potential threat to this magnificent species, and have been in the forefront of moves to ensure its survival and its recovery. The main instrument through which those efforts are co-ordinated is the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, known as CITES. We were one of the first countries to sign the convention in 1973, and since its inception have played a major part in strengthening and improving it.

As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, the Indian elephant was one of the first to be listed on appendix I of the convention and has always received the strongest protection. The African elephant was first listed on appendix III of the convention, and more latterly in appendix II and now finally in appendix I.

By 1985, it was clear that the earlier controls were not enough to stop the decline in the species. At the 1985 meeting of the conference of the parties to CITES, the United Kingdom played a leading role in the introduction of tighter restrictions on trade. Those included the establishment of the ivory trade monitoring unit, which is attached to the CITES secretariat. As no funds for the operation of this unit had been provided in the core budget of the convention, the United Kingdom has contributed £5,000 per year to the running costs of that monitoring unit.

Within the European Community, we went further than that. Ivory imports were first restricted and then, in May 1988, the European Community introduced a complete ban on the import of ivory and elephant products from certain African states where the elephant population was known to be under particular threat.

I am sorry to say that the African elephant has continued to suffer losses at the hands of ruthless, determined and well-organised poachers. That is why the population in 1989, as mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, was estimated at 610,000, which is a reduction on previous years.

On 23 May 1989, Lord Caithness, after a visit to Kenya, announced the Government's intention to urge our European partners to support proposals to list the species on appendix I of the convention, thus effectively banning commercial trade. We were successful in achieving that support and in securing agreement in principle to a ban on imports of ivory into the European Community.

While those arrangements were being made, the Government introduced on 9 June a unilateral ban on imports of ivory into the United Kingdom. That was followed by a European regulation imposing a Community-wide ban, which came into force on 17 August 1989.

The whole question of the conservation of the African elephant and the proposed appendix I listing was fully discussed at the seventh meeting of the conference of the parties to CITES held in Lausanne in October last year. It was a very complex and difficult issue, which generated a great deal of emotion, and there was a great deal of media interest. In such an atmosphere, objective and dispassionate scientific discussion was at best difficult. Although the conference was united in its desire to ensure that the African elephant was given the protection that it needed to survive, there were sharp differences of view about the best means of achieving that objective.

The east and central African states, whose elephants had suffered most from poachers, were strongly in favour of a complete ban on trade in ivory. A number of southern African countries, including Botswana and Zimbabwe, have elephant populations which are sustainably managed, and are therefore stable or increasing. The authorities have to cull the animals to reduce pressure on the habitats, on which the survival of their elephant populations depends. The proceeds from the sale of ivory

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

can be ploughed back into local conservation projects, which help to provide work for local people. Those countries, perhaps not surprisingly, wished to continue to trade in elephant products. I have some sympathy with their view. If elephant populations are to be managed, that means the culling of animals, and therefore the production of legal ivory.

Although we listened sympathetically to the views of the southern African states, we concluded that an overall ban was necessary. Indeed, we went further and proposed to the conference a resolution urging that if the appendix I listing was agreed, parties who were able to do so should implement appendix I controls immediately, without waiting for the formal entry into force of the uplisting three months later.

However, many people, including some prominent voluntary conservation organisations, were concerned that if a complete and indefinite ban on ivory were introduced, a number of major ivory producer and consumer countries might opt out of the stricter controls. Without their support, a trade ban could not hope to succeed.

Accordingly, the conference considered a compromise put forward by Somalia, which attempted, as far as possible, to reconcile the differing views and interests. That entails listing the African elephant on appendix I and banning trade until such time as the conference of the parties decides that trade in particular elephant populations can be resumed without threatening the survival of the species. After much discussion, that proposal was accepted by the conference.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that a distinction must be drawn between culling and poaching. That is the difficulty that we face. Are the implications of the agreement that my hon. Friend described that the elephant will be culled in future, and worldwide? If not, will he pursue that?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I hope that the African countries will manage their elephant populations responsibly. In some cases, that must entail culling. We must strike a balance between populations and the habitat. An elephant population explosion in those countries would damage the habitat on which elephants depend. Management of the herds is important.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister talked about pressure on the habitat being caused by the elephant. Governments can now claim, because they have so restricted the area of the African elephant, that some elephants should be culled. Man has put pressure on the elephant and, having done so, uses that as justification for further slaughter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is something in what the hon. Gentleman says. The exploding human population in some of those African countries has come into conflict with the elephant population. But rather than discuss that matter at length, I owe it to the hon. Member for Leyton to deal with Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was another difficult and sensitive issue. The CITES conference considered a proposal to allow trade to continue in stocks of ivory accumulated before the decision to transfer the African elephant to appendix I of the convention. This was of great interest to the United Kingdom, because it affected Hong Kong. In considering our position on that issue, we had to take into account the fact that the stocks of ivory in Hong Kong were held legally, and that the United Kingdom has special responsibilities to Hong Kong. Representatives from the colony were part of the United Kingdom delegation, and were able to explain to the conference their case for allowing trade in existing stocks of ivory to continue. However, having listened to all the arguments, the conference voted against the proposal; with the United Kingdom abstaining on behalf of Hong Kong and Portugal abstaining on behalf of Macau.

Hong Kong has traditionally been a major ivory trading centre. It has substantial stocks of legally acquired ivory, and an ivory-carving industry on which 3,000 local people depend for their livelihood. I dispute the newspaper reports, quoted with some approval by the hon. Member for Leyton, that the only people affected are millionaires. It is uncharacteristic of the hon. Gentleman to overlook the interests of 1,200 craftsmen and 1,800 workers who depend on that trade.

Mr. Cohen: The Environmental Investigation Agency said that 300 jobs were involved, not the number that the Foreign Office has quoted. What effort have the Government made to find those people alternative jobs —because the trade will end? Surely, it would have been better for the Government to make a big effort to get them replacement jobs so that the ban could be kept in place.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Urgent efforts are being undertaken to retrain and find alternative employment for the workers involved. This does not involve just their livelihood as regards employment, but would effectively render valueless stocks of ivory calculated at that time to be worth more than £80 million. That fact influenced the Hong Kong authorities, which have reaffirmed their commitment to comply with the ban on international trade in ivory, resulting from the conference decision. However, they are understandably concerned about the need to allow some time for their ivory traders to dispose of their stocks, and for the workers to find alternative employment. That is why the authorities approached the United Kingdom Government and asked us to enter a temporary reservation on their behalf. In making that request, they made it clear that the ban on the import of all forms of ivory into Hong Kong, which was introduced with ours in June 1989, would remain in force, and that only existing stocks of legally acquired ivory would be allowed to be exported. That was to ensure that there would be no loophole through which illegally acquired ivory could enter trade via Hong Kong.

We considered that carefully, and on 17 January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced the Government's decision to agree to Hong Kong's request. The Government entered on that day a temporary six-month reservation against the listing of the African elephant on appendix I of the convention. The effect of the reservation will be that during the period that it remains in force, Hong Kong will be able to export its existing ivory stocks either to CITES parties which have entered appropriate reservations, or to non-CITES states. But in entering the reservation, we made it clear that it will not apply to the United Kingdom or to any of our other dependent territories. So none of the Hong Kong ivory will be

imported into the United Kingdom and after the expiry of the six-month period, all further commercial exports of ivory from Hong Kong will be completely prohibited.

The reservation is the best way of meeting the Government's responsibilities to a dependent territory without compromising our support for measures to conserve the African elephant.

The Hong Kong Government have taken various measures to deter illegal trading and to enhance controls over existing stocks. A special customs task force has been set up to investigate and stop any illegal trade through Hong Kong, and maximum fines for violating endangered species legislation have been increased five-fold. Illegal consignments are confiscated. Controls over ivory in Hong Kong are now among the most comprehensive in the world.

All stocks of ivory in Hong Kong are registered, and since 12 January, possession licences have been required for all commercial ivory and personal effects in excess of 5kg. Movements of ivory between dealers is recorded and their records of stock holdings are adjusted accordingly. No ivory can leave Hong Kong without an export licence, and no licences are issued for exports to countries that have implemented the CITES ban. An export licence is granted only for ivory which has appropriate CITES documentation.

Those thorough and comprehensive measures are clear and reassuring evidence of the Hong Kong Government's firm commitment to adhere fully to CITES.

We and the Hong Kong Government are fully committed to the conservation of endangered species and to CITES itself. We would not have entered a reservation if we believed that by doing so we were putting at risk the future of the African elephant.

Controls on imports and exports are only one part of the problem. A major threat to the elephant is from continuing poaching. Through our foreign aid programme we are giving the African countries concerned aid and practical and technical assistance to deal with the real threat to the future of the elephant.

Once again I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on raising this important subject. The African elephant has been described with some justice as "nature's great masterpiece" and "the only harmless great thing". There is now an unprecedented international awareness of the plight of the elephant and a widespread determination to take appropriate action to ensure its future well-being. We shall not relax our efforts to conserve this "great masterpiece" because without it the whole world would be the poorer.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 19 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Home Ownership

1. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses and flats owned by local authorities have been sold to their former tenants since May 1979; and what proposals he has to extend the opportunities for home ownership within the Principality.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): Over 79,000 dwellings have been sold to sitting tenants by local authorities and new towns in Wales. We are encouraging local authorities and housing associations to undertake a range of low-cost home ownership schemes. The most important initiative is the introduction by the Development Board for Rural Wales of the experimental flexi-ownership scheme, which allows tenants to buy their homes at a weekly outlay broadly the same as their rent payments.

Mr. Gow: Is not the opportunity for the extension of home ownership at the heart of the Government's policy? Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us hope that his new initiative in Wales will be followed elsewhere in the kingdom?

Mr. Walker: There is no doubt that the initial reaction to the flexi-ownership scheme launched only a couple of months ago has been one of enthusiasm by the tenants. The principle certainly needs to be examined and I hope that one day it will be applied to the whole country.

Mr. Alan Williams: What advice would the Secretary of State give to those who followed his earlier advice to buy their home and who now find themselves caught in a Government-created trap, at their wits' end trying to meet higher mortgage payments and dreading the arrival of the first poll tax demand, yet knowing that they will have lost their right to be rehoused if their house is repossessed?

Mr. Walker: I have no doubt that, if that is the case, the Labour party will revert to its policy of trying to stop the sale of council houses, as the right hon. Gentleman did when he was a Minister at the Welsh Office. However, I believe that all 79,000 are delighted with their purchase.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State realise that many people who have bought their council house—we all want maximum home ownership—find it next to impossible to keep up their mortgage payments and that many are back on waiting lists for council houses? Those waiting lists have almost doubled in some parts of Wales. What will the Secretary of State do about it?

Mr. Walker: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I do not believe that many people who bought their council house at an enormous discount are back on the waiting lists. The majority of the 79,000 are delighted. I hope that the numbers will extend considerably in the coming years.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State accept that the proposals of Housing in Wales, Tai Cymru and housing associations in Wales are wholly inadequate to deal with the problems of housing for at least 70,000 people who are on waiting lists in the Principality? What about the 6,000 or 7,000 homeless people? Cannot the Secretary of State see that the people of Wales are looking to him for some way out of this misery?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. I am proud that in the lifetime of this Government there has been an enormous improvement in the housing stock of Wales, which dwarfs anything achieved by our predecessors.

Standard Spending Assessment, Clwyd

2. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the specific reasons for the standard spending assessment per capita in the county of Clwyd being the lowest in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Standard spending assessments for 1990-91 have been calculated to reflect as accurately as possible the relative position of every local authority in Wales.

Dr. Marek: Is the Secretary of State aware that although the consultations might have involved the county councils, no one in Clwyd, particularly on Clwyd county council, can see why the standard spending assessment should be so low? It is plain daft. This is a serious matter. Members of Clwyd county council want to see the Secretary of State and one of his Ministers about it. Will he agree to meet them?

Mr. Walker: It was not just a matter of discussions with the county councils; the standard spending assessments for 1990-91 were fully discussed and agreed by Welsh local authority associations. Clwyd might be dissatisfied with some factors, but, as a proportion of its relevant population, it has fewer pupils to teach and the second lowest unemployment rate in the counties. Clwyd county council should see how it can save by efficiency, instead of making extraordinary estimates, such as it is making now.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be general acceptance of his view that there is scope for increased efficiency, but that nevertheless Clwyd finds itself a victim of the change in formula? Is he further aware that within Clwyd, the district of Rhuddlan is simultaneously being hit in exactly the same way by the change in the method of calculating the formula? I hope that he will pay careful attention to that.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend will agree that, if the Government sit down with local authority associations to try to agree a formula to assess needs and those associations agree to that formula, the Government cannot do much more.

Regional Development Fund

3. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of grants which Wales has received from the European regional development fund in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Figures for European regional development fund assistance committed in Wales in each of the past three years are as follows: 1987, £57·8 million, 1988, £63·3 million and 1989, £28·8 million. The decline in 1989 was due to delays in Commission approvals. That will result in a rise in commitments in 1990.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those grants play an important part in helping to create more jobs in Wales? Is he satisfied that the source of those grants is sufficiently well publicised?

Mr. Walker: Yes. The fund has played an important part and the Welsh Office has done a great deal in endeavouring to negotiate a range of grants for the benefit of Wales.

Dr. Kim Howells: Will the Secretary of State ensure that whatever EC grants are available are used to help to remove the Albion colliery tip above the village of Cilfynydd, which is just a few miles down the valley from Aberfan? That village is threatened by the old Albion tip, which is causing grave discomfort to many of my constituents, who are also worried about their property.

Mr. Walker: Irrespective of European grants, it is obviously important that all those concerned take the action that is required. I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep concern. As he knows, that matter is a basic responsibility of Mid Glamorgan county council. It has applied for grants to take certain action and the Welsh Development Agency has speedily agreed to give those grants—I believe that it approved them today or last week. I shall certainly keep a close watch to see that all the assistance needed by that county council is given.

Mr. Livsey: On the RDF, what will the Secretary of State do about the integrated operations initiative put forward by Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed? That initiative has been accepted as worthwhile by the Welsh Office and by the EC, but, apparently, it is now being blocked by central Government. Will the right hon. Gentleman do something to ensure that that initiative stays at the front of the queue instead of being pushed back?

Mr. Walker: It is not a case of pushing back the initiative. Important negotiations and a change of emphasis are taking place in the Community. We certainly do our best for all the applications.

Cleddau Bridge

5. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance has been provided since 1979 to Dyfed county council in respect of the capital costs of the Cleddau bridge, Pembrokeshire.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The Government made a £4 milion interest-free loan to Dyfed county council in 1979. No assistance has been provided since then.

Mr. Bennett: Although I welcome the £4 milllion loan provided by the Government, is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable annoyance felt in Pembrokeshire because my constituents must pay 50p every time they cross the bridge when the rest of the road system is free? Why have my constituents been singled out for such an imposition when the rest of the road system is provided from taxation?

Mr. Roberts: I assure my hon. Friend that his constituents have not been singled out, but Cleddau bridge is owned and operated by Dyfed county council. The policy on tolling operated by the present Government is the same as that operated by successive Governments—that users who enjoy the exceptional savings in time and money made possible by estuarial crossings should contribute directly to the costs involved through the payment of tolls.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Would the Minister care to tell the House how long the missing link in the county of Pembrokeshire on the M4 has been delayed because of the expenditure on roads by the former Secretary of State for Wales?

Mr. Speaker: Will the M4 go over that bridge?

Mr. Wardell: Yes.

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the section of road to which the hon. Gentleman referred is far from Cleddau bridge. The hon. Gentleman should know, however, that we have eased congestion along the Baglan to Lonlas section by improving the Baglan roundabout. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not travelled that way recently. We have plans to improve all three sections between Baglan and Lonlas.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 11 January 1990, the numbers of unemployment claimants in the Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 4,754, 14,051 and 90,349 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison.

Mr. Hughes: There have been at least 23 changes in the method of compiling unemployment statistics, all of which have reduced the overall total. Is poll tax yet another secret weapon in the Government's armoury to reduce the figures? The cost of collecting rates in Wales was £9 million, whereas poll tax will cost more than £25 million to collect, the cost of which will have to be borne by the charge payers. Is not it sheer hypocrisy by the Government to lecture our local authorities on financial prudence when they behave in this way?

Mr. Walker: The income for the local authority in Newport must greatly benefit from the fact that unemployment there was 92 per cent. higher at the time of the general election than it is now.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is not the Secretary of State aware that there are 120,000 fewer industrial employees—involved in manufacturing, production and making things—in Wales now than there were in 1979? Is it any wonder that income per head in Wales is lower than in 1979 and that we are the poorest region in Britain?

Mr. Walker: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, because the figures that he has just mentioned were given in a reply by me, the main drop involves those employed in the coal industry. I am glad that in the past three years there has been a big increase in the number of jobs in manufacturing. I am also pleased—obviously the right hon. Gentleman is not—that there has been an enormous increase in the number of jobs in the service industries. Many people in Wales delight in the fact that there is an enormous increase in both industries.

7. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* in December 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: In September 1989, the latest date for which information is available, there was a civilian work force in employment in Wales of 1,158,000. In September 1979, the figure was 1,160,000.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend's interesting answer reflects some of the problems with which he has had to cope in the restructuring of the Welsh economy. Can he be more specific and tell the House some of the initiatives that he has taken to boost employment in manufacturing and service industries? What programmes will he be pursuing in the next 12 months towards those objectives?

Mr. Walker: If one takes into consideration the increased numbers in higher education in Wales compared with 1979, the figures for 1989 were higher than the 1979 ones. I am delighted that a range of initiatives have brought the financial services to Wales and a great deal of overseas investment. During the past three years Wales, with 5 per cent. of the population, has had 20 per cent. of all the inward investment into Britain.

Mr. Foot: Does the figure that the Secretary of State gave mean that the Government have just got back to the employment figure for Wales that existed in 1979 when he, along with his associates, ran an election campaign to say, "Labour isn't working"? Will he respond to the invitation that I have given him many times, to make in Wales the speech that he occasionally makes in England, and give the figures of how much has been poured down the drain through the huge numbers of unemployed that have existed throughout the past 10 years? Those figures are still very high and much higher than in many parts of England.

Mr. Walker: As the right hon. Gentleman knows better than anyone else, pits closed on a large scale under Labour Governments, as well as Conservative Governments. In the past 10 years there has been an enormous drop in the numbers employed in both the coal and steel industries, yet, in spite of that, this year there are as many people in employment as there were in 1979. I am glad that there is a great diversity of jobs, mainly in the private sector.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the difference between the time of the Labour Government and today is that those in work are working for companies making profits, so their jobs are much more secure than they were under the Labour Administration?

Mr. Walker: Perhaps the most important fact for Wales is that it now has a diversity of job opportunities that it never had before.

Local Government Finance (Advertising)

8. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent in total by his Department to advertise and provide information on the poll tax in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I expect the total expenditure on information relating to the community charge to be around £400,000 in 1989-90.

Mr. Jones: Now that we know that the average poll tax for Wales will be at least £47 higher than the Government's estimate, and that the Government's only response is the ridiculous idea of rate-capping Welsh local authorities that have never been accused of overspending by any Government, why do not the Government accept that all their plans for propaganda for the poll tax to persuade the people of Walls that it is a wonderful tax have been an abject failure? Should not the Secretary of State join his colleague, the Secretary of State for the Environment, and, rather than rate-cap Welsh local authorities, go cap in hand to the Treasury to get more money for them this year, to save hard-pressed Welsh ratepayers from this ridiculous tax?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has knowledge that I do not have—we do not know what the individual community charges will be; all we know is what we read in the press.

As for capping, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has made the position absolutely clear. Of course, we do not like the tremendous increases in spending that are proposed—we were talking about Clwyd county council a few moments ago. It is proposing to spend about 14 per cent. more in the coming year than it did this year—and this year it spent 9 per cent. more than the previous year.

As for the information that we have given, we have published guides for households and for students about the community charge rebate, and four more leaflets are on the way, all of them in two languages.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In that information, will my hon. Friend continue to make it clear that those who benefit most from the community charge are the least well off in Wales—despite the attacks mounted on the people of Wales by local councils that set the community charge at unnecessary and ridiculously high levels?

Mr. Roberts: We all know that single pensioners and single parents will certainly benefit from the community charge. There is an excellent rebate scheme, and we have published a guide to the community charge rebate.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister has admitted that he is ignorant of what is going on in Welsh local authorities. It

is now mid-February; will he tell us whether there is any possibility or probability that the Government intend to rate-cap any Welsh local authority?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that we enjoy a particularly favourable position in Wales, in that the average community charge that we anticipated was about £100 less than the average anticipated in England. He also knows that the percentage of grant that the Government give local authorities in Wales is considerably higher than it is in England.

Mr. Barry Jones: Have not the Government underprovided our excellent local authorities in Wales by about 4 per cent? If the Government resort to charge capping, will they not be attacking, in effect, the Conservative-controlled Vale of Glamorgan district council and independent-controlled Montgomery council? If charge capping takes place, the consequences will be cuts in schooling, housing and social services.

The Secretary of State is seeking an alibi. He is passing the buck to our councils, but he is to blame for introducing a poll tax that the people of Wales do not want.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman really cannot have it all ways. He is afraid that we want to restrain local authorities from overcharging their community charge payers. He would far rather allow the tremendous increases that we read about in the press to be imposed by local authorities. If he has any care for the electors and community charge payers, he should join the Government in urging local authorities to reduce their spending and their community charge. We all know the truth: local authorities are raising community charges as much as they possibly can and hoping to blame the Government for the outcome.

Local Government Finance

9. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information on the level of poll tax to be levied by *(a)* Carmarthen district council and *(b)* Dinefwr borough council; and what is the average for all the local authorities so far notified in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received no such information.

Mr. William: Is the Secretary of State aware that Dyfed has the lowest average male earnings of any county in Britain? What has he to say to the 20,000 or 30,000 people in my constituency who are on low pay, live in very ordinary homes, are not eligible for any rebates and who will lose heavily when the poll tax bills arrive?

Mr. Walker: Expenditure was based on a 7·1 per cent. increase on last year's budget, and only 15 per cent. of all local government expenditure in Wales will come from the poll tax. The hon. Gentleman should explain to his constituents how lucky they are.

Mr. Rogers: I am amazed that the Secretary of State is ignorant about what is happening in local government in Wales. I am sure that he realises that many local authorities, including my own county council of Mid Glamorgan, have already set the level of poll tax. Those councils will now have to struggle for the resources to rebuild and reopen the Rhigos mountain road at the top end of the Rhondda valley, which has collapsed as a result of recent bad weather. Under the previous rating system, a Welsh Office scheme gave 75 per cent. over and above a penny rate to cope with emergencies. Will the Secretary of State assure me that such money will be immediately forthcoming under the new system to open this vital road, which is the Rhondda's only access to west Wales, the heads of the valley and even into the midlands?

Mr. Walker: That is a separate question and I shall look into the details.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Would my right hon. Friend care to speculate on the howls of outrage that will be uttered by people all over Wales if Labour's proposals for a roof tax are introduced? Under that tax, people would be charged not only on the basis of the capital value of their home, but on the basis of their income. Much unfairness would arise, because after a national Labour Chancellor had fleeced the taxpayers, 400 local chancellors would do the same at the town halls.

Mr. Walker: One notices the total confusion and muddle in the Labour party on this matter. It is certain that if a Labour Government handled a new roof tax in the same rather ruthless way as they handled the rate support system, the people of Wales would have a bad time. When people throughout the Principality discover that they will have to pay a tax based on the capital value of their house, they will be very distressed.

Mr. Barry Jones: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Conservative Cabinet invented the wretched poll tax. Did not he undertake in Cabinet to impose that unjust tax on the people of Wales? His name was on the poll tax Bill as it was dragooned through the House. These fairy tales from the right hon. Gentleman will lead to electoral disaster for his party. He will be remembered in Wales as the man who brought an unjust tax, the poll tax, upon our people. The poll tax and the right hon. Gentleman's endeavours to promote it are a stain on his ministerial reputation.

Mr. Walker: In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, he has no ministerial reputation. We have introduced one poll tax. The shadow Cabinet of which the hon. Gentleman is a member has had three different types of roof taxes. We all look forward to seeing the detail of the one that he supports so that people throughout Wales can examine it.

Teachers' Pay

10. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the hourly pay of supply teachers and home tutors in *(a)* West Glamorgan, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities have considerable flexibility on the pay of supply teachers and home tutors. They are not required to notify the Welsh Office of their local arrangements.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend accept the recommendations of the interim advisory committee which, if implemented, would eradicate the discrimination against supply teachers in counties in Wales as outside?

Mr. Roberts: I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that we accept the recommendations of the interim advisory committee—including those related to teachers on

short-notice contracts. As a result of those recommendations, the pay of supply and other teachers on such contracts would be calculated on the same basis as that of full-time or regular part-time teachers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with recruitment to teacher training courses in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: On the whole, yes, and I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that initial recruitment to the public sector training institutions in Wales exceeded the target by more than 17 per cent. That augurs well for the future and implies that teaching is still viewed as an attractive career.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister's statement will be very welcome to all part-time or supply teachers. Is he satisfied that sufficient resources are available to Welsh local education authorities to employ the part-time and supply teachers required to ensure that the national curriculum is fully implemented?

Mr. Roberts: A survey of teaching in Wales showed that the vacancy rate is about 1 per cent., which is similar to the rate for England and Wales combined. We are keeping a careful eye on the position and are doing our utmost to ensure an adequate supply of teachers. Other matters, including the employment of part-time and supply teachers, are for local authorities.

Health Authorities

11. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Welsh health authorities; and what matters will be discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The date and agenda for the next meeting have not yet been determined.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister is aware of my concern that Dr. Joan Williams and Mr. David Else, who are employees of Mid Glamorgan health authority and shareholders and company directors of Medical Diagnostics Limited, and Dr. Stephanie Matthews and Dr. Keith Davies, who are employees of South Glamorgan health authority and shareholders and directors of Lifecare Advanced Medical Limited, have serious direct conflicts of interest between the income-generating work in the Health Service and their involvement in private companies. Will the Minister issue guidelines for the chairmen of Welsh health authorities making it clear that such activities fall well beyond the scope of acceptable private practice and will not be allowed in future?

Mr. Grist: Health authorities, as employers, are responsible for ensuring that their employees' private interests do not conflict with those of the authorities. We are considering whether further guidance is needed to guard against the risk of conflict.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Will the Minister meet representatives of local authorities in mid-Wales, as many of them are keen to establish a Mid Wales health authority based on Bronglais hospital, Aberystwyth?

Mr. Grist: I know of the hon. Gentleman's concern for his local hospital, but I believe that he has been taken in by people who have raised unnecessary scares about it. East Dyfed health authority does a first-rate job.

Community Care

12. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the cost to local authorities in Wales of implementing the community care proposals contained in the recent White Paper on community care.

Mr. Grist: As we have made clear in the White Paper "Caring for People", the resources to be made available to local authorities in Wales to implement the new framework for community care will be determined in this year's public expenditure survey, following consultations with the local authorities which have begun.

Mr. Michael: The Minister did not answer my question. Does he accept that in coming years, the increasing number of elderly people will require extra resources? Does he further agree that care in the community will cost money and must not be implemented on the cheap? Will he guarantee that the Government will make available enough money to enable local authorities in Wales to bear the burden that is being transferred to them by the National Health Service and Community Care Bill which is currently in Committee? Will he also ensure that such finance is ring-fenced, so that there will be no doubt about the resources available to look after our old people?

Mr. Grist: As the hon. Gentleman is, with me, a member of the Standing Committee, he must be aware that the Government have every intention of ensuring that their policy works to the benefit of the old and dependent in society. We do not believe that resources should be ring-fenced because we put our trust in local authorities. Of course, we shall take into consideration any action that might have to be taken in the future, but at this stage we have faith in local authorities.

Mr. John P. Smith: Will the Minister take this opportunity to comment on the shortfall in respite care allowances? My constituents are unable to take advantage of hostels for the mentally and physically handicapped because the abolition of the board and lodging allowance has penalised dependants. People do not receive the same amount of benefit if, to have a break, they put their dependants into respite hospitals.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will know that this is a subject for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security rather than for me. He will be aware of the increased funding by the Welsh Office for the mentally handicapped and the mental illness strategies.

A55

13. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response has been received to the publication of "The A55—The Road of Opportunity"; and what further sections of the road will begin to be improved in the next financial year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The response to the publication of the document "The A55—The Road of Opportunity" has been very favourable. We will be announcing details of major trunk road schemes planned to start in 1990-91 in the Welsh Office commentary on the 1990 public expenditure White Paper due to be published in March.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that everyone concerned—the private developers and Clwyd county council—is taking full advantage of the glittering opportunities presented by the Government's tremendous success in driving ahead with that new road? Will he make a statement about when work is likely to begin on the badly needed Rhuallt hill improvement?

Mr. Roberts: On my hon. Friend's second question, tenders for the scheme were invited on 19 January and are due for return at the end of March, and construction is expected to take about two years. We shall get going with the scheme as soon as possible.

On the earlier part of my hon. Friend's question, I believe that the actions of the local authorities in connection with the enormous Government investment in the new road, and the proposals that are coming forward, are to be welcomed.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

14. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority to discuss health services.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that such a meeting is urgently required? At a meeting on Wednesday this week, South Glamorgan health authority will consider an emergency proposal to close six hospitals. Three of them are in my constituency—St. David's and Glan Ely hospitals and Ely ear nose and throat hospital. The shortfall for next year's budget is £7·5 million, and as a result the authority is reduced to planning in a panic, and having to sell capital resources to fund a revenue shortfall. I should have thought that the Minister would regard that with the utmost seriousness.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will know that those proposals are the responsibility of the health authority. As they may eventually come before my right hon. Friend for a decision, it is impossible for me to talk about them. He will also know that the health authority that he and I share is the best resourced in Wales. In the forthcoming year its capital allocation will be increased by 122 per cent. which I think the hon. Gentleman will agree is fairly generous.

Dr. Marek: How much extra will it cost the authority when it has to pay for its patients to be treated in England, and how much extra will it cost when the authority has to pay value added tax?

Mr. Grist: The health authorities will be funded for value added tax and for contracts taken out elsewhere.

The hon. Gentleman must understand that South Glamorgan health authority is as likely to attract inward patients as anywhere else, as it is a regional centre and a highly regarded university hospital-based authority.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

16. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the results of the recent tests carried out under the auspices of his Department into the level of polychlorinated biphenyls in Llanelli.

Mr. Grist: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has taken two further samples, one from the playing field and one nearby, to validate the results of its original survey. The results of the samples will be available towards the end of March.

Mr. Davies: Is the Minister aware that there is considerable concern in my constituency that this matter should be dealt with urgently? We know that one sample provided earlier showed high levels of PCBs in the field adjacent to an infants' school. So that pollution may be removed, will the Government, and the Welsh Office in particular, view sympathetically requests for financial help from the local authorities which are under considerable strain in this matter?

Mr. Grist: Unless the right hon. Gentleman can produce proof of that strain, the work to which he referred will fall within the local authorities' ordinary duties. We want the results of the tests to be available as quickly as possible. Apparently a problem arises because the samples have to be dried before they can be examined; it is more a scientific problem than anything else.

Rural Housing

17. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the provision of affordable housing in rural Wales.

Mr. Grist: We are taking a wide range of measures to stimulate the provision of additional affordable housing in rural Wales, including substantial spending by housing associations and consultations about planning guidance on the provision of land for low-cost housing.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Minister really aware of the housing crisis in rural Wales? Many youngsters are having to sleep outside and even in cars, and it is estimated that there are 100 such youngsters in Newtown. Does the Minister agree that the Welsh Office should change its planning rules so that rented housing and starter homes can remain in the local housing market for local people?

Mr. Grist: That is precisely why Housing in Wales has launched its rural initiative, with 31 on-site schemes in preparation at the moment. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have out for consultation proposals that would make the planning laws a little more amenable to the sort of proposals that he suggests.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Director of Public Prosecutions

31. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

32. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I frequently discuss matters of departmental interest with the Director of Public Prosecutions, and I last met him for that purpose on 14 February.

Mr. Allen: Is the Attorney-General aware of the reports of the remarks of Sir Peter Leng, Army land commander in Northern Ireland from 1973 to 1975, to the effect that he was aware of the dirty tricks being performed by MI6 in Northern Ireland and the smearing of hon. Members of all parties? Is he aware that Sir Frank King, General Officer Commanding, said that he has "no quarrel" with Sir Peter's remarks? Will the Attorney-General now ask the DPP to consider whether criminal offences took place and to bring charges against those who deliberately sought to undermine democratically elected people in the House and elsewhere?

The Attorney-General: Although the question relates to the DPP and the supplementary question to Northern Ireland, I can say to the hon. Gentleman that, as with all assertions of criminal conduct—I have read a report in the newspaper today—any relevant information that is brought to the attention of the police or the prosecuting authorities will be duly considered.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Attorney-General seen the report published by the district auditor on the sale of cemeteries by Westminster council for 15p? Has he noted that the auditor said that the sale was unauthorised, unlawful and detrimental to ratepayers? When will the members of Tory-controlled Westminster city council be called to account? Why has the ball been kicked from one end of the field to the other for years without anyone being charged? Is it because Lady Porter is a friend of the Prime Minister and a member of the Tory party? Finally, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that if a Labour authority had done this, it would have been hung, drawn and quartered?

The Attorney-General: I am responsible for the enforcement of the criminal law in England and Wales, where hanging, drawing and quartering went out some time ago. I have not seen the auditor's report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but, if there is a question of liability, it sounds like a civil matter, not a criminal one.

Mr. Latham: In view of the verdict of unlawful killing at the inquest on my former constituent, Petty Officer John Black, and the decision to seek a fresh inquest, can my right hon. and learned Friend say today, or discuss with the DPP, when a fresh inquest will take place? The man in question died in December 1983.

The Attorney-General: Again, the question does not arise as part of the responsibilities of the Director of Public Prosecutions, but I can help my hon. Friend by saying that, unless I am badly mistaken, the application for a fresh inquest will be heard soon in the Divisional court, where it is already listed.

Mr. Aitken: When assertions are made of attempts to overthrow a democratic Government by unlawful means, on what criteria does the Director of Public Prosecutions go into overdrive and put the accelerator down and when does he put on the handbrake? For example, does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that when similar allegations were made—admittedly from a different angle—by Mr. Peter Wright, the entire Law Officers' Department rushed round the world spending £3 million of taxpayers' money on hyper-legal activity? Why is no action taken when those assertions are made from a different angle?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend does not do justice to his recollection of the "Spycatcher" case. The litigation, here and overseas, ended in the House of Lords in complete vindication of the Government's contentions. The action was undertaken to enforce the Government's right to lifelong confidentiality from those who have been members of the security services, and that contention was wholly upheld by the House of Lords. It had nothing to do with the Director of Public Prosecutions. When he is confronted with evidence that a criminal offence has been committed, there is neither accelerator nor handbrake but one measured pace.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Attorney-General confirm that forgery with a view to disseminating defamatory information is a criminal offence and that no one in this country has the power to authorise the commission of crimes? Will he give an undertaking not to leave this serious matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, but to report these exchanges to the DPP and then report back to the House of Commons on whether the DPP will investigate it?

The Attorney-General: No, Sir. It would be wrong to answer the hypothetical questions with which the hon. Gentleman prefaced his question. It is unnecessary to depart from the well-tried and well-proven practice whereby matters suggesting that criminal offences may have been committed are considered first by the police and then by the prosecuting authorities.

Extradition

33. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he has any proposals to change the present law and practice relating to extradition between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

The Attorney-General: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is responsible for United Kingdom law in this area, has no proposals for change. As to practice, we shall continue to seek the extradition of offenders from the Republic of Ireland whenever an appropriate case arises.

Mr. Gow: Is not it the duty of the Government of the Irish Republic, with or without the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to do all in their power to ensure that those who are suspected of criminal offences, notably terrorist offences, are brought to justice? Is my right hon. and learned Friend continuing to make representations to secure the extradition to this country of Mr. Ryan?

The Attorney-General: I believe that the Irish Government would accept the duty that my hon. Friend formulates. Mr. Ryan's case must be regarded as concluded in view of the decision of the Irish Director of Public Prosecutions, who is an independent official, as is the Director of Public Prosecutions in this country. I have the highest regard for the Attorney-General in Dublin, Mr. Murray. Each country has its own statute law with which it has to comply. Each country has independent judges and independent Directors of Public Prosecutions. Each of us desires that those who should be charged with serious criminal offences are brought to justice.

Legal Aid

34. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the best estimate available to Law Officers of the cost per annum, at 1990 prices, of extending legal aid, on similar criteria to those applicable elsewhere in the legal system, to those representing the interests of the deceased at inquests.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The latest estimate of the annual cost of extending full legal aid to representation at inquests was made in 1980. At 1990 prices the sum involved is £5·96 million. Advice and assistance under the green form scheme is currently available for such proceedings.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for that answer. Will he undertake to review the cost and the decision that it would not be justified to extend legal aid? He will be aware that verdicts at inquests vary between those producing a liability and open verdicts and that those verdicts may determine whether other prosecutions take place. Legal aid is important. Will there be a review of the right to legal aid at inquests?

The Solicitor-General: Matters must be considered as a question of priority, and competing claims are continually examined. The latest claim to be granted by the Lord Chancellor, at a net cost of about £5 million—roughly the same figure as I mentioned earlier—provided assistance to about 5 million child potential claimants and 1·5 million elderly potential claimants in personal injury cases. The matter must be judged against such priorities.

Director of Public Prosecutions

35. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what was discussed.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have just given to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Mr. Dalyell: Following his undertaking to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), will the Attorney-General reflect on the penultimate paragraph of the letter from Colin Wallace to the Prime Minister of 19 February asking how it came about that the director of Army legal services, Major-General Whiteley, became involved in preparing a summary for the Appeal Court? Will he find out from colleagues such as Sue Marsh how that happened?

The Attorney-General: I have many responsibilities, but they do not extend to the hon. Gentleman's question. There is nothing that I can usefully add to what I said to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North.

Civil Justice Review

36. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on recent representations received on his plan to speed up the judicial process.

The Solicitor-General: Implementation of the main recommendations in the report of the civil justice review is being taken forward in the Courts and Legal Services Bill and in a programme of associated changes to the rules of court and administrative reforms.

Mr. Favell: As a fellow lawyer, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a lawyer's time is money, that the system often leads to far too long being spent on court procedures, and that the speeding up of that process would be most welcome?

The Solicitor-General: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the proposed administrative reforms will require litigants to put their cards on the table at a much earlier stage in a case. That should speed up the administration of justice and facilitate a reduction in costs.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eastern Europe

43. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had expressing concern in the Third world that aid to eastern Europe will adversely affect the amount of aid available to it; and if he will make a statement.

49. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that total Overseas Development Administration expenditure for 1990-91 will be increased so that aid funds for eastern Europe do not reduce the amount available for developing countries.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The Government are aware of concerns, here and overseas, that economic assistance to eastern Europe might adversely affect the amount of aid going to developing countries. I assure the House that the provision of United Kingdom assistance to eastern Europe is separate from and additional to our regular aid programme, which is growing in real terms. OECD member Governments affirmed in December that their support for economic reform in central and eastern Europe will not diminish their determination to give high priority to their development co-operation with the Third world.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister accept that there is widespread concern among aid agencies in Britain that relief to eastern Europe is at the expense of relief to the Third world? Will she give a further assurance that over the next few years at least the poorest of the Third world will not be asked to subsidise the poor of eastern Europe?

Mrs. Chalker: I have repeated many times that aid to eastern Europe is additional to and separate from aid to the developing world. That is exactly what we have decided and that is exactly what we have done.

Mr. Williams: I very much welcome that assurance. In view of the highly volatile and rapidly changing position in eastern Europe, may we have an assurance that the Minister and the Government will be flexible in interpreting the need for assistance to eastern Europe and will be willing, if necessary, to draw upon the contingency fund?

Mrs. Chalker: If that occurs, of course the Government will consider what is needed. However, we have been

flexible and provided $100 million to the Polish stabilisation fund which was not envisaged when we began talking about the know-how fund. When we saw the need for humanitarian assistance in Romania before Christmas, we immediately dispatched 1·8 tonnes of medical supplies. Last week my hon. Friend the Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced that we would be providing disposable syringes for Romania. We have also arranged for five injured young people from Romania to be treated here and we are considering at the moment another way of helping Romania. None of those things was even considered when we started down the path of the know-how funds of £50 million for Poland and £25 million for Hungary. We are being flexible and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Nelson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the momentous changes in eastern Europe provide some spectacular opportunities for private investment rather than more taxpayers' aid? Should not we differentiate between the much-needed infrastructural and basic support aid that we provide to the poorest countries and the probably greater case for more technology transfers and trade credits to eastern Europe?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the 29 projects that were announced for Poland in December and the six further projects that we announced last month, it is interesting to see how much private organisations are adding to the incentive that the Government provided for the know-how funds. There will be joint ventures and many contributions from the private sector because the eastern European countries have a greater ability to attract private capital than some of the really underdeveloped countries.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us have a genuine and deep-seated feeling for the Third world? However, only a limited amount of money is available, and with Germany wanting to go headlong towards creating another surrogate state of East Germany, the amount of money required may stretch into billions of pounds. Whatever the world may want, Germany is likely to benefit. Who is going to pay for it? If anyone is to pay, why should it not be Germany? Why should not we help the Third world instead of helping the fourth reich?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend takes his claim a little too far. We have spent more than £3,500 million in Africa over the past eight years and we shall continue to help the developing world. However, the Federal Republic of Germany has also been helping the developing world and it is helping eastern Europe greatly. We will do our bit, and I have no doubt that all Members of the European Community will continue to help adequately in the Third world and look to the need for democracies to be encouraged in eastern Europe.

Africa

44. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures he is taking to improve child health care in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Almost everything that we finance in Africa, bilaterally and through multilateral organisations, benefits children by encouraging sustainable economic and social development. Our health sector aid concentrates on preventive community-based systems in which mother and child health programmes have a central place. Child health also benefits from our support for family planning, provision of clean water and sanitation, education, especially women's education, and progammes to improve the status of women.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that her response is a welcome statement of the Government's programme? Does she further agree that with a more effective oral rehydration therapy programme we could save more children's lives than the total number of lives that were lost in the first and second world wars? Will my right hon. Friend also consider the fact that half the world's children are currently not protected by the diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus programme of immunisation? Will she lead a children's crusade to improve the health of the world's children?

Mrs. Chalker: We are already helping with immunisation through our contributions to UNICEF's major programme. With regard to oral rehydration therapy, we have been a major contributor to the World Health Organisation's diarrhoeal disease control programme which is responsible for promoting the use of ORT.

Mrs. Clwyd: As the Minister knows, I have just returned from Ethiopia. Does she agree that in that country children are suffering most because of famine and war? Does she agree that the Foreign Ministers meeting in Dublin tomorrow should be asked to bring every effort to bear on the protagonists to end that bloody and increasingly vicious civil war and to bring the warring factions round the negotiating table?

Mr. Chalker: I am glad to see the hon. Lady back safe and sound from Ethiopia. I have already asked my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary whether he will consider raising in the Foreign Affairs Council in Dublin tomorrow the urgent need for a peace settlement in Ethiopia. Of course, the children suffer—probably rather more than the hon. Lady and I know. I hope that we shall use all international forums to bring about peace swiftly.

Tibet

48. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what environmental protection measures Her Majesty's Government propose to take in respect of Tibet.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have no plans at present to finance environmental protection measures in Tibet.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge the concern caused by the Chinese Government's attitude to Tibet, in terms of forcing changes to unsuitable crops, which has led to starvation, the stripping of rain forests and the area being used as an environmental dump? In those circumstances is not it appropriate that the British Government should apply some pressure to the Chinese Government to stop those practices and protect the interests of the native population of Tibet?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the environment throughout the world is central to our

agenda. I fully acknowledge that developing countries will need additional resources to tackle problems, whether they be crop substitution or deforestation. As yet, we have had no request to help with environmental problems in Tibet. I sincerely hope that it will become possible, throughout that area, to take all such measures internationally as will prevent deforestation and the flow into the gulf of Bangladesh, which I have just visited, of much of the soils from those high regions.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that China's record in Tibet is disgraceful by any standards?

Mrs. Chalker: Successive British Governments have regarded Tibet as autonomous, although recognising the special position of the Chinese authorities. That continues to be the Government's view, but we sincerely hope that China will give the people of Tibet their rightful stance.

Operation Clockwork Orange

3.32 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the statement of a genuinely distinguished soldier, General Sir Peter Leng, Scots Guards, a senior commander in Aden, subsequently Master-General of the Ordnance and a member of the Army Council, but, most relevantly, Commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland for the years 1973-75 that, contrary to Government claims, the operation Clockwork Orange had official sanction to run."

I must persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is definite, that it is urgent and that it is important. The matter is definite, and it is fully reported in the first editions of yesterday's *Sunday Times*, under the by-line Barry Penrose and the heading "General Backs Wallace Claims". The four page 1 and page 2 articles were "pulled out," to use the trade term, for reasons that are revealing but not relevant to the application for the matter to take precedence over the announced business of the House of Commons.

The matter is important, because accuracy by Ministers to the House is important. You did me the courtesy Mr. Speaker, of being in the Chair for the Adjournment debate last Monday night, attended by about 70 Opposition Members and 30 Conservative Members. You will have heard, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces say, as reported at column 118 of *Hansard*, that operation Clockwork Orange was not approved.

At least the Select Committee on Defence might consider asking Sir Peter Leng to appear before it to clarify exactly what he meant. The Minister and the general cannot both be right. Who is the House of Commons to believe?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The general.

Mr. Dalyell: That would be my view—*[Interruption]*. Well, the general has no axe to grind.

The matter is urgent, because it emerges that Clockwork Orange was masterminded by a senior civil servant, Dennis Payne, and that the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland, at the time, General Sir Frank King, has said that he has no quarrel with General Sir Peter Leng's account.

Nothing is more urgent than matters that go to the heart of the integrity of British Government. Nothing that this House of Commons has to consider is more urgent than the matter of integrity in the highest places.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"General Sir Peter Leng's statement on Colin Wallace."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, I have to decide whether his application comes within the criteria of the Standing Order, and if so, whether the debate should have priority over the business already set down for today or tomorrow.

In this case, I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.36 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: On this matter?

Mr. Rees: The point of order, Mr. Speaker, is on the role of Select Committees, arising out of this matter. We have had a rehearsal by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of the facts as revealed in a newspaper, in an article that was withdrawn at the request of the Ministry of Defence—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I understand.

On the precise point about the Select Committee, Mr. Speaker, first, the Government denied that Clockwork Orange existed; then, they said that it was not authorised. Now, General Leng, whom I also respect and with whom I worked, and the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland, Frank King, both say that it was authorised, which is another part of the story.

On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Select Committee on Defence is considering the matters of papers and of authorisations. Can General Leng, as a former senior officer in the Army, be called before a Select Committee to give evidence on that point? Can the Government stop him so appearing? If he wishes, can he appear before the Select Committee on this point?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to give directions to a Select Committee from the Chair. As I understand it, it would be possible for that to happen.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not astonishing and unsatisfactory that, at the very time when the former President of the United States of America is being required to give evidence in respect of the examination by Congress of Admiral Poindexter on all those matters, it is proving impossible in the British House of Commons for the legislature to exert any effective scrutiny over these matters? It is grossly unsatisfactory that the activities of the Select Committees of this House are being circumscribed by Ministers in this regard.

In view of the latest statement by the highest-ranking officers in the armed forces that these matters of disinformation and smear were properly authorised, surely there is now an overwhelming argument for the House to have a proper examination of all the material interests in these matters.

It seems that only with some co-operation from the Leader of the House and the Government are we ever likely to get to the bottom and to the truth of these matters. Therefore, I appeal to the Leader of the House to join me in discussions through the usual channels to find a way in which we in the House and the public can find the truth of the matter.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that that was heard on the Government Front Bench. It is not a matter for me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Barry Jones.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called Mr. Barry Jones.

Mr. Barry Jone (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order arising out of Welsh questions, Mr. Speaker. It may have been obvious to you, Sir, that, of the first 10 oral questions tabled, five were tabled by Conservative Members with English constituencies. From where I was sitting, the only Conservative Back Bench Members with Welsh constituencies whom I could see were the hon. Members for Pembroke (Mr Bennett) for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones).

I seek your assistance and guidance, Sir. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends believe that the questions tabled by English Members make it difficult for us to catch your eye in the limited time for Welsh questions. That may be a ploy to prevent us from catching your eye and perhaps to give assistance to Conservative Back Benchers, whose numbers are small. Can you help us on that matter?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can help the right hon. Member. If a question on the Order Paper is reached, the hon. Member who tabled it will be called, from whatever constituency he comes. I think that we did rather well in Welsh questions today. We reached question 17 and only three hon. Members who had questions on the Order Paper were not called for a supplementary question. The hon. Gentleman's complaint does not hold water today.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that many millions of people, particularly those who live in constituencies near the Kent coast, are anxious, for one reason or another, about the future of the Channel tunnel. I understand that Ministers have resisted demands for a statement—they have made that resistance known for private notice questions too—on the grounds that there is no ministerial responsibility for the matter. It is important that no one is allowed to pull the wool over your eyes, Sir, as you are the guardian of Back Benchers and their constituents. I wish to bring to your attention two points which suggest that there is ministerial responsibility for the matter, and that a Government statement should be made.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member feels that strongly, he should table a question on the matter. If he is right, and there is Government responsibility, I am sure that he will receive an answer.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. We have just had Welsh questions. We are about to have an Opposition day debate on a motion tabled by the Scottish Nationalist party.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members, some of whom are now on their feet, wish to participate in that debate. We should get on with it, rather than have points of order which I cannot answer.

Mr. Rogers: Further to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), Mr. Speaker. You answered his

question by saying that it might well be so. The original question was whether the Government had a right to prevent General Leng from appearing before the Select Committee. Can we understand from your answer that the Government have that right and have exercised it?

Mr. Speaker: I did not say that. It is a matter for the Select Committee.

Mr. Alan Williams: I want to return to the first point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have always regarded it as one of the most important elements of your responsibility to protect the rights of the House of Commons. I know that you regard it as a matter of seriousness when the House has been misled, even if inadvertently. We now have a rather unprecedented situation, in which we need your guidance to protect those rights.

The Prime Minister, as head of the Civil Service, is saying that she was misled by the Civil Service, and therefore inadvertently misled the House. The Prime Minister, as head of the security services, is saying that she was misled by them, and therefore inadvertently misled the House. Now the head of the armed services is saying that he was misled by them, and that he therefore misled the House. This is more than just one ordinary accident. We need at least a statement. Can you, Mr. Speaker, advise us how we can get one?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made the point for himself. In answering a Standing Order No. 20 application, I am responsible only for the difficult decision whether to give it precedence over the business for today or tomorrow.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), Mr. Speaker. Over the years, it has been a convention for Welsh Members to participate in Welsh questions, during which we may discuss matters devolved to the Welsh Office. If it is to be the practice that English Members are to come to the defence of the Secretary of State for Wales, clearly there is less time for Opposition Members to question the Minister and we shall have to press for more time to be made available for Welsh questions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Jack: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Let us hear Mr. Bennett first.

Mr. Bennett: Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), Mr. Speaker. Can we rest assured that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and that any hon. Member may take part in any part of our discussions? If the Labour party is so concerned about the matter, why are its three spokesmen on English health matters all Scottish Members of Parliament?

Mr. Jack: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I resent the imputation that English Members tabling questions on Welsh matters is a barrier to Welsh members entering the discussion. There is always the opportunity of a supplementary question. Hon. Gentlemen have ignored the fact that many of the matters, particularly those relating to north Wales, also relate to the north-west of England.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can say any more than I have said. Hon. Members need only look at the Order Paper today to see that virtually all hon. Members who were present in the Chamber——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East) *indicated dissent*——

Mr. Speaker: —including the hon. Gentleman who is shaking his head—were called to ask questions.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. This is a United Kingdom Parliament, and today we have a debate in the name of the Scottish Nationalist party. We should get on with it.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. John Mark Taylor.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 9762/89 and 9865/89 on preferences for Poland and Hungary be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. John Mark Taylor.]*

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY] [1ST PART]

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on the dispute in the ambulance service in the name of the Scottish Nationalist party. I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.48 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Before I start, I want to make one technical correction. We are not the Scottish Nationalist party but the Scottish National party, and there is more than just a semantic difference.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise.

Mr. Sillars: I was not looking for an apology.

I beg to move,

That this House recognises public concern about the prolongation of the ambulance dispute; acknowledges strong public support for the ambulance staff; is aware of the Government's role in prolonging the dispute; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Health to renew negotiations with representatives of ambulance staff in order to seek an end to the dispute on the basis of a just award and a pay review mechanism that will recognise the place of ambulance staff in our emergency services.

The motion is tabled in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), myself and others in the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru. I acknowledge and recognise the co-operation of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on behalf of the Labour party in ensuring that a single motion has been tabled by the Opposition today. Whatever political differences we may have in other areas, there are absolutely none in respect of this dispute.

I notice that the name of the organ grinder, the Secretary of State for Health, is missing from the Government amendment. It also appears that he is missing from this debate. I am sure that many members of the public, as well as ambulance staff, will think it an absolute disgrace that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not reckon that this subject is important enough to present himself to the House to state his case.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sillars: I shall not give way, even for a kiltie.

I shall refer to the Secretary of State for Health all afternoon because, with due respect to the other hon. Gentlemen, the organ grinder is far more important than the monkeys.

On page 2 of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's letter of 16 February, which was sent to hon. Members, he refers to the trade unions and says:

"They are still claiming 11·4 per cent. and are still insisting on a pay mechanism for ambulancemen"—

I do not know why he fails to understand that women are also involved—

"which would link them to firemen or other staff".

That statement from the Secretary of State was untrue. The position of the trade unions was made perfectly plain in a statement issued on 16 January. Paragraph 2 of that statement reads:

"The pay rate aspect of our claim is the other major demand. In April 1989 our claim was 11·14 per cent. on the hourly rate. However, the unions are prepared to negotiate on this and, if necessary, lower our sights."

Paragraph 4 states:

"In November 1989, to facilitate negotiations, the ambulance unions dropped several key parts of the April 1989 claim.

The parts of the claim dropped were:

1. An increase in standby allowances
2. An increase in annual leave
3. The introduction of long service holidays
4. A reduction in the working week
5. The introduction of long service pay, after 5, 10 and 15 years' service."

Any of those five objectives is perfectly legitimate for a trade union involved in negotiations—the 11·14 per cent. pay claim is perfectly legitimate. It says a great deal for the flexibility of the trade unions that they were prepared to make that type of offer to the Government. They were prepared to lower their sights on a major part of their claim and to drop a series of important aspects of it. The Secretary of State's letter, which was sent to all hon. Members, is wholly inaccurate. Perhaps that is why he finds it extremely difficult to come here this afternoon to try to justify his unjustifiable position.

We have two reasons for tabling the motion. First, the ambulance staff have been in dispute for six months, and it is extremely important that the people that they elected, along with other concerned members of the public, appreciate that and do not forget those staff. In the past five weeks, momentous events have taken place in the Soviet Union, East Germany, other parts of eastern Europe and in South Africa with the freeing of Nelson Mandela. Various things have happened that have tended to push the ambulance dispute off the front pages and out of the media.

I have been involved in industrial disputes, and I appreciate that people can believe that they have been forgotten. As a result of this debate, an important signal will be sent to the ambulance staff and to the public to say that the dispute is at the top of the parliamentary agenda and of the public agenda. From my experience as a trade union official, I stress to ambulance staff that the combination of public support for them and their commitment to the public is unbeatable. If they maintain their commitment to the public, they will achieve their objectives as redefined by the trade unions.

The second reason for the motion is to produce a further critical examination of the issues, particularly against the changed political circumstances of the electoral prospects of the Tory party. That should make many Opposition Members consider their future carefully.

I have looked at all that has been said in the debates, and there seem to be six main pillars supporting the Government's case. I shall examine them in turn. First, the Government say that it is wrong for management to engage in arbitration, and therefore that solution is rejected. Secondly, they say that no more money is available because each penny spent comes off patient care funds. The third pillar is combined with the fourth: the Government reject a pay review mechanism, similar in its objectives to that applied to the fire service, to avoid further disputes. The Government justify that through

their assertion that no true comparison can be drawn between the ambulance service and the police and fire service.

The fifth pillar of the Government's case is that it is immoral to take industrial action in an essential service. The sixth pillar is that the organ grinder—the Secretary of State—claims that he has no personal responsibility for direct intervention.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does not the hon. Gentleman contrast the statements that the Secretary of State actually makes with the number of times that he goes on radio and television to argue the case, while trying to be Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate and wash his hands of the affair?

Mr. Sillars: Judas Iscariot at least got something. I take on board what the hon. Gentleman says, and I shall refer to the television stardom role that has been adopted by the Secretary of State.

The first pillar in the Government's case is arbitration. The Secretary of State's position is set out in *Hansard*, on 24 October last year. He said:

"Management cannot hand over the control of pay of large groups of people to third parties when it also has a responsibility to spend its money on the provision of patient service."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 666.]

I hope that everyone grasped the phrase.

"cannot hand over the control . . . of large groups".

The ambulance men and women number about 22,000 out of 1 million people in the National Health Service—just over 2 per cent. of the total staff involved. They could not be defined, even by an idiot, as a very large group.

There are large groups, including the 100,000 doctors and the 490,000 nurses. Those are, by any definiton, very large groups. Their pay is not worked out by arbitration, but it is something near it, because there are pay review mechanisms that remove any possibility of industrial dispute.

I say to the Secretary of State, who is not here, that the job of management is to consider all the elements that make up an organisation's activity. They must consider its revenue, materials, equipment, fixed capital formation in hospitals, human capital and, last but by no means least, staff motivation, commitment and morale. Those are the elements that go to make a challenge to management.

There is now a distinct failure of management. For six months, they have failed to resolve a dispute that could easily be resolved by recourse to arbitration. To listen to the Secretary of State, one would think that arbitration was a completely new invention that had never been tried before and might lead to chaos and disaster.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman may care to reflect on the Secretary of State's previous role as an Under-Secretary of State for Transport. Every time the railway unions sought an increase, he constantly said, "Go to the Railway Staff National Tribunal"—the arbitration organisation.

Mr. Sillars: Yes, that is the point I am making: there is nothing new about arbitration. It is a well-tried system employed to break down conflict and disputes or to resolve a dispute when that would be extremely difficult under normal circumstances.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am following carefully what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Can he give some examples of arbitration used anywhere else in the Health Service instead of the Whitley council arrangements?

Mr. Sillars: I have heard and read this argument before, and it is not relevant. Once upon a time, in every industry and undertaking, there must have been a first time when arbitration was invoked—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is a logical proposition that no one could confound.

I have personal experience of arbitration; I have served as a member of an arbitration panel which tried to solve a dispute between teachers and management in local government in the mid-1970s. Arbitration is not the handing over of management control to the arbiters. Arbitration does not take place in a vacuum. No one ignores the realities facing the management and the trade unions.

An arbitration panel is a tripartite body. The chairman is neutral; there is a nominee from the employers' side and another from the trade union side. They assess the award against the realities.

I was the trade union nominee on an arbitration panel, and it sat in private. No one on it could get away with loose intellectual or economic arguments, or with stupid social arguments, no matter which side he represented. There was genuine concern on the part of the whole tribunal, and that applied to every arbitration that I have ever experienced——

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sillars: No.

These panels tried to reach certain objectives. One was to resolve the dispute fairly; the second was to leave the structure of management-trade union relations intact; the third was to injure neither party. Arbitration is a civilised way of resolving disputes. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was right: it is ironic that the Government urge arbitration on a group of workers whose claim they do not like, but deny arbitration to another group whose claims they like in no circumstances——

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Sillars: I shall not give way. I do not want to upset the hon. Gentleman; he will get in later, but he has to wait his turn.

The Select Committee examined arbitration. As I said before, somewhere along the line there must be a first time for arbitration. In the debate on 11 January this year, the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said:

"Last March, the Select Committee recommended that 'the Government take the initiative in getting discussions started between the Management and Staff sides with the purpose of developing a mutually agreed arbitration procedure. We suggest that arbitration should be a last resort and that a strict timetable should be established and adhered to for issues referred to arbitration'."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 1133.]

The Select Committee foresaw difficulties of this kind, and put the idea forward. What a pity it was not accepted.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has some knowledge of arbitration, but he is not the only Member with knowledge of it. These are complex and intricate matters. Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House from experience how Whitley works, and what impact arbitration for one group of workers would have on the standing of Whitley and on the Health Service?

Mr. Sillars: One of the great problems of Whitley was beautifully summed up by Lord McCarthy, who said that it was made up of

"employers who do not pay and paymasters who do not employ."

I look forward to the day when I can stand here and claim to have piloted Concorde; I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) would get up and claim that he had done the same——

Mr. Walker: I have.

Mr. Sillars: I make no such claim.

I now come to the second pillar of the Government's case—that no more cash can be offered because none is available, and that if it is made available it can only come out of patient care. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has said several times that the cost of prolonging the dispute is twice as much as it would have taken to settle it. No Conservative Member, and especially not the Secretary of State for Health, has answered the question posed by the hon. Member for Livingston about how the Secretary of State can find money to prolong a dispute when he denies his ability to find money to settle it.

There are other costs. It is said that the money must be taken from patient care, but there are other costs not inside the Health Service that are important to the community. What about police time? According to a parliamentary answer, the police in Scotland have turned out to 6,700 cases. Some 166,060 police man hours in England have been devoted to trying to tackle the problem in the ambulance service. What about the loss of police manpower in a society in which people are concerned about crime and security? Of course the loss is unquantifiable, but the citizen is entitled to ask why police are being sent to try to do the work of the ambulance staff when the work that they should be doing is securing the position of people in society.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the quality of service given by the police, the Army, the Navy and the Royal Air Force in undertaking emergency duties that should be carried out by the ambulance service? That service is of a low standard simply because the people in those services are untrained and inexperienced in carrying it out. They are not qualified to do it, they do not want to do it and they should not have to do it. The issue could be resolved if the Government stopped being so awkward and understood the desire of the ambulance workers to carry out the service that they have been trained for and should be paid to do.

Mr. Sillars: I do not think that I have met anyone in the police who would argue for a moment that the police provide exactly the same standard of service. There is no question of that.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Police Federation of England and Wales supports the claim of the ambulance men?

Mr. Sillars: I am aware of that. I am a former fireman, and all the firemen that I know take exactly the same position.

Pillars three and four of the Government's case are intertwined. They are a no-pay-review formula, linked to the assertion that, while ambulance crews are part of an emergency service, they are somehow or other, in the Secretary of State's eyes, of a lower status. Last year, the Secretary of State said:

"I do not accept that comparisons can be made with other emergency services, when only one tenth of the mileage of the ambulance service is taken up by emergencies."—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. 855.]

That is deeply insulting to ambulance crews.

I hope that that gibe was not aimed at the crew in Lockerbie, which turned out within three minutes of the call about that disaster. If we went to Lockerbie ambulance station and looked at the log book, we could probably prove that only one tenth of the mileage was for emergency services, but that is not the relevant point. The relevant point is that, when the emergency arose, the ambulance men had the commitment to fulfil their obligations to the community.

The Secretary of State's point of view shows a total incomprehension of how all our emergency services operate and the demands that they make upon the psychology, the physical condition, the bravery and the commitment of those engaged in them.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Sillars: No. I have given way fairly generously.

I should like to compare the police, the fire service and the ambulance service. Some police officers undertake duties such as school crossing patrols. Those duties are important, but they do not constitute an emergency. Crime prevention is important, but it is not an immediate emergency. We can only guess at what special branch does, but I do not think that it engages in emergencies. The police have duties in community involvement and desk duties, and much time is taken up in court attendance. Those are all non-emergency activities, but no one would argue for a moment that the police are not an emergency service, because, when required, police officers have the ability to turn out.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Sillars: No. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is not getting in.

I am a former fireman, and my brother recently retired as a fire officer. Over the years, I have kept in touch with my mates in the fire service. They are involved in non-emergency work such as equipment cleaning, maintenance and repairs. Fire prevention staff rarely turn out in emergencies, and the service also uses part-time and retained firemen in various parts of the country who, by their very definition, do not work mainly in the fire service. Nevertheless, they turn out for emergencies. Lockerbie has a part-time fire station, yet it turned out within six minutes the first appliance to attend the disaster there. In the case of the police and fire services, it is not necessary to prove that their staff are always engaged in emergency turnouts.

Ambulance staff are in exactly the same position. They undertake a great deal of routine work, but when there is a Clapham, a King's Cross, a Lockerbie or a Hillsborough, ambulance staff or whatever grade turn out to provide emergency services—and they all bring professionalism, skills, commitment and will power to the job in hand.

From my own experience as someone who has served in the fire brigade, I can tell the House that a great deal is required of men and women who respond to emergency

calls. They are expected to go from dead stop to full ahead. One's heart is pounding and one's nerves are jangling, because one knows that one is about to encounter an horrific or potentially horrific situation. The police might find themselves confronted by an armed criminal. Firemen are expected to enter buildings full of flame and smoke from which other people are escaping. Ambulance staff must suppress the nausea they feel when dealing with injuries and burns that are horrible to contemplate and even worse to treat.

My brother, a former fire officer, made a very good point to me over the weekend. He pointed out that firemen save lives in the sense that they take people out of burning buildings and other difficult situations, but that their work is only potentially life-saving. If a life is saved, it is saved by the ambulance staff who take over and use the skills that firemen do not have, from the moment the firemen hand over a burned or devastated human being into the caring hands of the ambulance service.

The three services all have different characters, but they integrate in an emergency. When the Secretary of State says in a sarcastic voice that ambulance staff do not compare with firemen, we should remember that firemen acknowledge that ambulance crews turn out for more emergencies than they do. Also, every time that an ambulance crew is called out, it has to deal with a human being—which is not always the case in the fire service.

I turn to the fifth pillar—the Secretary of State's accusation about the morality of the dispute. In the debate on 11 January, he said:

"the industrial action organised and taken by the trade unions concerned is against patients and patient services, and it cannot be justified—as industrial action in any essential service cannot be justified."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1990; Vol. 164, c.1115.]

That is not a moral statement—it is moral blackmail. We as a society have no right to tell people that, because we need them, they must meet our demands, irrespective of the costs to themselves and to their families.

If one were to try to lift the Secretary of State's views out of the depths of moral blackmail and on to a plane of genuine morality, the wording of that statement would instead read, "As industrial action in any essential service cannot be justified, we have special review mechanisms to ensure that our emergency services are never taken advantage of."

If there is a moral equation between society and the emergency services, as in every other decent equation, morally there are two sides—there are rights on the public side but the public also have obligations to the people who serve them. The words that I read out are the moral equation; they are applied to the police and the fire service and they should be applied to ambulance staff.

Now I come to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). He said that the Secretary of State had a personal responsibility to intervene. Hon. Members may have seen him on the Channel 4 programme. I thought at first that he was at a Nottingham Forest game, tossing the coin, but it turned out to be a commentary by him on the dispute. There is no question of his being a key player. He said on that programme that he is the man who provides the money, and how could he respond to ambulance staff demands? He has produced and presented radio programmes, and produced and presented the Channel 4 programme. I turned on the television set, and there he was in a helicopter above the north of England. The public want him to come down out of the air, and get to the negotiating chamber along with the trade unions.

Finally, there are the changed circumstances that I mentioned earlier—the Government's electoral prospects. My remarks bypass Conservative Members on the Front Bench, and are intended for Tory Back Benchers—an extremely anxious Conservative Party at present. The more that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) shakes his head, the more convinced I am about the accuracy of my statement.

I shall quote from *Scotland on Sunday*, published yesterday, 18 February. Under the headline "Thatcher set to ride out stormy spell", the article quotes a "Downing Street source"—there are no guesses or prizes for who that might be—who

"disclosed yesterday that Thatcher was reconciled to electoral setbacks as an inevitable consequence of mounting mortgage rates and high poll tax charges in England"—

she is in the same boat in Scotland—

"'The Prime Minister knows that the path of true love is never smooth'".

It must come as a great surprise to all members of the public, racked by inflation, mortgage interest payments and high rents, that they are embraced in a passionate love affair with the Prime Minister, or that they are at least being propositioned by her.

"'Of course it's all very painful. But it's painful because it's working'".

Has it never struck the Tory Party that it is painful and that it is not working?

If this is Bernard Ingham speaking he must be losing his marbles completely, because the article continues:

"Medicine that works is always painful."

That has never been my experience; it is sometimes true, but often it is not.

"But this attitude is certain to deepen despair among back-benchers who fear a bitter backlash in the Tory heartlands."

The article goes on to comment on the mid-Staffordshire by-election and the local government elections in England, Wales and Scotland.

The quotation within a quotation from *Scotland on Sunday* demonstrates that the Tory Party's leader is now deep in the bunker, obsessed with a bunker mentality—a leader denying reality. She appears to have drawn into the bunker with her the Secretary of State for Health. Like first world war generals, they are driving their troops in front of them into the electoral slaughterhouse.

Does anyone think that it will be pleasant to be a Tory canvasser on the streets for the Mid-Staffordshire election or the local government elections in England, Wales and Scotland? Let us consider those elections. The Government must attend to this problem, because their vested interests are involved. Do they want to go canvassing on the poll tax, water charges, the current level of inflation, current interest rates or current mortgages and rents, or on the difficult Budget that we are all told is coming, or with the National Health Service Bill still in Committee, agitating the general population?

The Government cannot avoid campaigning on any of those issues. Do they really want to add to that poisonous cocktail their continuing dispute with the ambulance staff? Do their canvassers in the Mid-Staffordshire by-election campaign want to go down the pavements bumping into people who have just put money in the buckets of the ambulance staff, and asking them to vote Tory? It is absurd.

[Mr. Sillars]

Any professional politician who wants to be in that position is in the bunker with the lady in Downing street—on the point of being medically unfit for leadership. The only conclusion that a Tory can draw from the present state of affairs—in his own interests, if not in the interests of the ambulance staff—is that he should seek to get genuine negotiations reopened to end the dispute. Tory Back Benchers can save themselves only by saving themselves from the folly of those on their own Front Bench.

4.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises the important contribution made by the skilled and dedicated service of ambulance staff; regrets that some have seen fit to prolong and intensify the action taken against patients in furtherance of the current pay dispute; appreciates the work of the police, the armed forces and the voluntary services in maintaining an adequate emergency service; supports the Government and National Health Service management on their handling of the dispute; calls on the trade union leaders to ensure that the undertakings they have given to maintain an adequate emergency service are met; believes that the dispute can only be resolved by the resumption of negotiations; and calls on the trade union leadership to recognise and act upon this.".

Let me begin by saying to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) in respect of his latter remarks that, judging by the opinion polls in Scotland, we should not be taking any advice from him about how to maintain our position. After all, his party is sliding gracefully into third place behind the Scottish Conservative party.

When we face the electorate, we shall expect to be judged on our record of good management of the Health Service, which can be seen partly in the record number of patients being treated in Scotland. Our record of good management of the Health Service arises from the fact that this Government have always sought to do what is right by the Health Service—which is not, perhaps, to take the advice of Opposition Members.

No party represented in the House has a monopoly on admiration for the work of the ambulance service, and no party can claim that it alone supports the ambulance service and its workers. The Government support the ambulance workers and recognise their skill and dedication. It is interesting to note that, in a long speech, the hon. Member for Govan never once referred to the patient transport services arm of the ambulance service, but instead addressed all his remarks to the emergency services. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the trade unions' claim is for recognition across the board for all sections of the ambulance service on an equal basis.

Having acknowledged the marvellous job done by the ambulance service, I must add that it is unfortunate that there should be industrial action in pursuit of a pay claim within that service, because there is no doubt that it is causing substantial disruption to the service and serious damage to patient care. The elderly are not being taken to their day centres. People are not getting to hospital for their courses of physiotherapy treatment, and waiting lists are being lengthened at a time when the Government are investing £7 million in reducing waiting lists in Scotland. Once again, the Opposition support those who take industrial action resulting in waiting lists being lengthened and in patient care being disrupted.

The admiration that we have for the ambulance service is perhaps reflected among those staff, of whom there are many thousands, who have continued to provide a full service and to carry out their duties, thus putting patients first. I should have thought that all Opposition Members would acknowledge and welcome their actions.

I want to put on record the strain placed on senior management and on officers working to maintain essential services. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) should be shaking his head, because some people in the ambulance service have worked extremely hard to ensure that the 999 service has continued.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Minister will be aware that, two weekends ago, three people died in Dundee who might have been saved if ambulance workers had been able to attend them. However, the management locked out the ambulance workers and denied them access to life-saving equipment.

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman wants to refer to examples in Dundee, I am sure that he saw the same BBC programme as I did, in which an ambulance man confessed that he had put attendance at a union meeting before answering an emergency call. To his credit, he has apologised. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the dispute will be settled by engaging in that kind of argument, I have to disagree with him. There is a clear duty on the ambulance service management to ensure that the Scottish ambulance service procedures are followed. Management have made it perfectly clear that, when those procedures are followed, they will do everything in their power to ensure that the service continues.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I intervene only because the Minister referred to me earlier. He has referred to the senior management in the Scottish ambulance service. Does he not believe that morale in the ambulance service will be affected by Mr. James Wilby questioning the integrity of the people with whom he will have to work in future?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that his name is John, not James, Wilby. I believe that he is just as inaccurate in suggesting that Mr. Wilby has questioned the integrity of his staff. I know John Wilby, and his dedication to the ambulance service. He has spent most of his career in the service. It does not help to attack him in that way.

Senior management and officers have worked extremely hard to maintain essential services. If only for the benefit of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), I want to place on record my thanks to the police, the voluntary services and the Army, who have had to step in when patients have been put at risk. They have done so because there has been no alternative, despite the fact that a clear undertaking had been given by trade union leaders that the emergency service would be maintained. That undertaking has not been met in a number of instances.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A very dear friend of mine had to be taken to hospital by the police because no ambulance was available. When I was at the West Kensington tube station the other day, some

ambulance men were collecting money from the public in buckets. An ambulance came along. I thought that it was going about its normal duties, but it just picked up the ambulance men, complete with cash buckets—presumably to take them to their next cash collection point.

Mr. Forsyth: The House will have heard what my hon. Friend said. It is to be regretted that, despite the clear undertaking by trade union leaders that the emergency service would be maintained, that has not happened in a number of cases.

Mr. Corbyn Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I noted that, over the weekend, the hon. Member for Govan was quoted in the newspapers as describing the tactics that are being pursued as "brilliant and exemplary". If he thinks that there is anything brilliant or exemplary about Edinburgh being left with only two ambulances to cover the whole city, I could not disagree with him more. He has a responsibility to ask those men, who are not even following the advice of their trade union leaders, to ensure that a proper service is maintained.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that, all over the country, ambulance managements are standing down ambulance workers who are ready, able and willing to provide an emergency service, that they are asking the poice or the armed forces to deal with emergency cases instead, and that those who are sent in to carry out emergency work do not want to do it, are not qualified to do it and, furthermore, are not equipped to do it? Those whom they blame for having to do that work are the Conservative party and the Government. If he is genuine, why does the Minister not demonstrate his support for the ambulance workers by meeting the unions and coming to an agreement, so that a proper emergency service can be restored?

Mr. Forsyth: If the men in the Scottish ambulance service are prepared to work to the TUC guidelines and to provide an emergency service, they will be paid 100 per cent. on the emergency side. On the patient transport side, if the TUC guidelines are followed and if the ambulance men are prepared to take elderly people to their day hospitals, they will also be paid 100 per cent. There is absolutely no need for local authorities to set up alternative services at a cost to the community charge payer, and there is every opportunity for an emergency service to be maintained within TUC guidelines if that is what the trade unions wish to deliver. The public are entitled to that.

Mr. Sillars: Does not the Minister realise that, when a dispute involving an important public service continues for six months, there is at the heart of it a great struggle between the Government and the ambulance workers for public support, as that is a key element in any such dispute? Have not the public themselves passed judgment that the ambulance unions have conducted a brilliant campaign strategically and tactically, in that they have never withdrawn their services from the general public, who believe that, far from being brilliant, the Government's performance has been lamentable?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that every person in Glasgow will note that the hon. Member for Govan is completely unaware that a 999 service was withdrawn from his own constituency, and that he has described that as "brilliant and exemplary".

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman cares to respond to the point just made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)—that the public support the ambulance workers and have made that very clear for six months?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady will have heard me say that the Government also support the ambulance workers. We support them for the service that they provide. But if we were to take the advice of the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Govan, which seems to be the same, and if we were to allow some procedure for determining pay such as the hon. Gentleman suggests, pay in the Health Service would press upon resources and the hon. Lady would find that the public in her constituency would complain about the loss of the development of services in the Health Service.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I should like to make some progress. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

For the benefit of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), perhaps we should go back to 1986, as it is important to recognise the importance to the dispute of what has happened since then. Back in 1986, a new salary structure was agreed for the ambulance service, which included revised working practices and improved conditions. It was acknowledged by everyone on all sides that that represented a good deal for the ambulance service.

I have examined what had happened to prices and to wages in the ambulance service since that good deal was obtained. I discovered that prices to April 1989 have gone up by 23 per cent. and the pay of ambulance men, including the current offer which applies from April 1989, has gone up by 31 per cent. So there has been a real increase in ambulance men's pay of 8 per cent. over the 1986 settlement, which every ambulance man to whom I have spoken has acknowledged as a good settlement; they are on record as saying that it was a good deal.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The Minister is talking about the increase in ambulance men's pay since 1986, but he should compare it with that of firemen and policemen over the same period. Firemen's pay has gone from a 7·3 per cent. increase in 1986 to one of 8·6 per cent. for the current financial year; policemen's pay has gone from a 7·5 per cent. increase to 9·25 per cent. for the current financial year, and ambulance men's pay has gone from an increase of 6 per cent. to the current offer of between 6·5 per cent. and 9 per cent. over the past 18 months; but in the intervening two years, their pay increase dropped to between 5 and 6 per cent. They have consistently lost in comparison to other emergency services.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is not an emergency service: it is the emergency arm of the NHS, not the NHS arm of the emergency services. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Forsyth: Perhaps I can answer the hon. Gentleman's point, as I did not hear what my hon. Friend said.

[Mr. Forsyth]

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), is arguing a separate point. My point is that, in 1986, the ambulance service was completely restructured in terms of pay and conditions, and the ambulance men acknowledged that as a good deal. When we compare their position in 1986 to what it is now, we see that ambulance men's pay has increased 8 per cent. faster than prices. In real terms, their pay is better than it was in 1986.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye asked me to make a comparison between ambulance men, fifth-year firefighters and other groups. I must be fair and say that the hon. Gentleman was right to say that, in terms of a comparison with firemen, the pay of ambulance men has not risen by as much, but in terms of the 1986 settlement, their pay has risen well ahead of inflation.

The management's final offer to the ambulance men is fair and reasonable. I am not sure whether everyone is aware of the nature of that offer, but I am certain that the hon. Member for Govan, judging by his speech, is completely unaware of it. I know that the hon. Member for Govan is aware that the offer is a 9 per cent. increase in pay, backdated to 1 April 1989.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): It is over 18 months. Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later. I have already been very generous in giving way.

The nature of the offer is a 9 per cent. increase on all rates, backdated to 1 April last year. That is 9 per cent. over the current year, and that would run until the end of September this year. On 1 October, there will be an opportunity to negotiate a further increase. In addition to that, there is an extra £500 for all staff with paramedical skills.

Mr. Sillars: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself until I have explained the offer——

Mr. Sillars: There are only eight people in Scotland with paramedical skills.

Mr. Forsyth: There is an extra £500 for staff with paramedical skills. I acknowledge that the number of people in Scotland with those skills is small.

Mr. Sillars: Small? There are only eight.

Mr. Forsyth: Actually, there are 24.

Mr. Sillars: Only eight.

Mr. Forsyth: No, 24.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Anyway, there are not very many.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Govan did not mention the most important part of the offer. There is an offer of a joint review of the 1986 salary structure, without the preconditions on the scope or timing of the outcome. The offer provides the ambulance men with an opportunity to accept a 9 per cent. pay rise—and the small number, admittedly, with paramedical skills would receive the extra £500—and the opportunity in October to get a further increase. They would also be able to consider the 1986 arrangement and the work carried out by the emergency services and the patient transport services. All that could be done without preconditions. The ambulance men have the opportunity to accept a good pay increase and have negotiations at the same time. That is a fair and generous offer.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister aware that the Government have tried to confuse the public? Will he tell the House and the listening public what the nature of the offer is over 12 months from April?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman did not really mean to ask me that. The nature of the offer over 12 months from 1 April 1989 is an increase of 9 per cent. That is a pretty reasonable offer.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman wanted to know the nature of the offer from 1 April.

Mr. McLeish: The offer is over 18 months. What does that offer equate to over 12 months? How much cash, in percentage terms, will the ambulance men and women receive in the 12-month period from April to April, not over the 18 months?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) is an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman responsible, I believe, for industry, but he does not understand the nature of this offer. I will tell him again.

Over the 12 months from 1 April 1989 until 31 March 1990, the ambulance men will get a 9 per cent. pay increase that will be backdated to that date. Therefore, they will get a lump sum back payment. I hope that that is clear to the hon. Gentleman. From 1 April of this year until 30 September will also be 9 per cent., in so far as that 9 per cent. offer will extend over 18 months. On 1 October there will be an opportunity for a new arrangement to be reached.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), characteristically, understands that point only too well.

Mr. Skinner: Obviously, there is a gap between April and October, and that is the part that must be filled. We have 9 per cent. over 12 months and we have a gap of another six months. That makes 18 months. We have 9 per cent. They are paid over 18 months. That is roughly equivalent to 6·5 per cent. over 12 months.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman disappoints me. He will know that the original offer was 6·5 per cent. That offer was recommended to the ambulance men by their trade union negotiators.

Mr. Corbyn: They rejected it.

Mr. Forsyth: They rejected it. The trade union leaders believed that an offer of 6·5 per cent, was fair, and they recommended it to their members, but their members rejected it. Management, being reasonable and flexible, offered 9 per cent. over 12 months. The offer that is being made now is 9 per cent. until 30 September this year, with the opportunity then to discuss arrangements for the remainder of that year and also to review the structure of the 1986 settlement.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Three times the Minister has said—I have been counting—that the offer is 9 per cent. over 12 months. It is important that we know whether the Minister is developing the Government's offer. I do not believe that I give away any secrets about this, but the Ministery will probably be aware that, the last time staff and management met Duncan Nichol before Christmas, it was made plain to Duncan Nichol that, if the offer was made at 9 per cent. for 12 months, the staff side could settle.

The Minister must be quite clear with the words that he is using. If he is prepared to say that it is a 9 per cent. offer over 12 months, this debate will have fulfilled a useful function and we can resolve the dispute this evening. The Minister must be quite honest and clear. Is that what he is saying? If he is not saying that, he should not mislead the House by using the very form of words that the staff side said that they would be willing to settle for.

Mr. Forsyth: The role that I am performing is educating the hon. Gentleman's colleagues about the nature of the increase in wages that ambulance men would enjoy in the period from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990, which would be a 9 per cent. increase. It is certainly true that the 9 per cent. that was offered is over an 18-month period, and it is certainly true that, having had their 9 per cent. increase, that would hold good until 30 September, when there would be an opportunity for further discussion about any increases subsequent to that.

It is quite wrong for the hon. Member for Bolsover to imply that this is some kind of confidence trick. If it is a confidence trick, it is an expensive one, because it involved finding £6 million of new money to fund it. That is a very real movement on the part of management.

Mr. Sillars: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I shall not give way. I must make some progress.

The improved offer that was made by management, which cost £6 million in 1989-90, was not even discussed by the main trade unions involved, but was rejected out of hand. The Government's position is that this dispute can be settled by negotiation and discussion. Management made an improved generous offer, which cost an extra £6 million, and it was not even discussed by the unions involved. Instead, they have persisted in taking industrial action that has caused untold misery to many elderly and sick people.

The hon. Member for Govan asked about the cost of the dispute. He asked how we can find the money to pay for the police, the Army and the voluntary services that are continuing to provide a service to the patient. The answer is simple: we have an obligation to try to maintain the emergency service, and that is what management have set out to do.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that simply allowing one group of workers in the Health Service to leapfrog the established arrangements for determining pay and conditions would incur no cost. I could not disagree with him more. Our package is fair and reasonable. It gives a 9 per cent. increase for the current year and offers scope for further discussion, and the trade unions should resume negotiations first.

The hon. Gentleman told us of his experience as a fireman and said that lives were saved by ambulance staff. He is right: lives often are saved by ambulance staff; but they are saved also by doctors, nurses, technicians and many thousands of other dedicated people in the Health Service. All those groups have long since settled. Administrative and clerical staff settled for 6·25 per cent. from 1 April 1989, and ancillary staff settled for 6·5 per cent. from April 1989. Fewer than 1 per cent. of NHS employees have yet to settle. The bulk of them—dedicated professional people—have taken 6·5 per cent., which was the original offer recommended by the trade unions to the ambulance men.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The Minister said that the difficulty was that any increased costs as a result of the increase in pay for ambulance personnel would have to come out of services, and that therefore other people within the Health Service would suffer. Is he saying that the cost of providing the police, for example, will come out of existing police budgets, that police budgets will have to suffer, and that those who depend on the police will suffer? Is he saying that the Government are providing new money to pay for the dispute and to pay for the police and other people involved? If that is what he is saying, is he not admitting that he is prepared to put dogma before the personal safety of patients, by finding extra money that could be paid to the ambulance personnel and get the dispute settled?

Mr. Forsyth: I take that as a plea by the hon. Gentleman that community charge payers in his constituency should meet the cost of the dispute. If the costs of the police were not to be met centrally by Government, they would be yet another charge on the community charge payer. I do not think that it would be right to expect the community charge payer to meet the costs of policing. Of course, Labour-controlled councils that are setting up alternative ambulance services will do so at the cost of the community charge payer.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) will remember that the previous Labour Government got into a mess over pay in the Health Service. That is why they had to cut the hospital building programme by one quarter. That is why they ended up cutting nurses' pay by one quarter in real terms. Inflation got out of hand. Because this Government have ensured good management within the Health Service, we have seen a development of the Service, more patients being treated and new services being provided—as in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency, where cardiac services have been expanded, which he has welcomed.

When the bulk of the dedicated staff in the National Health Service have settled for 6·5 per cent., it cannot possibly be right to agree to make some provision for ambulance men that is outwith the normal methods of determining pay and conditions, simply because some of their members are prepared to put patient care at risk.

The hon. Member for Govan said that we should try to move towards arbitration. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) asked whether he could give an example of that tried and tested procedure inside the Health Service. He was unable to do so, because there is no agreed provision for arbitration within Whitley. If we were to say to the ambulance men, "You can have arbitration," what about the other groups in the Health Service? What about the other groups within Whitley? What is the point of having Whitley if every group can simply disagree and move to arbitration?

Mr. Sillars: Why not?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says, "Why not?" The Health Service has well over 1 million employees, and 150,000 in Scotland. There would be chaos if every pay discussion went to arbitration. The system for determining ambulance pay and conditions within Whitley, which the hon. Gentleman repudiates, was satisfactory for several years when the settlements reached what was proposed by the ambulance men themselves.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Under-Secretary not understand that the Whitley council provisions come from an age-old process that was established before we faced the tremendous difficulties of inflation that have persisted for 20 or 30 years? In my view, therefore, the whole Whitley council procedure should be rejigged to look at these matters——

Mr. Sillars: And the Select Committee on Social Services said so.

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that the whole House will be impressed by the strong statement made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North against nationally organised bargaining through councils such as the Whitley councils. I hope that it will not embarrass the hon. Gentleman if I make common cause with him in a few moments.

Management must be responsible for pay. Pay in the National Health Service cannot be a matter for Government to determine, especially when 70 per cent. of its costs relate to pay. Management must determine the balance between service development and the amount that it can put forward for improving wages and salaries.

We are determined that there should be a better ambulance service in the future. We want to see more staff with paramedic skills. The hon. Member for Govan made great play of the fact that there are only 24 in Scotland. I should like to see a lot more—and our pay offer reflects that. It encourages people to acquire such skills. Although I approved a programme for increasing the numbers last November, it is now being held up by the dispute. We want the dispute to be resolved so that we can get on with establishing a service that has more paramedics.

We have increased spending on the Scottish ambulance service by 40 per cent. in real terms—that is even more than the amount by which we have increased expenditure on the Health Service overall, which has increased by one third.

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I have been very generous to the hon. Gentleman already—

Mr. Sillars: Will the Minister give way on this point?

Mr. Forsyth: Very well, I give way again to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sillars: I thank the Minister for giving way. On Friday evening, I met a constituent who is a qualified ambulance man. On 16 August 1988, he received a letter congratulating him on his interest in undertaking extended training to become a paramedic. He then received a letter in February 1989, telling him how well he had done and that he had passed the pre-test examination. Then he got a letter on 3 July 1989, telling him:

"Unfortunately, at the very last minute, our Professional Advisory Group have come into conflict with the Scottish Home and Health Department."

My constituent wants to become what is known as a paramedic, but cannot because of the Minister's Department. That is why we have only eight paramedics in Scotland.

Mr. Forsyth: I do not recall receiving any correspondence from the hon. Gentleman about that case. If it goes back to July 1989, he has taken a long time to raise the matter—

Mr. Sillars: I met the gentleman concerned on Friday.

Mr. Forsyth: If the gentleman came to see the hon. Gentleman on Friday and the correspondence goes back to July 1989, as I have just said, the fact remains that, in November last year, we decided to increase the training of paramedical staff, and that is now being held up. The hon. Gentleman is simply scoring points, when the real issue is whether there are opportunities for people to acquire paramedical skills. There are such opportunities, but they are being held up by the dispute, and the hon. Gentleman is not really helping to resolve it.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I shall give way once more.

Mr. Turner: When will the Minister get round to telling us the cost of the dispute? The general public want to judge the Government on whether they have handled the dispute well or badly, as a result of the costs that the Government have incurred by continuing the dispute rather than settling it. Will the Minister please tell us the cost and set that against the pay increase that has been sought by the ambulance men?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman had been here from the beginning of the debate, he might be more enlightened. He asks me about the cost of the dispute, but the cost is not measured only in money; it is measured in all those elderly people who are not getting to their day centres or to their out-patient appointments, and in increased waiting lists. If the hon. Gentleman had been here to listen to the debate from the beginning, he would know that there is the opportunity for the ambulance men to get a 9 per cent. increase in pay and for discussions on the future of the service to continue.

The point that I was seeking to convey when the hon. Gentleman intervened was that the management must be in a position to work out the balance between pay and service developments. If I can speak for the Scottish ambulance service—I am amazed that a Scottish nationalist Member should complain that the Secretary of State for Scotland should have responsibility for replying to the debate——

Mr. Sillars: Where is he?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman should know that I speak for and on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend has responsibility for the ambulance service in Scotland. I thought it amazing that the hon. Member for Govan should complain about that and suggest that it should be the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, whose responsibilities are south of the border. That is an unworthy complaint.

I turn now to developments in the Scottish ambulance service, because I take it that the hon. Gentleman is interested in such developments in Scotland——

Mr. Sillars: And in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forsyth: We plan to spend £6 million on a new radio communications system and £4·7 million on eight new communications centres. We are planning the computerisation of the ambulance service and are currently carrying out trials and pilot studies on the use of helicopters in Scotland. We are also planning a reduction in single manning.

Those developments are possible only if the management can judge what proportion of the resources should go into service development and what proportion into pay. If we were to listen to the hon. Member for Govan, all the resources would go on pay and there would be no service development. The first people to suffer would be the constituents of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and other people in rural areas, who will be the very ones to benefit from developments on single manning and from the use of helicopters to improve the emergency service.

Management must be able to judge the balance between pay and such developments. It would be wrong for Ministers to second-guess them or to force them to take decisions that are not in line with their view of the development of the service.

Mr. Turner: What about the cost of the police and the Army?

Mr. Forsyth: From a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) is asking me about the police and the Army, and the hon. Member for Govan has already asked about parity for the ambulance service with the police and fire services. I advise the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that I do not recall the last Labour Government arguing the case for parity between the ambulance service and the police and fire services. I recall them setting up the Clegg commission, and I seem to remember that the Clegg commission rejected parity on the grounds that accident and emergency work was only a small proportion of the duties of ambulance staff. I must tell the hon. Member for Govan that the ambulance service is the emergency arm of the Health Service; it is not the health arm of the emergency service—the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) made earlier from a sedentary position.

It is right to say that the accident and emergency service accounts for only 10 per cent. of the journeys carried out by the ambulance service. Nothing has changed in the past 10 years to alter the arguments that were considered by the Clegg commission or the decision that was taken by the last Labour Government.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend reconsider what he has said about Clegg, and note that, when the Clegg commission investigated this matter, it did so at the fag end of the inquiry, and that no substantial evidence was brought to bear? There were anecdotal remarks by the management on that occasion, but neither side in the dispute has subsequently provided any statistical evidence to show how much time is spent on emergencies and how much is spent on routine matters.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend has been helpful in telling the House his view of what Clegg said. However, that does not alter the facts of the matter, the position of the previous Labour Government or the fact that, subsequent to Clegg, in 1986, when there was a reorganisation of the position of ambulance men, that argument was not deployed or found to be significant.

Mr. Robin Cook: Perhaps I could help the Minister to refresh his memory of exactly what Clegg said on the matter. His comment on whether ambulance staff spent more of their time on emergency services is in paragraph 32 of the report. He said:

"The employers also made clear to us their view that there was a distinction to be drawn between ambulancemen involved in emergency work (which occupied, in their view, only 10 per cent. of all activity) and the ambulancemen involved in the routine movements of patients."

Is it not crystal clear from that statement that Clegg carried out no investigation and made no study of how much time was spent on emergency work? When the management quote Clegg, they merely quote back the echo of their own evidence to Clegg, which has never been substantiated.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman's party was in power and gave the terms of reference. If it was his party's policy that the ambulance men should have parity with the firemen and police, it was open to it to give them parity when it was in Government. If the hon. Gentleman seriously argues that Clegg would not have recommended parity if he thought that there was a case for it, I must take issue with him.

It is not a claim but a matter of fact that 10 per cent. of journeys are for accident and emergency purposes.

Mr. Cook: It is not a fact.

Mr. Forsyth: It is a matter of fact. If the hon. Gentleman argues that small acknowledgements should be made of the accident and emergency service and its activities, the final offer made by management provides for that. It provides for a complete review. Instead of fanning the flames of the dispute, the hon. Gentleman should urge the trade unions to go back to the negotiating table and seize the opportunity to put their arguments.

Mr. Cook: The Minister has made an important and interesting statement. He has just said that it is a fact that one in 10 calls are emergency work. He must be aware that, when we have attempted to find evidence for that fact, we have been told in parliamentary answers that the information is not centrally available. He must also be aware that his colleague, the Secretary of State for Health, referred me to figures collected by York district health authority on behalf of the whole of England. Those figures show that, far from one in 10 calls being emergencies, the figure is one in five. Will the Minister please give us the evidence for the fact that he declaims?

Mr. Forsyth: I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*—setting out the basis on which the figures have been compounded. [HON. MEMBERS: "Tell us now."]. If the hon. Member for Livingston seriously challenges the position that about one in 10 of ambulance journeys are for emergency purposes, he will find himself at odds even with the ambulance men themselves. I do not know how many

[Mr. Forsyth]

ambulance men he has spoken to recently. I spend quite a lot of time speaking to them. They tend to be outside most of my meetings these days. The fact is not in dispute.

Even the hon. Gentleman must know that, in Scotland, the emergency service is organised on a separate basis for the non-emergency service in our urban areas. It is not a matter of great mystery how many patient journeys are emergency and how many non-emergency. If there is any variation in statistics, it is on the classification of journeys as either urgent or emergency journeys. The hon. Gentleman makes a non-point. If that is the best that he can do to undermine the Government's case that the trade unions should go back to the negotiating table, I look forward to his speech with interest.

I certainly believe that pay negotiations in future should allow—this is where I agree with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, who, alas, has now left the Chamber—for more local flexibility to cover recruitment, retention and local needs. The inflexible national pay bargaining process which exists in many parts of the Health Service is increasingly nonsense. The ambulance service is a clear case where local management must have more responsibility and discretion in the future.

We want a settlement of the current dispute. We want a better accident and emergency service, with more paramedical staff. We are interested in local productivity deals which will release resources for better pay. On the table now is a 9 per cent. increase in pay and the offer of talks without preconditions for the future. I urge the trade unions to take us at our word and to restore the service which the public are entitled to expect.

5.4 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): It is a sign of the desperation of the Minister's party in Scotland that he expressed satisfaction that it has managed to squeeze past the Scottish National party in the latest opinion poll by an amount which is the same as the margin of sampling error of the opinion poll. I warn the hon. Gentleman that it will take only another couple of speeches like the one that we have just heard to take his party back into third place.

It is extremely revealing that it took us so long during the Minister's speech to drag out of him the fact that the Government's current offer is in truth an offer of 9 per cent. over 18 months. If the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues really believe that that is a fair, decent and honest offer, why did he go to such lengths to pretend that it was not 9 per cent. over 18 months? Of course he knows the truth. That is why it was so difficult for him to utter the words "9 per cent. over 18 months". It is well below the rate at which any group outside the Health Service and many groups within the Health Service have settled.

It is entertaining that the Minister was caught out claiming as facts matters on which he did not have a brief. Let me amplify the point that I made to him in my intervention: during the previous debate on the ambulance service, the Secretary of State for Health referred me to the figures from York, claiming that one in 10 calls to the ambulance service were emergency calls. He went on helpfully to say that emergency calls in the Health Service are defined to include moving people who are seriously ill straight to hospital on the advice of a doctor.

I have consulted those figures. The figures collected in York show that the proportion of emergency patients as a proportion of all ambulance patients is 18·2 per cent. That is not one in 10, but almost one in five. The proportion of ambulance mileage spent on emergency calls is 28·6 per cent. of all ambulance calls. That is one in five of all patients and over one in four of ambulance miles. I ask again: where do the data come from to support the claim that one in 10 calls are to emergencies?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that my responsibilities extend only to north of the border. He asked me to justify the figure of 10 per cent. The figures are as follows: there were 156,770 accident and emergency journeys, 176,956 urgent journeys, and 1,664,020 passenger transport service journeys out of a total of 1,997,746. That substantiates my point that one in 10 journeys were for emergencies. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not feel that I have wasted the time of the House. Rather than go through the figures for all the health boards, perhaps he will be content if I write to him.

Mr. Cook: We shall be interested to see those figures. If the Government are sitting on such figures, I find it perplexing that they decline to answer questions on them.

I remind the Minister that we are debating a British dispute and a British motion. Even if the figures that he quoted are thrown in as the Scottish contribution to the United Kingdom figures collected by York, it is perfectly plain that one in five of all patients are carried in an emergency and over one in four of all ambulance miles are for emergency calls.

Even if the figure were one in 10—the statistics do not support that contention—that exceeds the proportion of time spent by the police on emergency calls. It is probably broadly comparable with the amount of time that the fire brigade spends on emergency calls. No one would dream of contesting the fact that the police and fire brigade are emergency services because they spend only 10 per cent. of their time on emergency calls. Why, then, should Conservative Members make it such a point of principle to deny that for ambulance staff?

What should cause most concern to the House, and undoubtedly will cause most concern and disappointment to the world outside, is that, during what was not a brief contribution to the debate, the Minister did not produce a single idea on how the stalemate would be broken. Not one new avenue of negotiation was opened up, not one new channel by which a second opinion might be taken. The only basis on which he held out the hope of settlement was if the staff side surrendered and accepted what has been on the table for the past three months. That was the Minister's sole contribution.

This is the sixth occasion when I have addressed the House on this issue. If, on the first occasion, at the end of November, I had been asked whether I would expect to address the House on the same matter at the end of February, I would have had difficulty crediting it. I still have difficulty in believing that even this Government have proved so stubborn, so dogmatic and so indifferent to public opinion that they have stonewalled the dispute for almost six months and not even met the staff side for more than two months.

My thoughts were unusually well expressed by the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), who, a fortnight ago in the London *Evening Standard*, was quoted as saying:

"That a settlement is not even remotely within sight is remarkable, that the two sides are not even talking is obscene."

Most of my hon. Friends and, I suspect, some Conservative Members would agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman can have him, if he likes.

Mr. Cook: I rather suspect that, instead of having the hon. Member for Harlow, we shall have his seat at the next general election.

Since that article, written only three weeks ago, three attempts have been made to bring the two sides together: by Church leaders, by an all-party group of Members of the other place and last week by the promptings of the chief ambulance officers—the very people whom Ministers keep telling us are the management of the ambulance service and should be allowed to get on with the process of negotiation themselves. Each of those three bids failed to bring about talks, because each time the management and the ministerial side refused to talk.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Does my hon. Friend agree that the great British public see this as the Government seeking to grind the ambulance workers into dust while they, by their generosity and widespread support for the ambulance workers' case, refuse to allow the Government to do so?

Mr. Cook: I will have comments to make about the degree of public support for the ambulance service later in my speech. It was notable that the Minister, although claiming to pay attention to opinion polls when they allowed the Tory party in Scotland to sneak into second place, ignored the opinion polls that related to the merits of the dispute.

My hon. Friend leads me to question why the public support the ambulance workers. We have all had opportunities to see ambulance staff at work, and over the past six months many of us have found ourselves in circumstances when we have witnessed their absence and the cost in human terms of that absence. It occurred to me a fortnight ago when I appeared on "Question Time". Ironically, shortly after we began discussing the ambulance dispute, a member of the audience took a severe heart attack and we had to interrupt the recording to accommodate the incident.

Hon. Members who have taken part in that programme will know that it is recorded in the Greenwood theatre, which is part of Guy's hospital. Although we were on the periphery of a major hospital complex, it was some time before a police ambulance arrived. When it did, it had no oxygen for the patient, who was breathless and in severe distress. The police had no training in resuscitation techniques—nor, to be fair to them, would it have been much value to them, because they had no resuscitation equipment. The only stretcher equipment that they had was an ambulance trolley, which was unsuitable for manoeuvring the patient up and down the steps. I am sorry to say that, when the patient reached Guy's hospital immediately round the corner, he was dead on arrival.

Many cases have involved a patient having to wait for much longer periods than usual. Only last week, there was an inquest into the death of an 86-year-old man who fell down the stairs at home and broke his pelvis and seven ribs in the fall. He waited eight hours before an Army ambulance came to collect him. His wife was quoted at the inquest as saying:

"The waiting was really awful, sitting there thinking every car coming by was going to be an ambulance."

I agree with the Minister that the public focus is caught by such cases. The public imagination is captured by emergency cases. I agree that those who depend on the non-emergency services are reminded of the dispute not just once in a while when they require emergency attention, but every week when they cannot attend their day hospital or get the treatment that they require. Many of their medical conditions will undoubtedly have deteriorated in the past six months, because there is no way that one can backdate physiotherapy treatments at the end of the dispute.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman gave the House a moving account of two incidents from his own experience. Will he join us in condemning those people who withdraw the 999 service and a service within TUC guidelines, and call upon all ambulance men to accept the advice which has been given and to maintain a 999 emergency service within TUC guidelines?

Mr. Cook: Every time I have been asked, I have condemned those few ambulance crews that have not operated within the TUC guidelines. On every occasion, my advice to ambulance staff has been to adhere to them. One of the main reasons why those guidelines are not being fulfilled by ambulance staff is that the management have put every possible impediment and difficulty in the way of the crews fulfilling those guidelines.

Ministers cannot avoid the fact that they have the responsibility that the dispute has continued for so long. Never once in those six months have Ministers sat down with the staff side to find a solution. No meeting, whether initiated by management or Ministers, has taken place within the past two months. Yet, while Ministers have been willing to tolerate the human cost, they have also been willing to shell out a large financial cost. That financial cost can be measured accurately, as human costs cannot.

The Secretary of State for Health and the Minister are given to advocating that we should seek to privatise parts of the ambulance service, on the basis that it would cost less. It is rather perverse that they have both prolonged the dispute by contracting the service out to the police, who cost more. The cost of the police and Army cover for the ambulance service certainly exceeds £20 million, and has probably cost about £25 million. That is not counting the £5 million paid to hill farmers in order to provide a statement so as to postpone the debate on the ambulance service three weeks ago.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that, on Friday, I received a written answer from the Secretary of State for Health which informed me that the London ambulance service did not yet know how much it had spent on military support, but that it had spent £7 million on additional support, of which £6·5 million went to the police up to the end of January?

Is my hon. Friend aware that the London public resent their money being spent against their interests? Furthermore, for the second time in two months, they resent the fact that the Secretary of State for Health is not here to speak for himself.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend quotes some helpful figures from London, which are part of the £25 million in my global total. To put my hon. Friend's figures in the best and most relevant perspective, it is necessary to look at how much is would cost to settle the dispute.

To meet the entire cost of the claim from the staff side would be £10 million only. That is equivalent to less than half the amount that the Government have been willing to pay the police and the Army to provide substitute services. I do not believe that it would even take £10 million to settle the dispute. If the Government met the unions halfway, they could get a settlement for £5 million—one fifth of what they have paid the police and the Army.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Surely the hon. Gentleman appreciates the implications for the National Health Service of giving in to such an industrial dispute. Why were the hon. Gentleman's arguments not pertinent to the Labour Government in 1978 during the fire service's dispute? The Labour Government, of which the hon. Gentlemen was a supporter, brought in the green goddess fire engines and actively fought that dispute.

Mr. Cook: I would not want the hon. Gentleman to overstate my support for the Labour Government on that occasion. For what it is worth, it was that dispute which resulted in the agreement, negotiated by my colleagues in the previous Labour Government, which has provided a pay mechanism in the fire brigade service and which has guaranteed 13 years of industrial peace. That is precisely why we find it incomprehensible that Conservative Members should resist the same deal for the ambulance staff.

Although I understand that the personal experience of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will not necessarily change how he will vote on this occasion, or persuade him to speak in a different way, I had hoped, given his personal debt to the ambulance service, that the least he could have done about the dispute was to stay silent.

Mr. Corbyn: I do not know whether my hon. Friend noticed, but when he was explaining that to settle the ambulance dispute would cost £10 million, the Minister shook his head vigorously. We know that the Minister does not want to settle that dispute, and that he would rather break it. Has my hon. Friend speculated on how much money the Government are prepared to spend to destroy the dispute rather than to settle it and return a proper ambulance service to the people?

Mr. Cook: I shall happily give way if Conservative Members want to tell us how deep those coffers are. It is interesting to note that the Government can always find enough contingency funds to raid when it suits their political prejudices.

It is, of course, no criticism of the policemen or the Army personnel who have provided the service in the past four months to say that the money that has gone on that substitute service has, inevitably, purchased an inferior one. The police and Army personnel do not have the training or the experience to be exposed to the difficult and stressful circumstances in which they now find themselves.

I note that, for once, the Government amendment recognises the skills and dedication of the ambulance staff. Although that does not persuade me to vote for their amendment, that recognition of those skills, albeit belated, is welcome. One of the most unpleasant parts of the Government's response to the dispute has been the way in which they have sought repeatedly to under-value the skill and competence of ambulance staff or the stressful circumstances in which those skills are used.

There has been much welcome talk of the skills of the paramedics. The Minister referred to those personnel, and was good enough to admit that the number of paramedics to whom he has offered the £500 is necessarily few. One of the main reasons why there are few paramedics is the pathetic provision made by the Government to provide the training necessary to acquire those paramedic skills.

The great majority of the 24 paramedics in Scotland mentioned—I should add the seven qualified in the London area—are people who have acquired their paramedical qualification in their own time because they were not allowed time off to train. It is a sign of their motivation that, despite the fact that they had to study in their own time, they have done so and qualified. Many more want to train, and there are now parts of Britain in which there is a six-year waiting list for training as a paramedic, so great is the motivation of ambulance staff to acquire those skills.

It also says much about the commitment of the ambulance staff and not just of those who have acquired the skills of a paramedic that, in just about every station in Britain, staff have given freely of their time and energy to raise the funds to purchase the equipment that those paramedics need.

The Minister has responsibility for the Health Service in Scotland, and he will be aware that the Scottish ambulance service has 325 defibrillators. Every one of those has been bought by charitable money and from fund raising by the ambulance service—not one has been paid for out of Health Service funds. Every month, 800 people in Scotland are assisted by those defibrillators and resuscitated by them. If the Minister is serious about wanting more paramedics, he must accept that there must be more paramedical training throughout Britain, funded by the Government, and that, once trained, they will require the equipment necessary to do their job.

Although the skills of paramedics are first-class, what makes me rather uneasy about Ministers' constantly focusing on those skills is the sub-text—the skills of the paramedics are being praised to play down the skills of qualified ambulance staff. Four out of five ambulance staff are fully qualified and they are trained in life-saving skills, which they use daily. Every day in Scotland, there are likely to be 1,000 emergency cases, which will require those skills. In London, as well as in parts of Scotland, there are ambulance staff who spend their entire time responding to emergency calls.

The other week, I read an account of one of the ambulance crews called to the Clapham junction disaster. That crew spent three hours at Clapham junction, and on their way back to the station they were diverted to deal with a traffic accident caused by a motorist who had had a heart attack. Having taken the motorist to hospital, the crew were then sent from the hospital to deal with a woman in an advanced state of labour. When the crew arrived at her house, they were unable to move her and had to deliver her baby at home.

In a single shift of some five hours, without a break, those ambulance staff demonstrated skills in coping with patients who were haemorrhaging severely, they applied splints to those with broken limbs, they lifted patients with

multiple fractures, they applied resuscitation techniques to a person with a severe heart attack and, finally, they demonstrated skills in obstetrics by delivering, unaided and without proper theatre equipment, a child at home. Many doctors could not span those skills, and few would expect to do so within a single shift.

One of the consequences of the exacting demands on ambulance staff and the varied role that they must play in emergencies is stress. The mortality rate among ambulance staff is 10 per cent. higher than the average for manual workers. Few ambulance staff survive in work until the statutory age of retirement. Those who do so have an average period of survival in retirement of two and a half years only.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) referred to one of the contributing factors. The pulse and blood pressure of an ambulance crew on emergency duty will alternate rapidly several times in one shift—they will move from a resting mode to one of severe excitement. It has been measured and quantified by doctors who have accompanied ambulance staff throughout entire shifts on emergency calls. The Government know that, because, as I reminded Ministers in the last debate, they received a report in 1985 on stress among ambulance staff.

Mr. Bill Walker: Under a Labour Government.

Mr. Cook: No, there was not a Labour Government in 1985. I wish that there had been, but I am sorry to say that the Labour Government has receded further into history than 1985.

I reminded the Secretary of State of that report in our last debate in January. I was not prepared for his response, which appeared in a parliamentary answer on 2 February. He said:

> "Consideration of the final report of the working party on the problems of long-serving ambulance men and women has not yet been completed. I shall consider the question of publication when it has been."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1990: Vol. 166 c. *420*.]

That was a parliamentary answer from the same Secretary of State who, since he arrived at the Department of Health 18 months ago, has turned his madcap ideas about the Health Service into a White Paper, turned that White Paper into a Bill and now insists that the Bill will be implemented by April of next year. He has turned the entire Health Service upside down within three years, but, five years after getting a report of stress among ambulance staff, he has yet to decide whether to publish it.

One of the key recommendations in the report, which is widely known if not widely published, is that the age of retirement for ambulance staff should be reduced to the age of retirement of the other emergency services—above 55. I offer this free advice and consultation—I would not dream of charging for my consultation, unlike Conservative Members—that it would be a useful gesture of conciliation if the Government were to say that they were prepared to look sympathetically at reducing the retirement age of ambulance men. That would not be a concession to the dispute; it would not be inflationary or have knock-on effects on other Health Service workers. If the Government were to make that gesture, it would create a mood of conciliation in which negotiations would be more fruitful.

That gesture would show some of the flexibility that the Government keep demanding of the union side, but of which they have demonstrated precious little themselves. However, it is partly because the staff have shown that flexibility and the public know the stress under which the staff work and the skills that they demonstrate when they work, that the public have given the ambulance staff, throughout the dispute, magnificent and unprecedented support.

The public have given them support, not just in the opinion polls, in which the ambulance staff are scoring better than Conservative Members, but tangible support, in cash. It is estimated that £4 million has been paid in individual donations during the past five months to the ambulance service. That is more than any party in this House could hope to raise with buckets in the streets. Perhaps the most depressing lesson of this dispute has been that that massive evidence of public support counts for nothing under the Government.

I presented a petition in the House on behalf of ambulance staff just before Christmas. It was signed by 4·5 million people—a record number of signatures on any petition presented to Parliament in its entire history. It was longer even than that the petition represented by the Chartists in the 1830s. Since our last debate, I have received the official Government response to that petition. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland assured us that the Government support the ambulance staff.

The official Government response to the petition of 4·5 million people consists of a dozen lines that are a stale re-hash of the Government's position. The Secretary of State for Health sends longer letters than this to 15-year-old constituents who have written to him on the matter. The response contains not a word that the Government are in the least bit troubled about the evidence in the petition that they have not a shred of public support for their position.

What I find perplexing about the Government's attitude in response to this dispute is that, in fairness to them, the dispute demonstrates a new trade unionism for which the Government can claim a large part of the credit. The political victory of the Conservative party in 1979 confirmed for many in the trade union movement that errors had been made in the winter of discontent.

That is why, when the union leaders set out on this dispute, they set as their objective winning and retaining public support. It is the Conservative laws that have obliged trade unions to consult their members by ballot. In this dispute the unions have consulted the ambulance staff three separate times in individual ballots and on every occasion there has been a margin for action of 4:1.

The tragedy is that the new unionism and the aproach on the part of the trade union leaders has turned out to make no difference to Government's response. Confronted by trade unions, their response has proved as reliable and boringly predictable as Pavlov's dogs. The clearest contradiction is that they have repeatedly urged unions to contemplate no-strike agreements. For the past six months, they have held out against a negotiating bid by the staff side which, if one strips away the rhetoric, is effectively an offer to negotiate a no-strike pay formula. It is Ministers, not unions, who are resisting that opportunity.

The greatest damage that will be done by this dispute will not be the damage done to the emergency cases who should have been assisted earlier than they were, or even to those who have been unable to attend day centres in the past six months. The greatest damage that this dispute is likely to do is to kill that new trade unionism stone dead.

[Mr. Cook]

I can tell Ministers, if they have not worked it out for themselves, that the next time National Union of Public Employees findsitself in dispute with them, and its leaders turn to the members and say that the important thing is to win and retain public support, those leaders are likely to be reminded by their members that much good has it done the ambulance staff and that public support is an impotent weapon under a Goverment who understand only the arithmetic of power.

There is still time to stop this message going out, show that massive public opinion counts for something and settle this dispute in a way that is fair to ambulance staff and gives patients the formula that they need to prevent the service from being disrupted again. If Ministers and Conservative Members are unwise enough to ignore that opportunity, they may find that public opinion will take its revenge the very next time that it is confronted with a ballot box.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand that, during my enforced absence, when I was dealing with constituency telephone calls, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said that I was in favour of local bargaining. That was certainly not the intention of my intervention. I intended to say that a look at the Whitley council system should at least consider arbitration.

5.38 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): In opening this debate, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) gave a good knockabout parliamentary performance. Although I listened carefully, I do not think that there were more than a couple of points on which I should like to take him up.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The introduction to this debate was serious and constructive, and my hon. Friends and I deeply resent the suggestion that it was knockabout.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Lady is perfectly entitled to her opinion and I am entitled to mine. I am elected to this House to give my opinion from time to time and that is what I have every intention of doing this afternoon.

Only a couple of points in the speech of the hon. Member for Govan require comment. First, he made great play of the Prime Minister being, as he described it, in the bunker. I suppose that he meant that she was being assailed and attacked from every side. I can inform the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was freely and democratically elected the Woman of the Year for the fourth year running by a poll on the "Today" programme. That shows the opinion of the public on the competence and admirable qualities of my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Govan mentioned the Clegg report. Whatever one may say about that report there is no doubt that Professor Clegg gave far more attention to comparability than did the hon. Member for Govan. It is true that ambulance men were tacked on to NHS ancillary staff, but the hon. Member for Govan should not be allowed to get away with the accusation that the professor, given the important job of producing a report on behalf of the Standing Commission on Pay Comparability, did a sloppy job.

A few moments ago I hurried out to get a copy of the report and read it once more. I understand that, during my absence, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned paragraph 32, which states that the employers believed that there was inadequate comparability. However, he missed the point that the next paragraph gives evidence from the unions. Information was taken from unions, and it was considered. As with all such reports, the important element of the Clegg report was its conclusion, reached after careful consideration:

"ambulancemen's conditions of service are broadly the same as for NHS ancillaries."

I am entitled, and it is my duty, to remind the House that, whatever the hon. Member for Livingston may say about his views having changed, when he was a member of the Labour Government, they set up the Clegg commission and accepted its report. Although I was in the House at the time, I cannot recall the hon. Gentleman strongly objecting to its conclusions.

Opposition Members and large numbers of members of the public have been informed about the actual offer for the ambulance men. Roger Poole's continual claim that ambulance men have been offered only 6·4 per cent. was repeated this afternoon. I felt almost as though I were in "Alice in Wonderland": Alice was listening to the Red Queen saying that 6·4 per cent. is exactly the same as 9 per cent. I shall not carry the analogy any further, but it is extraordinary to pretend that 6·4 per cent. is the same as 9 per cent. It could be so only if salaries were to increase over an 18-month period to 9 per cent. but the period was chopped off after one year. In that case, something funny might begin to happen. But it is not happening: the 9 per cent. is on offer and has been since April last year, and the public do not know that. Even some ambulance men do not know it.

Not only is the 9 per cent. backdated to 10 months ago, but 14 per cent. and 16·3 per cent. increases are on offer for paramedics, the latter figure being for those who work in London. By no stretch of the imagination can those figures be called 6·4 per cent. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who has left the Chamber—I did not think that he would stay long—tried to maintain that the sums were the same. They are not. This is a generous offer to people who deserve it.

Mrs. Fyfe: The hon. Lady is attempting to persuade the public that this is all a misunderstanding that has nothing to do with Government intransigence. If she is convinced that this is a fair offer, misunderstood by the public and ambulance men alike, why is she so reluctant to support the ambulance workers' demand for arbitration?

Dame Jill Knight: I am trying to remind ambulance workers what the figures are. The hon. Lady must understand that public opinion, to which great attention has recently been drawn, is based on wrong information. The public believe that the offer is 6·4 per cent.; it would be good if they realised that the true figures were 9 per cent., rising to 16·3 per cent.—a generous offer to people who deserve one.

Of course the ambulance workers do a good job and the public appreciate that——

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South) *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: I must get on; many hon. Members want to speak.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the service could be a great deal better. We should stop using ambulances to ferry round people for treatment, for instance. It has often appalled me to think of these expensive pieces of equipment hourly and daily doing a job that minibuses could do.

I believe that the Government are right to encourage staff to obtain higher medical qualifications by paying them more. It beats me why there should be such solid opposition from the unions when the Government want to pay highly qualified people more money. That happens with teachers, doctors, accountants and even British Rail staff—everyone gets more money if better qualified. It is as simple as that; there is nothing wrong with it. Opposition Members, who have supported the unions which have fought this principle all the way, seem to think it wrong to improve the ambulance service and to pay more money to those who are more highly qualified.

We all want the dispute settled; sick people and accident victims are in danger, and it is no use Opposition Members pretending otherwise. We know that people have been in danger and have not been attended to when they should have been taken to hospital. Whatever is said about public support, people are getting a little tired of collecting buckets. It upsets me that they are putting in money because they support the ambulance men but do not understand how much is on offer. It is rather sad to see old-age pensioners, perhaps living only on a pension, putting in money for people who earn much more than they do.

Salaries are rising. A leading ambulance man or woman now on £10,888 a year will receive £11,868. Paramedics' pay will rise to £12,368. Those finding it difficult to spare money for the collecting buckets may not know how much money is on offer. The wages of qualified, as distinct from leading, ambulance men earning more than £10,000 a year will rise to more than £11,000.

Are the collections quite honest? Who gives people permission to collect on the streets every day? If one wants to collect for the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, for children's charities, for the blind or for any other charity one must obtain a permit. There must be an agreement about places where collections are taken up, and details of the money must be audited. Opposition Members may think that this is funny, but it is not funny to con the public, and there is an element of conning in the collections. It is wrong that, day after day, collections should be taken up when, as far as I know, no permission has been given for them. There is certainly no supervision of the collection of the money or of how it is dished out. I am beginning to get letters about the matter, and I think other hon. Members will get letters, too.

It is nonsense to suppose that the Government can grant all the union demands. At one stage, the union agreed and recommended the 6·5 per cent. offer, but now it is asking for 11·4 per cent. That would have disastrous results everywhere and there would certainly be cuts in service. There would be an immediate public outcry if cuts had to be made to pay the 11 per cent. that the ambulance unions seek. It would also be an awful blow to the morale of people in the other parts of the National Health Service, nearly all of whom have settled at 6·4 to 6·8 per cent. What will they think if they see people receiving more money as a result of a dispute and a great deal of trouble? I can imagine the demands that the Government would have to face.

It would be wrong to take the ambulance service out of the National Health Service. It would send out a dangerous signal if the House and the Government gave in to the demands, because it would be tantamount to saying that people who care for sick people or accident victims can have more money in their pockets by refusing that care. That is the terrible message that would go from here if we gave in.

We all want this worrying strike settled. Could a way ahead be sought by making training more quickly available? The hon. Member for Govan cited a case which purported to show that a man had waited a long time for training. If that is true, the man had a genuine grievance, which should be examined. I do not know whether it is true, but I am told that ambulance men have to pay for their courses. Perhaps there is a way ahead along that avenue, which may lead to negotiation. I should like training to be made available much more quickly and cheaply for ambulance men who are striving to better themselves.

What about opening a gate to local deals? We have seen the worth of the Northumbria experiment. There is no time to give details of it, but any hon. Member who has studied it knows that local effort in Northumbria has resulted in an excellent and much better service for patients. That is what we all want. Is there any possibility of agreeing a no-strike deal? Some of us would like to see the kind of deal that was worked out for the nurses because we never want to see another dispute like this one.

I warmly welcome the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that by, 1 October, the unions will be able to negotiate again, having had their 9 per cent. increase and back pay to April 1989. Perhaps, if people in the ambulance service looked at all the points that I have made, they could negotiate an even better deal in October. I urge the Government to stand firm but to make their case more widely known. They should also make quite clear what is on offer and the amount that the ambulance men currently receive. We must recognise that there are some things that we can do to smooth the progress of the negotiations so that the whole matter can be settled amicably and quickly.

5.55 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I have been a shop steward and a full-time union officer, and have been involved in many disputes, most of which the public did not even hear about. Some went on for a long time, while others were settled quickly. The ambulance dispute reminds me of a problem in the highlands some years ago. Cleaners there had their hours cut by the Highland regional council, whose members thought they were being smart and were dealing with a bunch of part-time ladies who could do without jobs.

Cleaners throughout the highlands went on strike a few months before the regional council elections. The councillors did not realise that the cleaners would get public sympathy, because they were from small villages and women took on those jobs because no one else would do them. In other areas of high unemployment, the women were doing such jobs not for pin money, but to keep body and soul together.

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

I was the union officer there at the time, and I saw a change in the attitude of the council members as soon as support for the cleaners started to appear. The councillors ran for cover and began to settle the dispute. However, it was too late; in the elections, many of them lost their seats on the council.

The Minister says that management are there to manage. If a general election was pending in the next six months I guarantee that the Government would lean on management and tell them to settle the dispute. We are not dealing with industrial management who have private resources at their disposal but with a management who depend on Government for the resources to pay the staff. It is nonsense for the Minister to sit back and say that it is up to management to manage. He knows quite well that, if he telephoned the managers, they would jump and settle the dispute if they knew that that was the will of the Government. Convervative Members suddenly think that the Whitley council is marvellous. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) let the cat out of the bag.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The hon. Lady has gone.

Mr. Martin: No, the hon. Lady is still in the Chamber; I give her credit for that. She let the cat out of the bag when she talked about local negotiations. In some highland areas, when someone is asked to work overtime, he is told, "Your overtime will be a fish supper, so that you will not go without a meal." That is the attitude in some rural areas. The worst thing that could happen is a return to local negotiations. Rural areas would suffer, while urban areas would have some bargaining power.

The Whitley council appeal procedure is cumbersome. Although there is nothing to take its place at present, that does not mean that the procedure should not come under scrutiny. The Minister misled the House when he said that the ambulance workers could easily use the Whitley council appeal procedure. He knows, even if other right hon. and hon. Members do not, that that procedure is so cumbersome that people sometimes have to wait two or three years for a hearing.

The first stage of such an appeal is that the full-time union officer representing the appellant must find three nominees from the union side, at least one of whom must not be a member of his union. Management must also nominate three persons to sit on the appeal panel. There is usually failure to agree at the first stage, because it is eachy-peachy on both sides. Further stages of the appeal follow, and at each, written evidence must be submitted before there can be another hearing. Let us not kid ourselves that a dispute that has already lasted six months will be quickly resolved using the Whitley appeal procedure. It could take another two years.

Right hon. and hon. Members may recall that the upgrading of nurses was argued about in the House 18 months ago, when nurses were told that any among them who were dissatisfied with their grading could use the Whitley appeal procedure. Only last week, I received a letter from a nurse telling me that she was involved in an appeal. Who are we conning?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: There are hundreds more nurses in the same situation.

Mr. Martin: I take the hon. Lady's word for that. I am highlighting the fact that putting more disputes in the pipeline will only aggravate the situation.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*—

Mr. Martin: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because many other hon. and right hon. Members wish to speak, and it would be unfair of me to give way now.

Earlier, I mentioned a cleaners' dispute in which I was involved as a full-time union officer, and the support that it received from the public. When the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) mentioned the bucket collections that are made by ambulance workers, she used, I believe, the word "con". I do not think that she really meant that. In any event, I can tell the hon. Lady that any collection that is taken by trade union members is well scrutinised and well recorded. No one gets away with any kind of con. It is dishonourable for any Member of Parliament to say that men and women wearing the uniform of one of the finest services in this country would try to con the public.

In Glasgow, men and women, and even young boys and girls, do not walk past collection buckets without making a donation. My own daughter is not a political activist, but she tells me that, if she passes such a collection twice during her lunch hour, she will make a donation on both occasions. It is not so much the amount of money that is given as the gesture of public support that matters.

There are those who argue that the public are uneducated or ill-informed, but if their hearts are behind the ambulance workers, as they are, the Government will have a tough job of resolving the matter—particularly if they take the attitude, "We'll leave it to management"; or, with a nod, and a wink to management, "Let them sit it out. They'll not get a ha'penny. Your job will be on the line if you settle this dispute."

In London, many minicab drivers receive radio calls to turn up at St. Thomas's hospital and at other hospitals. Because they are paid only a set fee, they do not respond, saying, "We don't want to know." That is because the fare will be an elderly patient whom they will have to help into their cab—which is not designed for a person suffering from arthritis or some other severe ailment. On arriving at the patient's destination, he or she must be taken to the door of their home, the key found, and the door unlocked. I would hope that nine out of 10 cab drivers are decent enough to help an elderly person to and from hospital—but the fact remains that, if minicab drivers can avoid taking such fares, they gladly do so.

It is shameful that a Government who claim to care for the people allow the elderly to be humiliated by making them use minicabs to travel to and from therapy. The same Government would not allow the Army to do such a bad job as to put our nation at peril from an intruder. The Government have a duty to settle the dispute. The Minister may think that it will be only a couple of months before ambulance staff are back at work, but as a former trade union officer, I can tell him that I have known of disputes on the records of the Trades Union Congress disputes committee that lasted for one and a half or two years.

Dame Jill Knight: The miners went back in the end.

Mr. Martin The trouble with the hon. Member for Edgbaston is that she knows nothing about industrial

relations. The miners might have gone back, but they brought about the downfall of the Tory Government. She had better remember that.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): The miners also brought down the Labour Government.

Mr. Martin: I do not recall the miners bringing about the downfall of the Labour Government. I can recall the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) saying in this House, "It's me or the miners." The people of this country chose the miners. In any event, I do not intend to be sidetracked by the hon. Member for Edgbaston. I was merely emphasising that, if the Government intend to take the same attitude as the hon. Member for Edgbaston—that, as the miners went back to work, so will the ambulance workers—I remind them that there are on record disputes that lasted years. Given the Government's attitude, the ambulance dispute also will last years. The Government owe it to the country to get the ambulance men back to work.

6.8 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The speech to which we have just listened can be succinctly summed up by the words, "Scrap Whitley." I am sure that that is what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) was telling the House. That may be what he and others want; it is certainly the cornerstone of the dispute.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—who is not in his place, but I understand why—has dissociated himself from the previous Labour Government. That come as no surprise, because I remember how he disagreed with the previous Labour Government over devolution. But now, in the hope of getting a seat on the Treasury Bench, the hon. Gentleman is prepared to support their policy.

In his introduction, which I thought flippant and frivolous, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) indulged in all sorts of sideswipes about people whom he described as "organ grinders". The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) is in her place to represent the Scottish National party. I remind her that members of the SNP came to the House and said categorically that they would not take part in or assist with any matters affecting England. But now we have the Govan edict—that the SNP will do what the hon. Member for Govan wants to do, any time, anywhere. That is no surprise, because the SNP has been described by its own supporters as a party with no policies, or policies for everything, and different policies for everywhere. We have seen an example of that today.

The hon. Member for Govan complained that the Minister opening the debate was a Scottish Minister. I can just hear the same fellow complaining that the Minister was English. All Opposition Members, other than the nationalists, know and understand that.

I shall now deal with the essence of the debate. The hon. Member for Govan—[HON. MEMBERS: "Look at him."] Have a good look, because it is a good kilt. I am proud to wear it because it is the Air Force kilt, and it is the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain this year. On Wednesday there will be Royal Air Force airmen in the House and that is why I am wearing it. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am responding to some of the uninformed comments of the Opposition.

The essence of this dispute is that the ambulance men have said that they do not accept Whitley rules. In the previous speech we heard one of the reasons why. I have news for the hon. Member for Springburn. I have some years' experience as a Whitley negotiator—[HON. MEMBERS: "You?"] Yes. I spent six and a half years as a Whitley negotiator, so I know something of the problems. I certainly endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Springburn about the delays in the appeal procedure. That is clearly part of the problem. But although the appeals procedure is slow—that has been proven down the years—it is often effective and it has produced good answers in the end. So should we scrap Whitley?

Opposition Members cannot call for one group which is covered by the Whitley umbrella to have separate arbitration. One group cannot operate differently from the rest, and the hon. Member for Springburn knows that as well as I do. If we allow one group of workers to go to arbitration because they have gone on strike, we must allow all groups to go to arbitration. There is no way in between. I see the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asserting that there is a way in between. That may be, but the proposal that has been put forward is, "We want arbitration." We must consider whether all the Whitley procedures—the way that negotiations are conducted and carried out—should be changed.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that the ambulance men have been given an offer that would take them through until the end of September. They have been told that, on 1 October 1990, they can negotiate for new structures and conditions—they have been told that the 1986 agreement is up for alteration.

The Government have said that they are agreeable to the management's offer. If that is so, all the other groups that have negotiated under the Whitley rules—more than 90 per cent., or the bulk, of the people in the Health Service have agreed—could properly say, "If there is going to be a change of structure for one group, perhaps it should be considered for all groups."

Clegg studied the problems in the light of the terrible industrial difficulties during the closing stages of the previous Labour government. A number of hon. Members have commented on the Clegg report. The important thing that was highlighted by Clegg, who was acting as the referee—one can criticise the referee, as a certain heavyweight boxer has recently—was that the ambulance service should not be considered part of the emergency services. If things have changed—there is a possibility that they have—and we are in a new era, with different arguments being put forward, perhaps there is a need for a complete review and an in-depth study of the issues. That could be a way to resolve the problem.

I have never been in favour of trying to erect imaginary structures that are expected to produce answers with which we can all live, because usually a solution will present more problems the next time there is negotiation. That has been my experience, and I am sure it is true for many other people who have worked in industrial relations on both sides of the negotiating fence.

I place on record my gratitude and thanks to the ambulance men in Scotland who have worked to the rules. I particularly thank those ambulance staff from north Tayside who have been carrying out normal duties, as that is much appreciated by my constituents.

Mr. McAllion: Does the hon. Gentleman support the Tory councillors in Tayside who voted unanimously with councillors from other parties to set up an emergency service through the regional council?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. It was not voted on. The position—*[Laughter.]* It did not get voted on. There was no division. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) must understand that Tayside region Conservative councillors took the view that the ambulance service has nothing whatever to do with local government, and I agree with them. They do not think that they have any accountability; it is not their locus, so they should not debate or vote on it. My answer is yes, I support them.

One must understand that the question to be resolved is whether employers should succumb to one group because they are working to rule and carrying out industrial action, or whether they should support the more than 90 per cent. of workers who have settled. Any sensible employer would support workers who have settled.

My advice to the ambulance men is not to listen to voices from the Opposition Benches. Since 1979, they have been looking for a union or any cause that could somehow discomfort the Government, or put them in a bad light. They tried it with the miners and with other workers. The fact of the matter is—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Moray may find this funny, but it is too serious a matter for joking. It is too important for the future of the ambulance men, the ambulance service and for patients, who are suffering at present. This is not a flippant or frivolous matter. Nothing to do with wages is ever flippant or frivolous to the people involved, whether they are the people who have to pay or those who hope to be paid.

We are discussing whether Whitley has a future. I warn management very seriously that, if they succumb to blackmail—that is what industrial action is—they will put everything else that works at risk. Whitley is at risk. There are proposals to change Whitley and to say—as I understand the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North does—that there should be some form of arbitration service, and not necessarily the present appeals procedure. I accept that that procedure is slow and cumbersome, but in my experience it has worked.

When I negotiated for people, they were always delighted when we appealed and were successful, even though it took some time. The pay was always backdated, which is a big advantage of working in the public service as opposed to outside it, where that system does not normally apply. That is why one can afford to be a little slower in reaching decisions in the public service.

This is a serious matter of principle, and the principle is whether Whitley, and the interests of the 90 per cent. of Health Service workers who have settled, are worth defending. If we succumb to blackmail supported by Opposition Members, who are engaged in political opportunism——

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The hon. Gentleman seems to think that the dispute is the result of a plot by Opposition Members. Every Saturday, I stand with the ambulance men in the city square in Dundee, and there is no lack of people going about their business—not people wearing Labour party, SNP or SLD stickers but ordinary people, from the very young to the very old—who put money into the ambulance men's buckets. Why does the hon. Gentleman think that is?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is old enough to remember other similar disputes, in which——

Mr. Ross: I do not.

Mr. Walker: In that case, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, who cannot be as old as I thought he was. As soon as a dispute is settled, feelings evaporate and views and attitudes change.

The conspiracy is not one by the ambulance men, some of whom are trying to deal with a genuine grievance. They are going about it wrongly, but that is a different matter. In a number of instances they have a case for saying that conditions should be altered. That is not unusual; very few groups could not make such a case. The important point is that the Opposition regard the dispute as an opportunity. They are engaged in political opportunism. It is among Opposition Members that we find the intrigue and political machinations. I am not blaming the ambulance men, although they are mistaken in their methods and although they will live to regret the scrapping of Whitley. That is the important point and I want it on record.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The hon. Gentleman should be extremely careful not to put words into other people's mouths. By saying that there is a case for looking at the Whitley council procedures and possibly bringing in arbitration as an alternative to a review procedure, we are not saying that Whitley should be scrapped. Let us be perfectly clear about that. No one says, "Scrap Whitley." We are merely saying that the Government should look at Whitley and improve it rather than allow it to fall into disrepute.

Mr. Walker: The captain of the Titanic probably did not want to sink the Titanic, but people's actions have an effect—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members should listen carefully. The other 90-odd per cent. of staff who settled under Whitley take the view that the system works, but Whitley may be killed off by the very people who should be making it work. Hon. Members know that the machinery depends on the active involvement of both sides to make it work. If one group—the ambulance men—says no to Whitley and decides to pursue its claim in a different way, the other 96 per cent. of staff may be tempted to do the same, and that would amount to scrapping Whitley.

6.23 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): In recent months, Wales has faced similar problems to those confronting Scotland and England. We are grateful to the Scottish National party for introducing the debate and to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) for his introductory remarks. I take issue with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about the need for the Opposition to rattle round looking for causes to do in the Government. The Government are quite capable of doing incredible damage to themselves, as the poll tax and the ambulance dispute has proved.

I thank ambulance workers in my constituency, in Wales and in general for the tremendous work that they do and for the dignity and restraint with which they have conducted themselves in the recent most difficult weeks. As hon. Members have said, they command overwhelming support in the community. A BBC poll undertaken in Wales showed that 100 per cent. of those asked supported

the ambulance workers. Only two people who were asked to sign a petition in my constituency, which carried 3,000 signatures, refused to do so.

It is disgraceful that the dispute should have been drawn out for so long, when the Government could easily have found a way of reaching a settlement. The size of the ambulance workers' claim is quite reasonable. If hon. Members are happy to accept an annual salary increase in excess of 10 per cent., how can we say that the ambulance workers do not deserve a similar increase? What measuring rod can we use?

The method of pursuing the claim has also been reasonable by and large, although today is a sad day in Wales because, in South Glamorgan, we have seen what amounts to a lockout; that represents a serious aggravation of the dispute, which the ambulance workers did not want. It is interesting to note that, this weekend, in the neighbouring county of Gwent, the ambulance manager passed control of the service to the ambulance workers themselves. That was an intriguing step forward, and reflects the sense of responsibility that the management felt the ambulance workers showed towards their work. I believe that that is generally so.

I have taken the trouble to go round all three ambulance stations in my constituency—in Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Porth-madog—and I am deeply impressed by the sense of responsibility shown by the men and by the Transport and General Workers Union and its leadership. They have tried to stick to the rules laid down centrally by the unions, to ensure that those who could be adversely affected by industrial action are protected, and that the dispute does not endanger life and limb.

I have noted the long hours that the ambulance workers often have to work. I have known some to work an all-day shift and then go on to all-night standby, at a rate of pay of £4 per full standby shift. That rate of remuneration compares badly with those of electricity and gas workers on standby work. Ambulance men may work as long as 24 hours on the trot; and one can well imagine the strain that that places on them.

What can be the Government's motive for prolonging the dispute? It cannot be to establish 9 per cent. over 18 months as the norm, given what is happening in industry—at Ford and elsewhere. It is widely believed among ambulance workers that there is an attempt to use the dispute to split their work into two, with a professional upgraded staff for the paramedical part of the work and a taxi-driver-type service for the other part, which is eventually to be privatised. It would be a woeful state of affairs if the Government used the dispute to pursue their own dogma and to make one more stride towards privatisation.

Perhaps some of the services in inner-city areas can be undertaken by something less than the full crew, and I understand that such a system has been experimented with in some cities. But in rural areas such as mine, it is not practical or possible to downgrade the service into a taxi-type service. Those areas need full-time professionals, because some parts of my constituency are 50 miles from the hospital to which the ambulance workers must take emergency cases. In my county, the average time for taking people to hospital is one hour, compared with seven minutes in some city areas. One cannot have a blanket approach, which I fear the Government have.

Ambulance workers and emergency workers, who turn out to all sorts of emergencies—not just medical emergencies. When the fire engines are called out, the ambulances are also called out, and the ambulance workers are often there first. They are often called out in police emergencies, too. If the fire service is entitled to index-linked pay, it is ridiculous that the pay of ambulance workers should not be index-linked. There should at least be parity of approach, if not parity in pay scales.

It is important that training should be adequate. It would not be right to pay a higher rate to only a limited number of highly trained staff if training is not made available to the overwhelming majority. As the dispute seems to be escalating, I am also worried about ambulance cover in rural counties, especially if we have to rely on the Army. I understand that six Army ambulances would be available to cover the whole of Gwynedd. That would be impossible.

I believe that there is a solution to the problem. We should lay on one side for a moment the percentage increase for this year and consider other aspects. The Government ought to say that they are prepared to allow next year's pay award to go to arbitration. They ought to accept that decision and be prepared to index-link it to average industrial wages. The Government should not use such a settlement as a basis for privatisation. The Government ought to agree to review the equipment that is available to ambulance workers—a subject that causes them considerable worry.

If the Government adopted such an approach, I believe that there could be a settlement, based on a figure for this year which the Government could accept. We must find a way out of this dispute. An old constituent of mine, Wil Napoleon, who is dead now, had a very good dictum: "Never start a fight in a pub without a back door." I suspect that the Government have started a fight in a pub without a back door, and that they will have to pay the price.

6.31 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), and to his suggestions about how to resolve the dispute. It is important to hold negotiations as soon as possible without preconditions. I was a Health Minister in the early 1970s. There was a similar strike to this one in 1972-73, when we had to introduce civilian volunteer drivers. Fortunately, that dispute was resolved far more quickly than this one.

I pay tribute, as did the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), to the ambulance men in my constituency, who provided such effective help at the time of the Lockerbie disaster. They have to deal with many serious accidents on the A74. They turn out rapidly in such emergencies. I pay great tribute to them.

The National Health Service and the unions agreed a negotiating structure in 1986. They decided to proceed under the Whitley procedure by means of freely agreed negotiations. There was no place for arbitration in the 1986 agreement. Furthermore, arbitration is not an option in other parts of the National Health Service. We cannot change the rules of the game.

In May 1989, management and unions reached agreement on 6·5 per cent. The unions put that agreement to their members on 20 June, but it was rejected. After that, the dispute began. On 4 December 1989, the National Health Service offered 9 per cent., backdated to 1 April

[Sir Hector Monro]

1989 and running through to September 1990. Leading ambulance men would have an increase of about £1,000 over 12 months and ambulance men and women would receive an additional £650, while those who are trained as paramedics would receive an additional £500. The unions responded with an 11 per cent. demand, with pay to be linked to police and fire service pay.

The Labour party set out the terms of reference of the Clegg inquiry. The unions' demand was linked to the Clegg report, but Clegg said that there should be no link between the fire service, the police and the National Health Service.

The 1986 agreement ought to be reviewed. There should be no preconditions. I do not understand why the unions insist on preconditions and will not return to the negotiating table. A 9 per cent. offer is on the table. To offer to renegotiate the structure without preconditions seems to me to be reasonable. A restructuring of the pay system, including Whitley and arbitration, would be on the table. Whether agreement would eventually be reached about that is another matter.

The ambulance men and the unions would, if they were wise, start afresh and try to resolve the problem during the next few months. They have already been offered 9 per cent., backdated to April 1989. That is a reasonable offer. The unions ought to get round the table with the National Health Service and resolve the problem between now and September 1990. Between now and September, 9 per cent. would be paid to the ambulance men. If the unions took that course, it could lead to much happier times for ambulance men and women.

6.37 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The main reason for this claim is to retain the value of ambulance men's earnings. The unions have said that a pay mechanism, such as a pay review body, would be given serious and constructive consideration. Alternatively, the Government could propose a new pay mechanism. The unions have been flexible.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) referred to five key parts of the union's case. They have said that they are willing to drop those demands if that would help to solve the dispute. The unions are ready to negotiate on both the pay claim of 11·14 per cent. and the nature of the pay formula. Flexibility is there. The Government ought to respond.

The emergency work of ambulance crews has been well illustrated. During the last few days, newspaper articles have suggested that the unions are almost defeated. I do not know whether those articles have been influenced by Government sources. If this dispute ends in defeat for the ambulance workers, working practices will be seriously affected.

A disgraceful attack on Scottish ambulance staff was instigated by Mr. Wilby, the director of the Scottish ambulance service. He called into question the ambulance workers' commitment to the service and to their professional duties. How he thinks that that will contribute to future harmony in the Scottish ambulance service I do not know. Perhaps he got carried away by conducting the Government's political fight on their behalf. No doubt he will be rewarded with a mention in either the new year's or the birthday honours list. When that happens, clearly it will be a reward for political service.

The position in Scotland contrasts with that in Gwent, where common sense prevails and obviously the priority of the management in charge of the ambulance service is public service instead of defending the Government's battle ramparts. There should be no totem poles, as the Government have sufficient strength. To their credit, many Conservative Members, particularly the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), have tried to get the Government to move, but the Government's position seems to echo the miners' strike. They are trying to show their strength and be machó, but true strength is the ability to be flexible and to negotiate. The Government should show their strength by negotiating with the ambulance workers.

6.40 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I intend to be brief in summing up, first because the case is self-evident and has already been put more than adequately by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and hon. Members from other Opposition parties. Secondly, I should not like to give the Minister the excuse that he could not reply to all the points that have been raised because he ran out of time before we forced the issue to a Division. Therefore, I shall ask the Minister some basic questions.

Throughout the debate, we have heard that it is costing £20 million-plus to subsidise alternative forms of support to replace the ambulance crews. Will the Minister give us a straight answer as to who is paying that money? Exactly where is it coming from? It has been mentioned that, were we to spend £10 million, which is all that it would take to settle the dispute, we should open the floodgates. I should be interested if the Minister could name any individual group that has ever used the emergency services as leverage to argue its own case in industrial discussions about wages. The entire industrial community recognises that the emergency services are different, and there is widespread support from all working people for the settlement of the dispute. I suspect that no one would try to use it as a lever.

As we are referring to the emergency services, perhaps the Minister will be more forthcoming about dealing with the letter of 22 August 1978 from the private office of the then Leader of the Opposition than the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland was on "Left, Right and Centre" on Friday night, when his subdued and humble demeanour made me wonder how many charm schools he had visited recently. That letter was signed by Matthew Parris on behalf of the then Leader of the Opposition. It stated:

> "In all the comments she made during the Firemen's strike, Mrs. Thatcher linked her remarks not just to the firemen but to what she, and you, call Emergency Services. All three deserve to have their pay negotiations put outside the arena of industrial dispute by being given firm and automatic linkage to national price or wage rises."

Will the Minister comment on that and tell us why the Conservative party seems to have changed its mind about the Clegg report? Conservative Members use it in their defence when we call for arbitration, but I was in the House in the 1970s when the Clegg report was published and the Conservative Opposition were very much against it. What has made the Conservatives change their minds in the intervening 10 years? Does the Minister accept that the report has been discredited in so far as it affects the

ambulance men, because it is quite clear that there was no real analysis of their situation then, and there is now a strong argument for a much better analysis?

I should like to know exactly what the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland meant when he said that the current offer would hold good until October. He led us a merry dance round various statistics, mentioning 9 per cent., 6 per cent., 6·4 per cent., 6·5 per cent., 18 months, 12 months and the rest. But when he said that the offer would hold good until October, it was not clear whether it would hold good after October, and that seems a strange way of offering the ambulance workers a negotiating base. If the Government are not guaranteeing the ambulance men the continuation of their wage increase after October, surely there is little point in them even considering negotiation.

The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said that negotiations should be reopened without preconditions, but the Government have placed preconditions on the ambulance staff in their negotiations because they are saying that there will be no pay review and no further increase forthcoming. Those are very tight preconditions for the Government to place on the ambulance staff, and I ask the Government to rescind them.

The Minister referred to investment. According to a press release from the Scottish Office this month, it amounts to some £4·7 million in Scotland. Of course, everyone welcomes investment in the ambulance service. It was disingenuous of the Minister to say that those of us who support the ambulance staff do not want such investment in the ambulance service. No one knows better than the ambulance staff how desperately that investment is needed. In my constituency, and I am sure in the constituencies of many other hon. Members representing rural areas, there is not a single fete, show or bazaar during the summer months where the ambulance men do not have an ambulance on display—and available for use in the event of an emergency—to raise funds to provide equipment to improve the service to the local community. When we talk about improving health provision and the need for investment, the Minister should note that the ambulance men have done a great deal to improve the service through their own voluntary efforts to buy vital equipment such as defibrillators.

I studied history, and one of my favourite books is "1066 and All That". Others who have studied history will know it well. One part of that book mentioned the arrival of what was known as "the face" and its implications for historical developments. Wars were fought over the face and deaths were caused by the face. It seems to me that the Government are more intent on saving their face than on resolving the ambulance dispute.

If ambulance staff are at the point of ceasing to observe the TUC guidelines, that must mean that they are being forced into total despair, anger and frustration at Government action. No Opposition Member wants the TUC guidelines to be broken, nor do the vast majority of the ambulance staff, but the frustration is being caused by the growing chasm between the Government, and the ambulance staff and the public. If the Government were to accept our motion, they would show a genuine commitment to resolving the dispute, which we all want to be resolved.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the House have the right to demand to know whether the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland have a reasonable excuse for absenting themselves for the entire debate?

6.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) rightly reminded the House, we have debated the subject a number of times. The best contribution that I can make to this short debate is to shed further light on Government policy on five particular points. I approach those five issues in a constructive and, I hope, enlightening fashion that will help to carry the debate further. I appreciate that a number of hon. Gentlemen have spoken with great passion and a sense of loyalty to their union colleagues and to the issues involved, but it seems to me that I can best serve the debate by answering the five key points that have arisen.

First, the hon. Member for Livingston implied that in some way we undervalued the contribution of ambulance men and women. That is not the case. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who has responsibility for health in Scotland, said, we all value greatly the role of ambulance men and women. Although I accept the very strong public sympathy for ambulance men and women and the understanding of their role, there is a difference between accepting that public sympathy and stressing that the Government have responsibility for settling public sector pay, however important a particular sector may be. It is not inconsistent for me to say that although the Government understand that public sympathy, we have a sense of responsibility.

The hon. Member for Livingston asked me specifically about retirement and stress. He was right to make that point. Unquestionably some ambulance men and women suffer great stress, particularly when they leave a horrific road traffic accident to deal with another rostered duty. In due course we will consider the reports on this issue. Although it is true that policemen retire earlier than ambulance men, I must stress that the police pay twice as much superannuation contributions as ambulance men and women to achieve earlier retirement. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Livingston was right to raise the issue, and we shall consider it in due course.

The second of the five main topics to arise in the debate was cost. The hon. Member for Livingston said that we could have settled the dispute some months ago, and that the dispute is inconsequential. He said that the cost of the police and Army services helping to provide emergency cover in certain areas has amounted to about £20 million. I do not dissociate myself from that figure, although it is an estimate and not all the bills have come in yet. In response to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), I can state that those costs will be paid by the National Health Service—by the appropriate ambulance authorities.

We are considering an additional cost because, although there may be some savings from staff who have absented themselves or are on lower pay, there will still be a burden. We cannot set the costs of the services provided by the police and the Army against the cost of increasing the pay of ambulance men and women in one year, because the cost recurs. The implications of agreeing to the union's demands for a pay review body or, failing that, binding

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

arbitration, would be much more expensive for the ambulance service. We must remember that the ambulance service costs about £200 million a year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to the 390,000 Whitley staff who would wish to share in any pay review body, mechanism or binding arbitration. The NHS pay bill is about £13 billion. In the debate before Christmas, the hon. Member for Livingston said that it was Labour party policy to agree to a pay formula. I hope that he has cleared that with his right hon. Friends the shadow Chancellor and the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, because such a pay formula would have significant financial implications for the Health Service and for public sector pay.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) asked a specific question about the offer that is on the table. That offer is backdated to 1 April, to increase the rate of pay by 9 per cent. per annum over an 18-month period. From 1 October this year, fresh negotiations on the further increase in pay will have to take place. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster reminded the House, rightly, that the increase is more than 9 per cent. in London—12 per cent.—and that we are putting on the table £500 per annum to increase pay for trained paramedics. That represents an extra £900 in cash for ambulance men and women over the 12 months beginning 1 April.

The third main point to arise from the debate relates to emergency and non-emergency work about which the hon. Member for Livingston asked specific questions. All hon. Members would agree that some parts of the ambulance service are non-emergency in nature; there can be no dispute about that. I can give the hon. Member for Livingston the figures. In terms of the number of patients carried, 10 per cent. of the activity of the ambulance service is emergency work, to which should be added another 5 per cent. for doctors' urgent cases. That means that 15 per cent. of ambulance service activities involves emergency work. That figure is not dissimilar to the one that the hon. Member for Livingston quoted for York.

We are in danger of confusing functions with the argument that we must have a full roster of ambulance men and women on which to draw in the event of an emergency. I suggest that some functions of the ambulance service are not of an emergency nature and can be contracted out. The experience in Northumbria and Wiltshire supports that contention.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend confirm now or later the figures that I heard in a BBC broadcast to the effect that the average cost of a non-emergency journey is £40 per person? If that is correct, it must be cheaper to contract such work out.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that non-emergency functions, when contracted out, can be cheaper. We are not being prescriptive, and it is for the various ambulance authorities to decide which part of the service to contract out and when. However, my hon. Friend was correct——

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. I have only three minutes left and two points with which to deal, and one of those points was made by the hon. Gentleman himself.

The fourth point to arise from the debate concerns training and equipment to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) referred. The hon. Member for Livingston mentioned 14,000 qualified ambulance men. Of those, only 2,000 are fully qualified paramedics. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston wanted to know whether those 2,000 qualified staff have to pay for that additional training. They do not.

We need to increase the proportion of ambulance men and women who are qualified paramedics. We want one paramedic in each emergency ambulance. Paramedics are qualified to provide drips, to unblock airways and to control heartbeats. We have only 2,000 ambulance men and women who are so qualified. I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston that we need to devote additional resources to training and equipment in the ambulance service. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland referred to steps that have already been taken to that end in Scotland. I confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health takes that issue very seriously. Over the coming months, we will be concentrating on how to improve training and the resources devoted to equipment in the Health Service.

On national pay, we want greater local flexibility which, in some cases, means higher pay, paid for by productivity in the ambulance service. That should be possible. That is the correct route further to reward ambulance men and women.

Mr. Poole knows that this dispute, including the pay review body, cannot be won on his terms. Surely both sides should sit down, without rancour or loss of face, but with common sense and good grace, and solve the dispute.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 276.

Division No. 83] **[8.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Allen, Graham	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Anderson, Donald	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Canavan, Dennis
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cartwright, John
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Ashton, Joe	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clay, Bob
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clelland, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Barron, Kevin	Cohen, Harry
Battle, John	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Beckett, Margaret	Corbett, Robin
Beith, A. J.	Corbyn, Jeremy
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cox, Tom
Bermingham, Gerald	Cryer, Bob
Bidwell, Sydney	Cummings, John
Blair, Tony	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Blunkett, David	Dalyell, Tam
Boateng, Paul	Darling, Alistair
Boyes, Roland	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Bradley, Keith	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Dewar, Donald
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Dixon, Don
Buchan, Norman	Dobson, Frank
Buckley, George J.	Doran, Frank
Caborn, Richard	Douglas, Dick
Callaghan, Jim	Duffy, A. E. P.

Donnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. Daffydd Wigley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bitten, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David

Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Tyder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:

The House divided: Ayes 255, Noes 199.

Division No. 84] **[7.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil

Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Greg Knight.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the important contribution made by the skilled and dedicated service of ambulance staff; regrets that some have seen fit to prolong and intensify the action taken against patients in furtherance of the current pay dispute; appreciates the work of the police, the armed forces and the voluntary services in maintaining an adequate emergency service; supports the Government and National Health Service management on their handling of the dispute; calls on the trade union leaders to ensure that the undertakings they have given to maintain an adequate

emergency service are met; believes that the dispute can only be resolved by the resumption of negotiations; and calls on the trade union leadership to recognise and act upon this.'.

City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill

(By Order)

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Lords amendments be now considered.

7.26 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The last time that the Bill was briefly debated in the House was on a revival motion on 1 December 1988. The House divided on that day, and the revival motion was carried by 107 to 23. Thereafter, the Bill went to the other place, where, after Second Reading, it went into Committee. Several of my constituents, including the organisers of the campaign to save Spitalfields from the developers, appeared before their Lordships and argued cogently and tenaciously against the main proposals of the Bill. As Spitalfields is an important part of my constituency, I too gave evidence.

Although we did not defeat the Bill or win any substantial amendments, their Lordships recommended an increase in the provisions for planning gain—notably, a doubling to £5 million of the moneys for the community trust and a trebling of the moneys for training local people to acquire new skills—a sum of £150,000 over five years.

Today is the last chapter in the story which began with the Second Reading debate in the House on 12 May 1988. I understand that today we may consider only the Lords amendments to the Bill. The amendments are very narrow indeed. As the promoters of the Bill described them, they are technical. Therefore, I would not be in order to use this occasion, as I have used previous debates, to deploy the main arguments against the bill—that moving the market from Spitalfields to Temple Mills is not proven on planning grounds and that the proposed redevelopment of the vacated Spitalfields market site takes wholly inadequate account of the needs of my constituents for additional housing and small workshops. Those major and potent arguments must be placed on one side. The debate is confined to the amendments made in the Unopposed Bill Committee of the House of Lords.

The amendments on the Paper——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, but he is about to embark on comments which may be more appropriate to the next motion which I shall put to the House. At present, we are considering the Question, That the Lords amendments be now considered. Once that is disposed of, we can consider the Question, That the Lords amendments be made. The right hon. Gentleman might prefer to address his remarks to that question rather than to the one before the House now. I shall dispose of the first question, after which the right hon. Gentleman can speak on the second motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.

Mr. Shore: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The amendments relate to clause 4, which authorises from the appointed day the establishment of the new site for the market in Temple Mills. Under clause 4(3), the corporation of the City of London is enabled to exercise

"all rights, powers, authorities, privileges, obligations and liabilities"

in the new market site as they operated in the old Spitalfields site. Subsection (4) specifies certain amendments to both the City of London (Spitalfields Market) Act 1902 and the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1922. It has been argued that the wording of the original clause 4(3) was technically unsatisfactory and did not do that which it was intended to do. The amendments before us, therefore, are designed to clarify the real intention of the clause.

7.30 pm

The first amendment, inserting new clause (3A), reads:

"For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that no obligation relating to the holding of the market shall require the Corporation to permit the carrying on of market trading on any part of the new site on which the carrying on of such trading would constitute development for which planning permission has not been granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971."

The new form of words raises the question of planning permission under the 1971 Act. This is the first reference to that Act that I have come across in all the debates on the Bill. My questions are simple. What developments relating to the carrying on of trading on the Temple Mills site would constitute development for which planning permission is needed? Was permission sought for any development on the present Spitalfields site? If so, was such an application ever refused?

The second main amendment is to clause 4(4), and refers to the corporation's power to dispose of lands in the new Temple Mills site not required for the purpose of the market. The words added in the amendment free such land

"from any trusts attaching to it by reason of that land having formed part of the site of the market."

What trusts presently exist relating to land in the Temple Mills site? Is any compensation available to any trust whose interests may be involved? I look forward to the sponsor's explanation of the amendments and to his answers to my questions.

Finally, I wish to express my regrets that the debate on this important Bill must be confined within the ambit of these amendments and that we cannot seek, as we would wish, to persuade the House not to proceed further with a Bill that rides roughshod over so many of my constituents.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and I shall deal briefly with the relevant points. First, I must emphasise that these Lords amendments are no different from any other Lords amendments, and that the procedure is identical to that followed in all the private Bills that have been passed in this House since the right hon. Gentleman has been a Member. There has never been any opportunity of debating at this stage the principle of the Bill.

As I have done previously, I acknowledge the right hon. Gentleman's deep constituency interest in this issue, and that of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) who may wish to speak later. I am authorised to say that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) fully support the Bill, as amended, because it is in the interests of their constituents.

The right hon. Gentleman asked, first, about the developments for the carrying on of trading at the Temple Mills site. The answer is, arguably any market trading outside the new market buildings for which planning permission has been given, such as the car parks or landscaped areas on the Temple Mills site. That is the simple answer.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman asked what trusts presently exist and whether any compensation is available. There are no such trusts, so the question of compensation does not arise. I should explain what the trusts are. The corporation is subject to a trust, the beneficiaries of which are all members of the public who wish to come and trade. It is one of those archaic lawyer's delights. There is not a trust in the sense that the right hon. Gentleman and I, as occupants of the Clapham omnibus, would expect. Those are the answers to his questions.

The Committee of this House found no need, after long debate, to make amendments. After many days of debate upstairs, for some strange reason their lawyers decided to gild the lily. There is no more to this than that. These are technical amendments, which do not alter by one jot or iota the principle of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

(By Order)

Order read for consideration of Bill, as amended.

Question, That the Bill be now considered, *put and agreed to.*

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of Third Reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Data Protection

7.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,

That the draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 30th January, be approved.

Before discussing the reasons for the order, I should like to say a little about the Data Protection Act 1984, under which the order will be made. The Act has its origins in the 1981 European convention for the protection of individuals with regard to the automatic processing of personal data.

When the Act came fully into force on 11 November 1987, we were able to ratify the convention. The convention and the Act balance the duties of data users —that is, those who hold and process personal data on computers—with protection for data subjects—those about whom the data are held.

Data users have an interest in the legislation, because compliance with the convention enables transfer of data to and from other ratifying countries without artificial obstruction; and data subjects benefit from the protection and the rights given to them under the Act. The legislation was enacted in July 1984, and Mr. Eric Howe became the Data Protection Registrar. Mr. Howe was recently reappointed for a further five-year term. The registrar is independent of Government and reports directly to Parliament: his fifth annual report was published in July 1989.

The main duties of the registrar are to maintain a public register of data users to ensure registration by those data users, to promote observance of the data protection principles set out in the schedule to the Data Protection Act 1984; to give advice and guidance on good practice; to consider complaints, and generally to enforce the Act. With around 130,000 registered data users and hundreds of millions of automated personal data files, and new situations and issues arising every day, that is a substantial task. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Howe for the way in which he and his office have carried out their duties under the Act.

In addition, I should say that the working of the Act is being reviewed by an interdepartmental committee chaired by the Home Office with representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment and with the Data Protection Registrar as adviser. The terms of reference of the committee are as follows:

"to review the implementation of the Data Protection Act, particularly with regard to the impact on data users of registration requirements; and to make recommendations."

The review was occasioned by the Government's deregulation policy and concern among data users about administrative burdens arising from the Act. The committee hopes to report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary fairly soon, but obviously I cannot say what its recommendations might be.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): As a result of the review, will one of the options be the scrapping of the bureaucratic machinery by which privileges under the Data Protection Act are maintained? Surely my hon. friend agrees that it represents a considerable administrative operation involving many staff and a great deal of money. There is a respectable school of thought that believes that all that is needed in the circumstances is the basic legislation and the right of access to the courts. In that event there would be an opportunity to save a great deal of public money and to provide a more realistic framework of protection.

Mr. Lloyd: We are having the review because we want to ensure that the Data Protection Act does not merely do its job, but does it in a manner that results in the least burden on industry and on data users, while maintaining the protection that data subjects have a right to expect. The purpose of the committee is to go as far as my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) wants to go, subject to the protection that data subjects should have under the Act, which it was designed to give them.

The order needs an affirmative resolution in both Houses if it is to come into effect. The Data Protection Act gives subject access rights to individuals. That means that they have a general right of access to automated personal data held on them by a registered data user. But there are exemptions, so that, for example, personal data held for the purposes of prevention or detection of crime are exempt if allowing access would be likely to prejudice that purpose.

The Act also enables the Secretary of State to make certain further exemptions by order. Hon. Members may remember that we debated four such orders on 3 November 1987; an account of those debates may be found at columns 885 to 905 of the *Official Report*. One of them was the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987, made on 9 November 1987 under section 30(2) of the Act. It exempted data held for the purpose of regulating financial services from the subject access provisions of the Data Protection Act. The reason for the exemption is that, without it, a data subject could discover what information regulators held about him and thus frustrate the detection or investigation of his malpractice and potential court proceedings.

While the protection of data subjects is very important and indeed at the heart of this legislation, should not their rights be overriding in all cases. In this particular case, Parliament considered that the interests of others—for example, those damaged by the suspected malpractice—must prevail.

The order amends the 1987 order in the light of sections of part III of the Companies Act 1989, which will come into force on 21 February, and of part VIII of that Act, which it is proposed should be brought into force on 15 March.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): What will be the effect of the order on data held about patients by the National Health Service? Will such patients be protected adequately, and will the concerns expressed by the medical profession be met?

Mr. Lloyd: The order will have nothing to do with those categories, because we are discussing delegated legislation as a result of the Companies Act 1989 rather than legislation pertaining to data held on patients or other individuals in other sectors. As my hon. Friend knows, some private Members' legislation on that matter made such data more available to the individual concerned. It is to that and any subsequent legislation that my hon. Friend should look in this instance.

The order brings the 1987 order into line with new powers in the Companies Act 1989. First, while the Companies Act 1985 enabled the Secretary of State to require production and explanation of a company's records, the Companies Act 1989 allows competent persons other than departmental officials to carry out such inquiries. That will enable the Secretary of State to bring in special expertise in increasingly complex cases and will give more flexibility to cope with sudden increases in work load.

Secondly, the 1989 Act will enable the Secretary of State to assist overseas regulators in the company law, financial services and insurance spheres by investigating in the United Kingdom on their behalf. The new power will protect United Kingdom investors by helping overseas regulators who are investigating wrongdoings that may have been perpetrated by persons who, undetected, would subsequently be free to carry on investment business into or in the United Kingdom. It will also help our investigators to gain reciprocal assistance from overseas regulators, particularly those who already have compulsory investigation powers that can be used on behalf of overseas regulators—for example, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.

The new power is thus a response to the current and expected sophistication and internationalisation of markets with transactions straddling one or more national borders.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend will remember that, when we discussed the Financial Services Act 1986, considerable concern was expressed about the need for confidentiality in some areas. There was particular concern that some institutions in London, which relied upon confidentiality for their investors, should not have their legitimate interests prejudiced in a way that affected the viability of the London market and encouraged people to place their business outside London. Is my hon. friend satisfied that the order will not be a licence for overseas investigators to come in and look at everything that is going on, to the detriment of our market?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right to be concerned. The order does not make it mandatory upon the Secretary of State to provide the information for which he is asked by an overseas agency or country, but it empowers him to transfer that information, when he thinks there is good reason, to countries that have also signed the convention —it has similar rules to the Act that we brought in. I am certain that we have the necessary safeguards and that the Secretary of State will not exercise his right to transfer that information without good reason.

To unravel a suspected breach of the law, regulators frequently and increasingly find it necessary to trace transactions to all the countries to which they have ramified.

Thirdly, part VIII of the Companies Act makes various amendments to the Financial Services Act 1986. Most of them relate to the powers of the Securities and Investments Board, which exercises powers under the Financial Services Act transferred by the Secretary of State. As Parliament recognised in approving the 1987 order, it may be essential for the effective operation of a regulator such as the board that individuals on whom data are held are not able to have access to those date.

Part II of the schedule to the order therefore updates the 1987 order to take account of modified or new functions under the amended Financial Services Act. In particular, the Companies Act amendments confer new powers to issue statements of principle and codes of practice to designated rules as applying directly to members of a self-regulating organisation recognised by the Securities and Investments Board and to use the enforcement powers in the Financial Services Act to assist an overseas regulator.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend realise that one of the criticisms levelled at the way in which the Financial Services Act operates in practice has been that it has led to an enormous increase in regulations and, therefore, a huge increase in the cost of compliance for companies operating in London? Many of those companies feel that it has led them to be less competitive internationally. Is my hon. Friend happy that the increased number of regulations required by the order will not inhibit our domestic market?

Mr. Lloyd: The Financial Services Act is not a matter for me and is certainly beyond the scope of our discussions tonight. The order does not give extra work to companies, but it gives the Secretary of State more freedom to make the investigations that he is already empowered to make and to transfer information abroad under conditions that are in our interests. It does not create any new burdens for the City, industry or any other data user.

The principles, designated rules and codes of practice provide the primary regulator with more flexibility in regulating the carrying on of investment. The order is not controversial. It has been the subject of detailed discussion between my Department and the other Departments in Whitehall with the main interest in its subject matter. As the Act requires, the Data Protection Registrar has also been consulted and is content with the order. Therefore, I happily commend it to the House.

7.53 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The order is complicated and an example of how not to draft legislation. I refer specifically to part II of the schedule. I have spoken to a few people today, none of whom seems to understand what this is about. I appreciate the Minister's explanation, which has helped considerably. In the explanatory note, only two full lines are devoted to part II. If we are to produce such orders in future, the House should be given a proper explanatory note so that we understand what we are dealing with.

As the Minister said, the order deals mainly with consequential amendments emerging from the Companies Act 1989. It extends the list of functions in the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987, which is embraced by section 30 of the Data Protection Act. This means that individuals will be further denied access to computer files containing information about them. In losing that liberty, individuals give authorities the opportunity to identify fraud and maladministration in the financial services industry.

The Government will claim that they have got the balance right between these two aspects, and are minimising individuals' loss of liberty against the broader benefit of stamping out maladministration. How do we

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

know that that is so? How can we be sure that the Government are not erring on the side of oppression—a strong word, but one which serves in tonight's debate?

Mr. Butterfill: I do not know whether, in his constituency, the hon. Gentleman has experienced the same as I have in Bournemouth, West. There, a large number of investors in Barlow Clowes thought that they had lost their entire life savings. Only the generosity of the Government has enabled them to recover most of them, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for that. Surely the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) would accept that such fraud is sufficiently serious to warrant this order—indeed, makes it essential.

Mr. Randall: I fail to see the logic of that. We all have constituents who have been affected by Barlow Clowes. However, a balance must be struck. We must ensure that people have access to files about themselves. The order would prevent people from having access to those files so that the Department of Trade and Industry could carry out investigative work and not be impaired by people making public information that would create difficulties for the DTI. I fear that the Government are erring on the side of oppression—I use that word intentionally, because it illustrates my point.

It is exceedingly difficult to establish whether the balance is right. Why are the exemptions under section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 so extensive? The 1987 order, or the 1987 version of what we are discussing—now we have the television cameras on us, the public can see the scale of it——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): It is small print.

Mr. Randall: The Government Whip, who should be silent, says that it is small print. He strengthens my argument: the print is small and we can see the extent to which people's freedom of access to files has been limited. Why are the exemptions so extensive? For example, why, under the 1987 order, do the Bank of England's functions result in limiting individuals' access to their personal files? Why is that necessary? Why are the functions in relation to the certification of directors restricted?

Some people might say that there are pretty obvious reasons for making personal files exempt under section 30 of the Data Protection Act. I am not sure on what grounds we could argue that tonight in the context of this order. No one here knows the principles on which those decisions are taken. I have given just two examples, but there are yards of them. How was the list arrived at? It arises from within the Department of Trade and Industry which in turn consults the Data Protection Registrar. The Minister explained that at some length. However, the power and influence of the registrar is exceedingly limited. It would be almost impossible for him or the Home Office to assess whether the huge list of additions that we are considering makes sense. The Data Protection Registrar, who is independent, is not, unlike the DTI, involved in investigative work, so he cannot make many suggestions.

I imagine that the registrar would simply say that he could see no obvious reason why these functions should not exist. It is clear, therefore, that the role of the indpendent registrar in establishing whether limits should be placed on individuals' access to personal files is highly limited. The initiative and power rest with the DTI.

I am dubious whether the Government have struck the right balance between people's freedom to see files about themselves and the benefits of denying access in tackling corruption in the financial services industry. I am inclined to be a little suspicious of the Government in this respect. I suspect that they will tend to restrict people's access to their files merely because of the ethos of secrecy that pervades Whitehall. The Opposition see great virtue in creating a more open society. We should like a freedom of information Act that would go much further towards compelling Departments to provide information far more readily.

Most other countries in the developed world, including Australia, Canada and the USA, are way ahead of Britain, and we are beginning to look outdated and obsessed with secrecy. Few would disagree with that proposition. There must be a change, and we must develop our democracy.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman will know that, as a recently retired chairman of the campaign, I broadly agree with him about the desirability of a freedom of information Act. But does he agree that the Australian and American systems have fairly comprehensive exemptions relating to commercial confidentiality, because of the obvious desirability of such confidentiality in investigations of fraud?

Mr. Randall: I do not argue against exemptions; I argue against unnecessary exemptions. I do not know from the information in the order whether these exemptions are necessary or unnecessary. I challenge hon. Members to judge whether they are. We cannot make an assessment, because the information is not available.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the order gives discretion to the Secretary of State? He will be accountable—eventually—directly to Parliament. Is not that the safeguard that we need?

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman is not quite right. The Secretary of State has certain powers and is expected to carry out certain functions. To do so he has to ensure that the availability of information does not prejudice the carrying out of those functions. The 1987 order and this order make the number of functions embraced by section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 very large——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am reluctant to interrupt the debate, but there are limits. Presumably the order to which the hon. Gentleman is referring came before, and was approved by, the House. We cannot reopen that debate now.

Mr. Randall: I agree. I am talking about the way in which this order extends the scope of the 1987 order. I question whether the list should be as long——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That would be going beyond the bounds of what is proper tonight. We are debating the merits or otherwise of the matters intended to be added to the list. We cannot discuss the generality of that list, or whether it is too long or too short.

Mr. Norris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely, at the point at which we approve the new order, we are reconstituting the earlier legislation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to challenge my ruling, or to debate it, and that he cannot do.

Mr. Randall: I do not challenge your ruling, as you very well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister referred to the additional functions of certain persons in assisting overseas regulatory authorities. Those functions make the overall list rather long, but I note your comments, and will refrain from pursuing the point.

Other countries have shown that huge savings can be made by rooting out poor and inefficient administrations. Had they not encouraged more openness, the public in those countries could not have challenged the authorities, because they would not have had the information with which to do so. The information revolution in the developed world—it is directly related to the information held in the computer files referred to in the order—is moving at an incredible pace. We must match these impressive developments in technology and information with equally impressive developments in openness so as to protect people's privacy and access rights.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although we all accept that the rights of the citizen need safeguarding, if we allowed unlimited access to information, it could tend to inhibit the functions of an Executive and make it unduly cautious? If they know that everything they do may be subject to public scrutiny, an Executive may always be inclined to err on the side of caution and never propose anything innovative or exciting.

Mr. Randall: I am not advocating unlimited access—that would be absurd—but this order prompts the question: are we going in the right direction? Massive changes are under way.

I should like to deal with some specific parts of the order. Why does paragraph 2 of part I of the schedule limit access to personal files via section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 in connection with persons assessing overseas regulatory authorities? The Minister touched on that in his speech, but I should be grateful for a little more detail.

One could argue that the exemption order is needed to investigate malpractice involving computer data in the United Kingdom. However, the files could be held at the same time in another country. One could argue that we have access via the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987 to United Kingdom regulators, and now we need access to overseas regulators. I accept that argument, but I am still not satisfied that we are maximising the extent to which we provide access by individuals to personal files. We seem to be using a massive sledgehammer to crack a very small nut.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman suggest an arrangement under which information provided for the investigation of overseas fraud by an overseas regulator should be made available to a United Kingdom citizen who might be the subject of such an investigation by an overseas regulator?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is going well beyond the scope of the order.

Mr. Randall: We all want corruption and maladministration to be eliminated. If a company or the Government wish to restrict access to personal files, the burden of proof for the restriction should rest with the company or with a Department. Why not make public the justification for restricting a person's access to his own files? That has not been referred to, but I do not see why it should not happen.

I do not suggest that we should make public all the details surrounding a case involving corruption. Plainly, such information would have to be exempted. I am talking about setting the principle on which restriction of access to information is made public. I should be interested in whether the Minister finds that broad principle acceptable. To me it is not at all unreasonable. It may be hard for some people to swallow, but I think that this is how matters will continue to proceed, now and in the future.

Part II of the schedule seems to relate to exempting, via section 30 of the Data Protection Act, certain new functions that are now part of the Financial Services Act 1986. I imagine that the new functions in that Act have arisen through changes in the Companies Act 1989. Perhaps the Minister will explain specifically the functions referred to in paragraph 4 of part II of the schedule because I cannot understand them. Paragraph 5 of part II talks about

> "Functions . . . in relation to exemption of advertisements".

That is gobbledegook, and we should have had an explanation. I am sorry to have to ask the Minister to explain such things.

Will the Minister explain the thinking behind paragraph 1 of part I of the schedule? It says that the Secretary of State would authorise an officer to carry out investigations. Why does the paragraph refer to an "other competent person"? Is it because the Department of Trade and Industry has reduced its staff to such an extent that it no longer has the expertise to carry out that vital work, or is it a deliberate policy to involve the private sector rather than civil servants? I have no hang-ups about the private sector, but I wonder whether such sensitive work involving personal privacy should not be done by Government officials.

8.15 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): The order follows a long tradition of orders that recognise the importance of data protection and the rights of subjects to have access to that data, while at the same time excluding such data from public access.

Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), I should like to look in detail at the schedule. I shall comment first on the interesting substitution in part I:

> "or other competent person authorised by the Secretary of State".

The 1987 order designated an officer. I assume that the new wording is necessary because, quite properly, in the discharge of his functions, the Secretary of State may wish to empower an outside investigator or inspector to gain access to information about a person that is pertinent under the order.

That is to say, it may be financial data about the person, which could lead to prosecution for dishonesty or fraud. If such an authorised "other competent person" was not mentioned in the order, the Secretary of State would be

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limited in the way in which the powers could be exercised. Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister winds up he will comment on that.

I was intrigued by the amendments in part II of the schedule. Paragraph 3 contains an interesting change because the words

"rules, guidance, arrangements or restrictions"

are to be removed and the words

"rules, statements of principle, regulations, codes of practice, guidance, arrangements or practices"

are to be substituted. It looks as if someone sat down with a lexicon or perhaps "Roget's Thesaurus" and tried to discover all the variations of the word "rules", having previously come up with only four.

Why are "statements of principle" suddenly involved in the legislation? The House has been advised that this is merely a technical order. If so, why is it necessary to introduce something as fundamental as "statements of principle"? The original statement of principle in section 28 of the Data Protection Act 1984 included substantial exclusions. No doubt hon. Members will recall that. Those were exclusions of any information concerning

"(a) the prevention or detection of crime;
(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders; or
(c) the assessment or collection of any tax or duty".

I was on the Committee that examined that Bill in 1984 and for the life of me I could not think what other activity could not be covered by those exclusions, especially in the case of financial services. I am at a loss to understand why it is now necessary to include a new statement of principle in the entry relating to the functions under chapter XIV of part I of the Data Protection Act 1984, in place of the words

"rules, guidance, arrangements or restrictions."

Similarly, I am unsure why codes of practice are to be included. I imagine that that is because codes of practice, whether statutory or non-statutory, may have a binding effect on any regulations that are relevant under the order. Again, an explanation is needed.

Even more intriguing is that, whereas in our original assessment, under part II of the Act there appears the word "restrictions", it no longer appears in the new form of words. I am again at a loss to understand why. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with those important matters when he winds up.

The overall purpose of the order is to keep up to date the general principle of allowing the Secretary of State to keep secret such information as may be deemed to be sensitive in connection with a prosecution for fraud or a related offence of dishonesty. I take the extremely relevant point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, when he outlined the delicate balance that must be struck between the general principle of providing access to confidential information on the data subject—which is the cardinal principle, laid down by the European convention—and the convention's recognition of the right to exclude information in certain sensitive categories.

It is entirely reasonable to update the 1987 order. Throughout data projection legislation, not only in Australia and the United States but elsewhere, there runs the well-recognised principle that financial services markets and the investigation of fraud or dishonesty should legitimately be an exempted area. I am not sure that the order could not be more narrowly drawn. Whenever such orders are laid before the House, the onus should be on the Government to demonstrate that not one jot of personal information shall be withhld from subject access unless there is concrete justification. I believe that that was the thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, and I agree that that should be the case.

In respect of financial services investigations in particular, secrecy is all. Were the subject of such an investigation to be given any idea that information was held about him, he could take advantage of that knowledge to arrange his affairs so as to gain protection under the umbrella that the order will constitute. In that context, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be aware of the current cases, which are sub judice, in which it is clear that information relating to the availability of knowledge on subject access could have been relevant to persons who have been charged with an offence.

Mr. Randall: We all agree on the principles of the order. As to whether the list is too big or too small, I still contend that there is no way of assessing that and whether the Government have gone too far down the path to secrecy.

Mr. Norris: Given that section 28 of the Data Protection Act 1984 draws exemptions as wide as

"the assessment or collection of any tax or duty",

the hon. Member makes a good point. My hon. Friend the Minister must make it clear that he has examined every detail of the order's applicability to information held about a data subject—and he must assure himself that in no way, and in no particular, does the subject access provision need further modification so as to allow the form of access to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Clearly, it is important that the order receives the approval of the House, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West agrees that there is no virtue in legislation that is hamstrung by not being related to other current legislation. To the extent to which the amendments contained in the order bring matters into line with the Companies Act 1989, obviously we cannot refuse to approve it. Nevertheless, the general principles of the European convention, which provide that in all but exceptional circumstances a data subject should have access to information held about him or her, are so important that, whenever such a measure comes before the House, it is vital that the Minister presenting it is assured that it is drawn as narrowly as practicable, to provide necessary confidentiality.

I have always believed that, when Governments are in doubt, they should as a general principle be prepared to tell citizens what is done in their name. That principle should particularly guide my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I am grateful for the support for it shown by Opposition Members. That principle ensures that a democracy works to serve the people and is not governed in turn by officials who can hide behind a cloak of secrecy.

In that context, my hon. Friend the Minister has some further explaining to do. However, in terms of the order's general principles and of the necessity to ensure that existing measures are updated in line with the Companies Act 1989, I commend it to the House. I trust that, when my hon. Friend winds up, he will give the officials in the Box something to do this evening and answer the points that I raised.

I recall being invited to serve on the Committee considering the Data Protection Bill after my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) approached

me in the Lobby and asked, "What do you know about data protection?" When I replied, "Nothing," I found myself instantly on the Committee. That was the first on which I served on entering the House in 1983, and the principle of knowing nothing initially has stood me in good stead. I have applied it in respect of every other Committee on which I have served. However, aware as I am of the detailed nature of the order, I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister a thorough review of all the options available to him.

8.27 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on a very good speech. He is one of the few right hon. and hon. Members to make sense of data protection legislation. As he said, his experience goes back to the Committee that considered the Data Protection Bill. He played an honourable role then and has done so since in respect of data protection matters, in ensuring that orders such as this are not so widely drawn that they make it impossible for individuals to be certain of their rights. Exemptions may be allowable in cases of fraud, but they should be clearly spelt out. I am sure that the hon. Member for Epping Forest agrees that there should be a role for the Data Protection Registrar.

The Minister said that the order is not controversial. That may be true on the surface, because its wording is bland and vague—I suspect, deliberately so. However, the denial of access rights is not so non-controversial to the subject concerned. Last Tuesday, the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), said of the Data Protection Act 1984:

"The Act—which was passed under the present Government—provides valuable protection for the individual, while recognising the need for controlled exchange in the use of personal data. The Government are wholly committed to the enforcement of the Act through the Office of the Data Protection Registrar."—*[Official Report, 15 February 1990; Vol. 167, c.470.]*

The Government claim it as a credit, but the Data Protection Act 1984 is one of the worst in Europe. The Data Protection Registrar is powerless over enforcement of exemptions. Within four days of that statement, we are debating the order, and we can see the true nature of the Government's thinking on the Data Protection Act. They have put before the House an order which does the complete opposite of what the Minister said they would do.

The order is just what it seems. First, it removes protection from the individual. Secondly, it removes any enforcement powers from the Data Protection Registrar. The Minister shakes his head, but the DPR is powerless over subject access exemptions. Thirdly, it provides no real information to the House concerning details of the orders.

The Minister made a comment about the purpose of the order in relation to fraud. The order amends another order —the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemptions) Order 1987. Together, both orders list more than 230 statements about withholding rights of access to personal data from data subjects.

When SI 1987/1905 was debated in the House, very little information was provided about it, even though some of the statements in the statutory instrument seemed quite broad. For example, in the middle of page 5, we find the words:

"Any functions of making available information for purposes or otherwise in connection with any functions specified in this Schedule in relation to Acts"

Apart from being gobbledegook, when one considers that paragraph closely, one sees that the schedule to which it refers was a very broad schedule which became virtually open-ended when the exemptions were made. The order before us is exactly similar, and it is equally generous with its wording. For example, paragraph 4 would insert:

"Functions of Secretary of State or designated agency under Chapter XV of Part I."

I understand that to mean all functions of all designated agencies. That is a very broad order.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest quite rightly said that orders about access exemptions should be drawn very narrowly, so that the House and the public can see exactly what is being allowed, and will know what exemptions will affect the right of individuals to see personal data, and when the DPR cannot get involved.

I also note that, as with SI 1905, the Government have not provided any detailed reason that I can see why an individual's rights are being removed. Although the orders contain 230 statements or functions, they contain little detail about why we should refuse an individual access to personal data. The House is in the dark about how the exemptions will apply in practice. The only light that has been shed on the matter was in the Minister's statement tonight, at the beginning of the debate. This situation should be unacceptable to the House. Each subject access exemption represents a significant diminution of an individual's rights. Consequently, each exemption should be considered most carefully. Once allowed, an exemption is total, and once it is applied, the individual is powerless to do anything about it.

In paragraph 220 of his fifth annual report, the Data Protection Registrar summarises what a subject access exemption means, saying:

"The individual does not know that the data user has applied a subject access exemption and is in no position to make an appeal to test whether the data user has been properly applied or not."

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman tell me to which of the functions under section 30 he considers that this should not apply? Does he exclude dishonesty or incompetence, malpractice or the investigation of bankruptcy? Does he not agree that other people need protection, as well as the person who is being investigated?

Mr. Cohen: Of course. I also think that exemption should be clearly defined; but we do not need 230 different statements of where they should apply. In a moment, I shall come to a particular example where I think subject access exemption may be applied, but let me finish the paragraph that I was talking about.

I cannot understand why it is not possible for the Government to produce clear explanatory notes, such as notes on clauses, before they put a whole range of personal data into an information black hole. The notes would explain why a subject access exemption was necessary, so that we could judge the validity of the Minister's arguments in every one of the 230 cases.

One case in which the exemptions could be misused is in the use of black lists. We know from debates in Committee on the Employment Bill that companies are using blacklists. They adversely affect individuals, perhaps because they are in a trade union or are involved in politics —which is their democratic right. Companies keep that

[Mr. Cohen]

sort of information about people on their computers. An individual might want to get access to that information, but if it conveniently comes under one of those 230 statements, and so has become a subject access exemption, the individual will not even know that he is on a blacklist, judging from what the DPR said in his report. If he finds out, he will not get access to data because the law will have been changed by the broad wording in the order to make blacklists exempt.

Mr. Butterfill: I am puzzled by what the hon. Gentleman is saying. It seems to me that we are considering an order that is limited to data protection for the regulation of financial services. I cannot see that a blacklist against an individual could have any connection with the regulation of financial services in the way that he suggests. Surely it has more to do with protection of the public from fraud and other undesirable practices, and I am sure that even the hon. Gentleman would not object to that.

Mr. Cohen: The Financial Services Act 1986 was a thick Act and took a lot of time and consideration in the House. It had many clauses that could relate to blacklisting.

A trade unionist might want information about a takeover because it affected the jobs of union members. The company could say that the union was affecting financial services and its stock market quote, and therefore it would use its subject access exemption to stop them getting the information. That could easily happen, because the Financial Services Act was so broadly drawn.

I wish to raise further questions concerning the statements on the first page of the order that it was made "after consultation with the Data Protection Registrar". The Minister quoted that. I wish to enlarge on the subject of those consultations. Did the registrar agree with the Minister's wording of the order? Did he have any advice for the Minister, and was any of that advice ignored? I think that the House should know exactly what the DPR said.

For example, did the DPR draw the Minister's attention to paragraph 232 on page 87 of his fifth annual report:

"Exemptions from subject access right should be strictly limited and very carefully defined"?

If the DPR was being consistent, he would give such advice. I should be interested to hear whether he did, and what the Minister's response was. As the Government have had two full years of operation to report on how the exemptions in SI 1905 have worked in practice, will the Minister say how many times subject access has been refused under the 1987 order?

Did the registrar raise during the consultation process his advice in paragraph 221 of the fifth annual report:

"I recommend that data users should be required to keep a log of the cases in which subject access exemption is relied upon and the reasons for using the exemption"?

Has the Minister any views on that advice, which I should have thought the House would regard as reasonable?

Such questions are important, especially considering the Minister who will exercise the power and control the many functions that facilitate subject access exemptions. That Minister will be the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is better known for his work in pursuit of privatisation than for his work to protect privacy. Privacy comes very low on his list of priorities. He was the one who introduced the poll tax, which has smashed privacy to smithereens, yet we are to give him powers over it under the order. That hardly inspires confidence.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is also known for his rigorous pursuit of wrongdoers and that his action in trying to eliminate fraud and in dealing sympathetically with investors in Barlow Clowes shows him in a rather different light from that in which the hon. Gentleman seeks to portray him?

Mr. Cohen: I shall not go into the issues surrounding Barlow Clowes

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is a good thing.

Mr. Cohen: But deeds speak louder than words, and we have not had great actions from the Secretary of State to tackle the wrongdoers. The multi-billion pound fraudsters have not been dragged through the courts by the Secretary of State. Recently, the right hon. Gentleman took to court a case for which his Department was so badly prepared that the procedings collapsed in a shambles. The hon. Gentleman is on the wrong tack in saying that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has a good reputation in this matter; the right hon. Gentleman's actions do not support that claim.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that much of the work of the Department of Trade and Industry—under whomever happens to be the Secretary of State—leads to major trials? I am not allowed to name the trial that started last week but, with his known fairness, the hon. Gentleman will agree that that trial could not have started and could not be expected, as it is, to last about six months——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has stuck perfectly to the motion, and I am sure that he will continue to do so.

Mr. Cohen: I shall not pursue that line, Madam Deputy Speaker. My response to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) emphasised my view: many of the trials collapse in a shambles; and the wrongdoers have not been hauled before the courts and made to pay back the money of which they have robbed shareholders and the public.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cohen: No, I shall not give way; you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have asked me not to pursue these matters, but to stick to the order.

Mr. Butterfill: My point relates specifically to the order.

Mr. Cohen: In that case, I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the order extends the ability of the Secretary of State to co-operate with investigators and regulators overseas? In view of the increasingly international nature of fraud, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the order represents a valuable contribution to the investigation of fraud?

Mr. Cohen: Of course we need links with overseas crimebusters to bust crime internationally, and I support that, but I do not think that the order will necessarily contribute greatly to that task. It is more likely to affect the individual's rights of privacy, which should be preserved. Such rights may be just as much affected by a bland and vague order such as this as big criminals may be affected by it. That is what concerns me, and that is why the order should be more tightly drawn, as the hon. Member for Epping Forest said.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, and so far it has been very theoretical. He has had access to the reports of the Data Protection Registrar. The key question that we must all ask ourselves concerning the alteration is whether there are data to which the subject would previously have had access and which would have been useful to him which he is now to be denied. Can the hon. Gentleman give practical examples from the reports to which he has had access to demonstrate that fact?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, my speech has been theoretical, but when the order is passed, a number of individuals will be denied the right to information that companies hold about them. At the moment, individuals have the right to information, and we are denying them that right. The examples will come after the order has been passed. I gave the House one example—that of a trade unionist trying to get information in a blacklisting case. Practical problems will arise when people are denied their subject access rights.

All that the House can say about the order is this: first, we do not have enough information about how it will work in practice; secondly, we cannot tell whether it is drawn too widely, although in my view it is. We should ask the Minister for clearer information, and further detail should be given to the House on how the exemptions will apply in practice. Otherwise, abuses will occur and the House will be sending out the message that we do not really care about individuals' rights.

I am getting rather tired of the Government's boasting, as the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science boasted last Tuesday, that the Data Protection Act provides valuable protection for the individual, only to undermine that Act by orders such as this. I advise hon. Members that, when they read words like "valuable protection for the individual" in *Hansard*, they should immediately understand them as having the same meaning when used by Ministers as if they had been used by Al Capone.

8.48 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I support the objectives of the order but I must join some of my friends and Opposition Members in saying that the explanatory memorandum that accompanies the order is somewhat less than helpful—and nor is the English in which it is couched particularly easy to follow.

The order would amend a large number of existing Acts and previous orders, and perhaps it would help if I ran through them. We are amending not only the Data Protection Act 1984 but the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989 and the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Randall: They are consequential amendments.

Mr. Butterfill: I agree that they are consequential amendments, but they are amendments nevertheless. The interrelationship of the Acts and the other orders that we are amending is complex. It would have been much more helpful if the explanatory note had contained more information so that we could understand how the legislation interacts. Instead, hon. Members have been left to work it out for themselves—in my case, by a somewhat convoluted process. I am not an expert in such matters. However, I have done my best.

Mr. Stern: May I underline my hon. Friend's point by saying that, when hon. Members are presented with an explanatory note, it always seems to be couched in a form of English in which "explanatory" is the exact reverse of the truth. With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall put the first sentence on the record so that those who read *Hansard* can appreciate in all their beauty the triple convolutions of the so-called prose that is supposed to explain what the order means. The explanatory note reads:

"Section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 provides that personal data"—
subject—
"held for the purpose of discharging statutory functions"—
"functions" becomes a subsidiary subject—
"which are designated by the Secretary of State"—
new subject—
"by an order"—
further new subject—
"made under that section"—
further new subject, although we have now forgotten which section is being referred to—
"shall be exempt from the subject access provisions"
a triple noun—
"of the Act in any case in which the application of those provisions to the data"—
by now we have completely forgotten what data we are talking about—
"would be likely to prejudice the proper discharge of those functions."

Whoever wrote that sentence should enrol immediately in a course on clear English, because the one thing that that sentence is not is explanatory.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend anticipates precisely the point that I intended to make. If he reads the second part of the explanatory note, the abuse of English and the defeat of the vaulting imagination of hon. Members will become even more apparent. It says:

"Schedule 1 to the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987 ('the 1987 Order') designates functions for the purposes of section 30. The Schedule to this Order"—

if my hon. Friends can follow which order we are now talking about—

"contains amendments to the 1987 Order"—

if we can remember which order we are talking about—

"which are consequential upon the implementation of the Companies Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act'). Part I of the Schedule, which comes into force on 21st February 1990, amends the entry relating to section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 (Secretary of State's powers to require production of documents) and designates functions under sections 83, 84 and 88 of the 1989 Act"—

I defy, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or anybody else to remember which 1989 Act we are now talking about—

"(powers exercisable to assist overseas regulatory authorities). Part II of the Schedule to this Order, which comes into force on 15th March 1990, contains amendments relating to functions under the Financial Services Act 1986."

[Mr. Butterfill]

If that is supposed to be an explanatory note, we need to send some of our officials on a course in plain English.

Mr. Cohen: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that he and the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), may be on dangerous ground by criticising the explanatory note? I was a member of a Statutory Instruments Committee, with my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), that considered official secrets. When we criticised the explanatory note, the Home Office Minister said that he had written it himself. Perhaps we could be told whether the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department wrote this explanatory note which, as the hon. Members for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and for Bristol, North-West have said, is gobbledegook. If the Minister wrote it, they will be on dangerous ground for having criticised the grammatical efforts of their own Minister.

Mr. Butterfill: At the risk of being proved wrong, my hon. Friend the Minister's command of the English language is a model of clarity and eloquence. Therefore, I am confident that the explanatory note was not drafted by him personally. No doubt he will confirm that when he responds to the debate.

Mr. Stern: To pursue this line of argument, does my hon. Friend agree that we shall soon be demanding an explanatory note to the explanatory note of instruments of this nature? I am not sure that either my hon. Friend or I would wish public expenditure to be increased to such an extent.

Mr. Butterfill: I should be the last person to wish public expenditure to be increased unnecessarily. However, this explanatory note could have been much clearer and longer so as to assist hon. Members in their examination of the order.

Part I, paragraph 2, of the schedule refers to

"functions of following persons in assisting overseas regulatory authorities".

Will the Minister clarify that my understanding of the paragraph is correct? I thought that it enabled the Secretary of State to rule that information would not be made available to a member of the public if it should properly be withheld to allow the investigation of fraud by an overseas regulatory authority.

It is an important power. If that is what the paragraph means, I support it. If that is not what it means, I believe that such a power should be included in the legislation. International fraud is becoming more common. The United Kingdom's financial services market is free and is extremely valuable to this country. It earns for the United Kingdom a vast amount of money in the form of invisible earnings, and I should be the last to want to lose them.

The corollary to an international market is that, with modern communications and modern means of data transmission, fraud is that much easier to perpetrate and that much more difficult to detect. Serious international fraud can be defeated only if the regulatory authorities in the countries concerned can co-operate in defeating it. I hope that that is what is intended by the paragraph, and that the order will give effect to that intention.

On part II of the schedule, like my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) I am somewhat puzzled about paragraph 3, which extends the previous entry for

"rules, guidance, arrangements or restrictions"

and substitutes for that

"rules, statements of principle, regulations, codes of practice, guidance, arrangements or practices".

I am not sure—nor will many other hon. Members be—why that extension needs to be made, what its practical effect on the denial of access will be and why those activities need to be protected as that section purports to protect them.

Paragraph 5, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), deals with the exemption of advertisements. Am I correct in assuming that it relates to the section of the Financial Services Act which regulates advertisements so that they do not mislead the public and improperly induce people to make investments? If that were the case, it would be entirely proper for investigations into the exemption of advertisements to proceed in a way that did not alert those being investigated. But it is not entirely clear to me, and I suspect that it may not be entirely clear to other hon. Members here this evening, so it would be most helpful if my hon. Friend could explain that in more detail.

Having asked some specific questions about the effect of the order, let me say a few words about the general philosophical approach which has been mentioned by hon. Members on all sides of the House this evening. As always, there is a conflict between the need to protect the public from fraud and misfeasance and plain incompetence on the part of certain authorities and the need to give the individual the right to access held about him on any given file. We need to draw a very fine line.

Hon. Members who have spoken this evening, including my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest and certainly Opposition Members, would go a lot further than I would. If we are talking about freedom of information, which has been the subject of much of our debate, I urge some caution. It is not always in the public interest for all information to be disclosed.

If we want to see the effects of a full right to information, we need only look at what happens in the United States, where everything in the process of government is open to public scrutiny. The effect is a politicised civil service. When the President of the United States and the Administration change, the new President changes the civil service, because he cannot do otherwise than have with him his political allies. That would be the regrettable effect if the right to information were pursued to its ultimate conclusion in Britain.

Without wishing to flatter those in Whitehall who may be listening to the debate, one of the great assets of the British constitution is the impartiality of the Civil Service and the knowledge that civil servants may give advice to Ministers in confidence and protect their professional position as independent and impartial advisers to Government. We have the balance right in requiring the Government to account to the House for their actions and not to require civil servants to account for their actions. But I fear that what has been proposed this evening, particularly by the Opposition, could have that effect, and I genuinely believe that it would be a sad day for British democracy if that were to happen.

I am also concerned about the general tenor of some of the speeches from the Opposition. Opposition Members said that the right of an individual to inspect any file that may be held on him, for whatever purpose, is more important than some of the purposes in the order before the House. I cannot accept that. Section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 states that its purpose is to protect the "public against financial loss due to dishonesty, incompetence or malpractice by persons concerned in the provision of banking, insurance, investment or other financial services or in the management of companies or to the conduct of discharged or undischarged bankrupts."

I cannot see how we can afford to deny the public the protection that may be needed in the investigation of those activities simply because it may prejudice the rights of one citizen to obtain access to data held on him. Once again, I call in aid the Barlow Clowes case, which is directly relevant to this debate.

Mr. Randall: I thought that we had had a considerable discourse on the need to have a balance between access to information and the need at times to restrict access to information so that investigations can take place.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman said that, but I differ from him on where he would strike that balance. The hon. Gentleman was erring on the side of protecting the right of the individual to have access to information instead of erring on the side of the investigation of fraud and malpractices which I believe is more important.

Mr. Randall: With respect, the hon. Gentleman is drawing the wrong conclusion, and I said nothing that could lead him to reach that conclusion. My point was that none of us in the House tonight can assess whether the Government have gone too far in compiling the list of restrictions. I do not know whether they have, and I challenge whether the hon. Gentleman knows. I believe that the Government may have erred on the side of secrecy simply because that is the general ethos of British society and certainly the position in Whitehall.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman compounds my suspicions about his approach to the issue. He suggests that the Government would err on the side of secrecy when we are investigating matters of the utmost gravity for the protection of the public. I would not apologise for that. If it is necessary to protect the public from fraud and swindlers—I do not suggest that the hon. Gentleman would ever be a swindler's friend, by any stretch of the imagination—the balance should lie with the protection of the public as a whole rather than with the protection of a single individual. The protection of the public as a whole must, by definition, be more important than the right of a single individual, however important the rights of that individual may be.

If there is any doubt about the issue, we must always protect the public as a whole, although on occasion that may work to the detriment of the individual. That may be the price that we have to pay in a democracy for adequate protection, particularly when we are dealing with people who are capable of perpetrating vast frauds and swindles on an international scale. That protection is very important when we are dealing with extremely sophisticated operators who can switch money all over the world at the press of a computer key, and when it is extraordinarily difficult for the police in any one country to investigate anything in any depth.

If we are to defeat that type of international fraud and crime and protect the public in this country and elsewhere—that is the implication of the order—we must err on the side of caution. That may mean that the rights of one individual may occasionally be prejudiced. I would sooner do that than risk thousands of people being swindled.

Once again, I refer to hundreds of my constituents who invested in Barlow Clowes. That case is relevant to the debate, because it involved another overseas regulator. The major losses did not occur with investments in this country, but with overseas investments. The Swiss companies involved were supposedly registered in Geneva, but it turned out that they were not registered at all. They did not even exist legally in Switzerland, yet my constituents sent money to box numbers in Geneva. I think that they were extraordinarily gullible and ill-advised, but they were advised by people in this country whom they thought were reputable. Money was also sent to Gibraltar. We must examine the ability of international regulators to co-operate with one another to defeat such fraud. Without a measure such as this, that will be totally impossible.

I repeat that, if a balance is to be struck between the protection of an individual and the protection of the public as a whole, we must err on the side of caution.

Mr. Cohen: Opposition Members agree that big fraudsters must be investigated and brought before the courts. However, the hon. Gentleman's argument is the same as that in favour of making all police records exempt, being subject access exemptions under the Data Protection Act 1984. The trouble is that there is no way of rectifying an abuse if incorrect information is placed on a person's file and he is subsequently badly treated. He cannot appeal. There must be an opportunity to set up appeal procedures. The Data Protection Registrar is like an ombudsman in these cases—investigating but keeping strict confidentiality. That would not interfere with investigations into potential big crime, but it would protect the individual. Why can we not have both?

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman's remarks worry me slightly. He is saying that we should not exempt police records or the records kept by regulators, for fear that that might prejudice an individual's right to know what information is being held about him. If such an investigation relates to a major fraud, which may be an international fraud, that is the price that society must pay if we are to be protected against that activity. There is no alternative to that protection. Therefore, I shall support the order.

9.13 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Opposition Members agree with much of what the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) said about the international aspects of this subject. It is extremely complex and increasingly important. I asked the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who is piloting his Computer Misuse Bill through the House, whether I could be on the Committee that considers the Bill. I look forward to Wednesday mornings in Committee, because these matters are important.

In preparation for the debate on the computer hacking Bill, on 5 January I tabled several questions to the Home Office, giving it six and a half weeks to answer. I make no

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

complaint about the nature of the answers, because it is a delicate matter. It pertains directly to assisting overseas regulatory authorities.

The first question that I tabled on 5 January for answer on 19 February was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to include provisions in his computer hacking Bill to promote safeguards to ensure that information stored in a DNA databank would not be open to misuse."

The Minister, who is at the Dispatch Box, replied:

"No. The Data Protection Act 1984"—

that is one of the Acts that we are discussing—

"already provides appropriate safeguards against misuse of personal data held on a computer database. These include a requirement that the data user must take security measures againt unathorised access."

It is one thing to say that the data user must take security measures, but it is easier said than done. Does the Home Office have any evidence that serious measures along those lines are being taken? I recall that the week before last, members of the all-party group for the retail trade went to a famous store, which I think should be nameless. The store managers were open about saying what mayhem had been created when the computer of just one store was illicitly entered. We need to take any possible measures that would stop that type of——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is preparing himself for other debates dealing with hacking. Will he look at the order that we are considering, and bring himself more into line with it?

Mr. Dalyell: My comments come under assisting "overseas regulatory authorities".

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is quite true, but I fear that the hon. Gentleman was moving considerably away from that. I have been listening carefully.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall come back, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The next question that I tabled was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the use of DNA material unrelated to crime."

I should like to put it on the record that the reply was:

"DNA testing has been used to establish relationship in immigration and paternity cases."

That work is excellent and wholly acceptable—and here we come to the "but"; I do not intend to speak for anyone other than myself, and this is a personal view— but I believe that authorities are entitled to use all the latest techniques of blood-testing in the fight against crime of any sort, and that includes fraud.

Mr. Stern: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dalyell: I would rather not give way until the hon. Gentleman has heard precisely the nature of my argument and then I shall, of course, give way to him.

I also tabled the question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for a DNA data bank for use in the fight against serious crime; what type of offences will be covered; what type of sample will need to be taken; and whether types of sample such as blood or hair-roots will be taken without the consent of the individual concerned."

I know that therein lies the rub. I know how difficult this is, and I also know that some of my hon. Friends take a different view——

Mr. Stern: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Dalyell: In a moment.

I also tabled the question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards legal powers to take samples, such as blood or hair-roots, in respect of screening people who there may be no reason to suspect of involvement in the offence."

There could be a whole range of offences, one of which could certainly be fraud. I give way now to the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has raised one "rub" as he calls it, about where the order might bite. However, there is another rub as well, and if I am lucky enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope to expand on this later. The hon. Gentleman is referring to data in a DNA bank being used for the detection of crime. Does he agree that we also have to determine the nature of the state that is determining that crime? Does he agree that to supply information through the order to the regulatory authorities of, say, France, is completely different from supplying exactly the same information under exactly the same circumstances to the regulatory authorities of, for example, Romania before the recent revolution? We are empowering the authorities to decide on the nature of the regime, as well as the nature of the crime.

Mr. Dalyell: I am not sure that that is not unreasonable. I am not being led astray or leading anyone else astray. However, the hon. Gentleman raises an important point. There must be a value judgment of to whom the information should be given. Our European partners are our partners and, as the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West said, the measure has international implications.

The next question that I asked is also relevant. It was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consult the Law Lords on the question which would arise if a doctor was asked to take a blood sample without consent, the question being how to obtain a sample from someone who refuses consent, and may physically resist having a sample taken, and on the question of the susceptibility of evidence obtained under duress by the courts; and if he will make a statement."

The Under-Secretary of State replied:

"My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the issues set out in the letter which my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State"—

that is the noble Lord Ferrers—

"sent to the hon. Member on 7 December."

It was an extremely interesting and perceptive letter. He continued:

"He is currently consulting the British Medical Association and the Association of Police Surgeons on the medical ethics of taking blood samples without consent from suspects in police detention and from convicted offenders. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider what further consultations are necessary in the light of their response. He has no plans to amend the law to enable the police to take blood or other samples from people who are not suspects or convicted offenders and who do not consent. The police are free to ask people to provide samples voluntarily."

Although it may be inconvenient and awkward, if hon. Members ask questions such as I have asked on this subject, they should not sit on the fence and pretend that it is entirely up to the Government to come to conclusions.

This evening I have had an opportunity to put my two ha'po'rth into the argument. I have given the matter considerable reflection—otherwise I should not have written the letters that prompted the letter of 7 December. I should not have asked those questions unless I had taken the view that it is pretty legitimate to use all techniques known to modern science, many of which are developing all the time, to pinpoint crime.

When does the Minister expect the discussions with the police surgeons and various other authorities to be finalised? I hope that when they are finalised, a hard line will be taken on the use of every available scientific, DNA and other technique. It is extremely cost-serving. If one takes that hard line, there is an argument for going ahead with one of the recommendations of Gordon Wasserman's committee, which was set up by the Home Office, that there should be an independent forensic unit to which those who get into trouble or who find themselves prosecuted could appeal.

I have argued elsewhere that the forensic unit might well be based at the university of Strathclyde—*[Laughter]*—where distinguished work has been done on an academic base for the whole of the United Kingdom. I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) laugh. If that work had been done in Hull, I should have said the same thing. But he is not my constituent and nor do I have many constituents—I could probably count them on the fingers of one hand—who work in the university of Strathclyde. I am an east-coast Scot, and east-coast Scots are different from west-coast Scots.

There is a strong argument for using every forensic technique available for this and other types of crime. After the discussions with the police authorities, I look forward to an announcement that the Government feel that every sort of technique should be available. I for one undertake to support and vote for any measure designed to take advantage of every scientific technique available, even if some of my colleagues, understandably, scream about civil liberties.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members who wish to speak to look at the explanatory note and I remind them that this is a narrow debate. The order is consequential on the Companies Act 1989 and the Financial Services Act 1986. Comments must be pertinent to that. Otherwise, I shall rule hon. Members out of order.

9.25 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your comments. My remarks will be brief.

It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) directly, and to take his argument a stage further. Instead of supporting him, as I do, by simply saying that all forensic and other techniques should be used in solving crime and apprehending offenders, I shall explore the nature of the crime that we are considering in deciding whether the techniques should be applied. I apologise to the House for the fact that some of my examples will come, not from my work in the House, but from work outside. I have a declared interest as a partner in a firm of chartered accountants, and the examples arise from my work there.

The explanatory note contains four words which in principle are anodyne, but which in practice contain a dangerous extension of powers—"assist overseas regulatory authorities". I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) that when we are dealing with fraud in general and financial fraud in particular it is necessary to consider it on a worldwide basis. Recent fraudsters, as in the Barlow Clowes operation and the Dover plan, would not have been caught or brought to justice without international co-operation. We must applaud international co-operation.

We are dealing with fraud that takes place in the context of our western European society and values. There are other frauds, or frauds as they would be defined elsewhere in the world, which are not so clearly pigeonholed. For example, how will the powers provided in amending the data protection regulations in the light of the Companies Act 1989 be applied where a person appears to have committed a detailed and marked offence against the exchange control regulations of an African country? That will cause considerable moral problems to Opposition Members. Many African countries maintain and impose severe penalties of imprisonment for breaches of their exchange control regulations.

South Africa, for example, has one of the most vicious exchange control regimes in the world. Do we intend to give powers to the Data Protection Registrar to shop someone who has broken the South African exchange control regulations? Many people in that country are desperate to get out, but they are held there by the force and the threat of force implied in the South African exchange control regulations.

In case the House believes that such stringent regulations are peculiar to South Africa, I should say that Nigeria operates similarly strict exchange control regulations. People equally fear being shopped by other regulatory authorities for breaking those Nigerian regulations. I have dealt with refugees from both those countries; those who have broken the respective exchange control regulations have a strong fear of violence.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): My hon. Friend has mentioned a most tricky point—irregularities in a regime that most of us regard as repressive and in need of reform. Does he agree, however, that we might be forced by necessity to co-operate in certain actions on behalf of the regulators of a country, be it South Africa or any other, if we are to receive reciprocal assistance from that country in our search for malefactors who are residents or national of this country and who have taken investors' funds to South Africa or elsewhere? Therefore, it might be necessary to co-operate with the undesirables to achieve the greater end.

Mr. Stern: I accept that. My hon. Friend has raised something about which the order says nothing, when it should.

If we are seeking to co-operate with, for example, South Africa to search out and to bring to justice a fraudster currently living in Europe, I accept that we shall get such

[Mr. Stern]

co-operation from South Africa only if we offer reciprocal co-operation to enable that regime to bring to justice a fraudster who originates in South Africa.

There is a distinction to be drawn, however, which is not drawn in the order. Although I should be happy to see regulations permitting us to co-operate with the South African regime on matters of fraud, I would not want our regulations to permit the British authorities to co-operate with that regime on matters relating to exchange control. South Africa possesses such control, whereas we, as a result of Government action, do not.

I am looking for some assurance not only about the Data Protection Registrar's entitlement to assist overseas regulatory authorities against the apparent wishes of the individual, but about how the registrar will be able to discriminate between one particular type of offence and another. We should consider, as a matter of civil liberty, whether we should give such undisclosed powers to the registrar so that, without reference to Parliament, he can discriminate in such cases.

Mr. Hanley: Perhaps I am wrong, but I felt that the power was granted to the Secretary of State and, through him, to the Data Protection Registrar. Ultimately, it is the Secretary of State who must sanction the decision. The registrar, worthy and honourable though he is, would need to refer for guidance in such cases to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend is quite correct, but in an open society can we not go further? Are we not entitled to look to the Secretary of State to declare to the House when he has exercised these blanket powers of discrimination which the order offers him? I should be grateful for some reassurance from my hon. Friend about exactly how—perhaps in the Data Protection Registrar's annual report or some other way—it might be possible for the Secretary of State to report to the House on how the powers should be used.

I quoted an example of repressive African regimes. I shall quote another example that is germane to the debate in the light of earlier references to the Barlow Clowes affair. There has recently been a belief among many overseas investors who have chosen to invest in this country through Gibraltar that the British authorities, in the light of the Barlow Clowes affair, have been attempting to hound them. I would be very worried indeed if, in passing this order, which contains the powers to assist overseas regulatory authorities, we gave the Secretary of State powers, through the Data Protection Registrar, to make undue inquiries of perfectly genuine investors who happen to use Gibraltar as a means of investing in this country. Many such investors feel that too much of that sort of thing has been going on already.

The joke in Gibraltar at present is that, whereas a few years ago it was believed that, if this country sent gunboats to Gibraltar, they would be to assist Gibraltar against possible invasion from Spain, the belief in Gibraltar now, in view of the arguments over the airport, is that, if gunboats were sent to Gibraltar, they would be to repress the Gibraltar Government.

Mr. Hanley: Surely not.

Mr. Steen: That is the view that is currently held.

There is considerable suspicion that the powers given in the order could be used with insufficient discretion, of which Parliament might not be apprised. That could happen unless some mechanism were built in to advise Parliament of the way in which those powers were so used.

There is one aspect in which the order does not go far enough. I accept that this is a problem generally with data protection legislation. The order applies only to data as defined in the Data Protection Act. There has been a growing belief in the House for a number of years that, as matters have moved on since the original Act, the definition of "data", and therefore the definition within the order, is inadequate.

We have had many debates in the House about, for example, medical records. They are probably the most personal and potentially most damaging record about any individual. They are not covered by the Act and, quite rightly, will not be covered by the Act under this order, because the order relates solely to financial matters. I wonder whether, in considering the order, we should look again at the extent to which financial information about an individual or company will be exempt from the order because it comes outwith the strict definition of data as laid down in the Act.

How many times have we heard of—and in our professional lives seen—the bank manager, at the end of an interview, write down, "This man is a con merchant"? That record is based on the opinion that the bank manager formed during the interview; it will stay on a personal or company file and will not be open to regulation under the Act because it is not data—it is not in technically permanent form.

Mr. Hanley: Being a renowned chartered accountant, my hon. Friend may well remember the case in which a certain watch was seized by taxation officials because engraved on the back of it was a Swiss bank account number. The defence of those who owned the watch was that it was not data as defined under the Act. It was not a record: it was a watch with an engraving. The courts said that, because the watch was engraved with information, it could be regarded as a record. Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that perhaps the courts can take such matters into account as the need arises?

Mr. Stern: I should like to think that my hon. Friend was right. However, I have been advised that it is not yet open to the courts to extend the definition of data in that way. I would like reassurance from the Minister about whether such an extension of "data" could be made.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend is hitting on an important point by referring to the fact that we are discussing electronically recorded data protected under the Act. Does he agree, however, that, if we did not provide an exemption of the sort suggested in this order, computers could not be used in the pursuit of crime, because of the danger that recorded material could be made available to the subject of that pursuit? To pursue international or national crime efficiently, it is necessary and sensible to have exemptions of the sort that we are discussing.

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend is right. I hope that neither he nor the House will take my remarks as suggesting any doubt of the need for an order of this sort. I merely maintain that any order of this sort must be drawn as

tightly as possible, and applied with the greatest discretion. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure me that there will be mechanisms to ensure such discretion.

On the basis of experience, I must point out, finally, that orders of this nature change the reality in which they operate by their very passage. I remember that, some years ago, a similar order was passed by the United States Congress, laying down regulations for United States investors in Swiss banks. I came across this example because I was advising a Panamanian investor in the United Kingdom who happened to invest, perfectly legitimately, in a Swiss bank.

The Swiss banks wrote to all their customers telling them that the regulations had just been passed by Congress and that they would be obliged within six months under Swiss law to disclose certain information under the regulations, which were part of the US-Swiss convention. The banks strongly urged their customers to remove their accounts if they felt that they did not wish certain information, which they listed, to be disclosed to the US authorities. These letters were sent, couched in the strongest possible terms, to all customers, whatever the source of their funds and whether or not the banks knew that source.

Is not my hon. Friend the Minister concerned that, by giving additional powers to assist overseas regulatory authorities, he may be causing widespread ripples with the stone that he has cast into the pool tonight?

9.44 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): One opens a can of worms when one goes back to the primary legislation from which a statutory instrument flows. I agree with the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on the explanatory memorandum to the order. In all my time in the House I have never found it necessary, when reading a statutory instrument, to find about four previous references to help the House to arrive at a decision.

First, I went to the Library to find section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984, the source of this statutory instrument and the order that was introduced in 1987 and which this one amends. The House would do well to remember why we have to have such statutory instruments. Section 30(1) of the 1984 Act, which comes under part IV headed

"Regulation of financial services etc",

states:

"Personal data held for the purpose of discharging statutory fuctions to which this section applies are exempt from the subject access provisions in any case in which the application of those provisions to the data would be likely to prejudice the proper discharge of those functions."

That is the source of all our problems about data protection, the order that is before the House and the one that was introduced in 1987. Section 30 (2) of the 1984 Act states:

"This section applies to any functions designated for the purposes of this section by an order made by the Secretary of State,".

When the Home Secretary framed the Data Protection Act, I do not think that he had any idea of the number and scope of the statutory instruments that it would require.

I went to the Library earlier today to look up the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987 which this statutory instrument amends. I should like to make an urgent plea for the convenience of all hon. Members. The Library staff are quite expert at looking up references, but it took them a long time to trace the statutory instrument that we are amending. In future when an explanatory memorandum to a statutory instrument is brought before the House, it should have upon it the number of the statutory instrument to which it refers. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) will support that plea.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend and I were in the Library together trying to find the references. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Vote Office should have copies of the primary legislation at least on the day that an order is discussed? My hon. Friend and I were both in the Vote Office today and, as he knows, there was no copy of the Companies Act 1989 or the Companies Act 1985.

They are large volumes of weighty legislation, but surely two or three copies of the primary Act should be available so that we can refer to them before discussing such important issues.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. He and I were reduced to photocopying the relevant extracts of the primary Act.

We are amending a statutory instrument that has about 12 pages and discussing an order to amend one line on one page. Will there be other statutory instruments to take up the time of the House to amend that statutory instrument of 1987?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to note the hon. Gentleman's new-found and unprecedented interest in statutory instruments. Some of us have been examining them for much longer than the hon. Gentleman. Did he vote for or against the primary legislation which gives powers to the Secretary of State?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is right to ask that question, because he was not in the House between 1983 and 1987. He and other hon. Members will know that I have frequently taken an interest, as the hon. Gentleman has done, in secondary legislation. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman serves on Standing Committees, but whenever I do so, I invariably raise points—sometimes to the chagrin of the Whip—regarding any clauses that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman makes a great defence for himself, but perhaps he will return to the subject of the order.

Mr. Brown: The order makes an important amendment to a comprehensive statutory instrument. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure in future that when the House is asked to amend data protection legislation, the resultant measure is consolidated into one Act of Parliament.

9.50 pm

Mr. Randall: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. The debate has been most interesting. The order is complex and badly drafted, but our debate was fundamental to the freedoms of the people of this country, and to ensuring that our institutions operate effectively and efficiently in wiping out corruption and malpractice wherever possible.

The essence of the debate has been the balance between protecting civil liberties and the freedom of individuals to

[Mr. Randall]

see files about them, and at times restricting availability to information, to ensure that proper investigations into corruption can be undertaken.

I hope that, whenever we review the Data Protection Act 1984, those principles will be kept in the forefront of our minds.

9.52 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The debate has been thorough and exhaustive, and the most pertinent intervention was made by you, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you said that the scope of the order is extremely narrow. So it is. I sympathise with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), who referred to the complicated nature of the matter and sought an explanatory memorandum. That request was made by other hon. Members on both sides of the House. Having read the order myself, I understand the point that they make.

Mr. Hanley: I am sorry to disagree with my hon. Friend, but although the order may be narrow in scope, as he says, does he not agree that it is extremely wide in its effect and has international implications? The measure is not so narrow as to be unimportant, but is wide enough to be extremely vital to the protection of investors in this country and worldwide.

Mr. Lloyd: I did not say that the order is not important, for I agree with my hon. Friend that it is. However, the changes that it makes are relatively narrow in scope, even though they provide a very necessary additional opportunity for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to use his powers to combat malpractice.

It was clear that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West was asking not so much for an explanatory memorandum on the order as for the Data Protection Act 1984, and the Data Protection (Regulation of Finance Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order 1987 to be brought into line with the Companies Act 1989, which made it necessary to change some of the 1987 order.

The order does not extend the list of categories of information that may be withheld. Many hon. Members have the impression that it does. If it did that, I would have followed their argument. The order changes only one part of the 1984 Act, and that was identified by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West as part II, paragraph 5. I shall return to that in a few moments.

The balance of the law under these orders is very clear, and was set by the principal legislation, which it is not our place to discuss this evening, as it was exhaustively discussed at the time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), who is not with us at the moment, was on the Committee which considered the Data Protection Act 1984, and I suspect that he has the advantage over most of us, with the exception of my hon. Friend the deputy Patronage Secretary, who was also a member of the Committee.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend rightly draws the House's attention to the fact that nothing is changed by what the House does tonight. We are merely tidying up, following the passage of the Companies Act 1989. That is why I strongly believe that now is the time for the powers that be to consolidate everything to do with data protection—the Data Protection Act 1984 and the Companies Act 1989. Is the time not coming when someone should consolidate all the legislation on data protection into one statute?

Mr. Lloyd: Many parts of our legislation could usefully be consolidated, but it is extremely time-consuming for the draftsmen and for the House. I understand the point that my hon. Friend is making, but I cannot promise that consolidation can be carried out at an early date.

I disagree when my hon. Friend says that the Order is merely tidying up. It is consequential on the legislation, and it does two important things. First, it makes it possible for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to call experts, apart from officials in his Department, to investigate certain data. That is only sensible because the complexity, particularly in financial matters, is so great that one needs to call those people with special knowledge to assist—whether they are accountants, specialist lawyers or people with experience of banking. All those people will be bound by the rules of secrecy, and they will be operating on his behalf, seeking information and understanding so that the Home Secretary may use it for the purposes determined by the Act.

The second important thing that the Order will do is to enable the Home Secretary to make the information available to overseas regulators who have signed the convention, when he believes that it will be in the interests of uncovering malpractice. He does not have to supply the information, but he may decide to do so, and it is very much in our interests that we supply information to help investigators of fraud and malpractice by overseas officials who have powers in that area. It is also very much in our interests to receive such information in return.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) was right to draw our attention to Barlow Clowes, because that is a good example of alleged fraud or irregularity transcending international boundaries. In that case, it was necessary to be able to exchange information across frontiers, and it was a pity that we were not able to do that earlier. Some of the difficulties that investors have suffered might then have been avoided.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West was extremely worried that what might be acceptable in general might be oppressive in practice. I remind him that the registrar is there and is required under the Act to keep an eye on the way in which the provisions are implemented and to make an annual report to Parliament.

I said that I would return to the question of advertising in paragraph 5 of the schedule. The provision now covers details of advertisements, particularly in unlisted securities where fraudulent claims may be the start of a malpractice that needs to be followed up. The order extends slightly the amount of information that may be withheld in such circumstances. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman would want to avoid that. The Labour party usually emphasises that fraud in the City and in business should be pursued actively and hard, and I am sure that he would not want to deny the correct authorities powers to do that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest, who served on the Committee, wondered about the additional expertise—a point that I have mentioned. He talked about codes of practice. The codes of practice referred to in the order enable the Home Secretary to give guidance and indications to a primary regulator, such as the Securities

and Investments Board, on how to conduct itself in the matter of the information that may be withheld. The order does not extend this information but gives guidance that is necessary to ensure that it may be obtained and used for the proper purposes.

Let me answer the questions of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). I have explained that the order does not extend any of the items of information that can be withheld, except in the small area that I have outlined. The hon. Gentleman wanted the information that may be withheld set out clearly, but then went on to complain that it was set out extremely clearly and in great detail. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. I agree with him that, when the information is set out in great detail so that one can see precisely what categories are included, there is quite a lot to get through, but that is part of the openness for which the hon. Gentleman called. He asked whether the registrar was content with the order: he was consulted and was certainly content.

I think that I have replied to most of the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West, who wanted to ensure that the philosophical approach was sensible and balanced, and I believe that it is. The basic philosophy is contained in the original Acts, which were exhaustively debated.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to several questions that he has tabled to Home Office Ministers. I cannot add to the answers that we gave him at the time, but I am glad that he is determined to chase us to ensure that information—especially relating to DNA and other means of identifying and getting to the root of particular sorts of crime—is thoroughly used and pursued. He is right in that. We are aware of what the hon. Gentleman seeks, and we agree with him, but I hope that he will accept that this is a complex matter and that discussions need to be carried through to ensure not merely that we make the best use of that avenue of information but that we make use of it in such a way that it does not impinge unnecessarily and in an unwarranted manner on the rights of individuals.

Mr. Dalyell: I realise that this is a complex matter, but I should not have thought that it would take six weeks to provide an answer to the question. Does the Home Office accept that it has a responsibility to make a fairly early statement on the report by Gordon Wasserman—one of its senior officials—on related forensic issues? The sooner that happens, the better it will be for forensic science. Some of us recognise that there are real difficulties over recruiting forensic scientists. The Government ought to pay regard to that problem.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but it is not a matter on which I ought to comment this evening.

It is a narrow order. It makes three changes that are, I believe, uncontroversial. Many questions have been asked and suspicions about the original legislation have been aroused., However, suspicions have not been aroused about the three changes that the order makes. Therefore, I happily commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 30th January, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5), (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

Animal Waste

That this House takes note of Community Document No. 9728/89 relating to veterinary rules on animal waste and prevention of pathogens in feedstuffs; and supports the Government's intention to secure an outcome which provides for the continued availability of a hygienic and practical means of disposal of animal waste.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5), (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Hill Livestock

That the draft Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Concessionary Television Licences

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.6 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is a great pleasure for me to raise the subject of sheltered housing and concessionary television licences. Earlier this evening I shrewdly suspected, and hoped, that I might be able to go home for dinner, but I underestimated the absorbing interest of data protection. Never in so short a time have I seen so many knowledgeable colleagues arrive in the Chamber—no doubt galvanised by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department—to participate in such a distinguished fashion in a highly interesting debate.

I am grateful for the support of many hon. Members. Many of my colleagues have raised the subject in Adjournment debates. Not frequently do we find in constituency after constituency represented by colleagues on both sides of the House the anomalies with which I hope to deal. There is, therefore, much concern about the subject.

My purpose is to find a way round over-rigid implementation by the Home Office—in the process becoming more bureaucratic than is strictly necessary—of the May 1988 regulations. I shall concentrate on those regulations and will pray in aid some constituency cases to illustrate the anomalies. There are many similar cases throughout the country about which I have heard and regarding which I have received letters from councils of all political persuasions. At a time when the Government are not enjoying universal popularity, we ought to concentrate on annoying the minimum number of people over such small measures. Sadly, that is not the case here.

I intend to refer briefly to the unsatisfactory state of affairs over wider concessions, causing unnecessary political damage, to which I have already referred. Successive Governments, whatever they might have done in opposition or as individual Members of Parliament, have never conceded free television licences for all pensioners. I do not urge that now and I do not propose to argue one way or the other, but as there was no overall granting of free television licences, quite rightly, concessions were granted to residential homes and to sheltered accommodation with communal services. That arrangement has continued for 20 years, and as with any such arrangement, there has been a constant challenge for the enlargement of those concessions.

We then reach the Armageddon for the Home Office in the case of Kirklees metropolitan borough council against the Home Office of 1987, which is known as the Kirklees decision. It meant that visiting housing stewards and the presence of an alarm system in mainstream housing constituted a communal facility and therefore at least potential eligibility for the concession. Immediately, panic rose from the bottom floor to the top floor of the Home Office as it was realised that those concessions could go way beyond the Government's original intention some 20 years before, which the Home Office now sticks to, and which is for schemes

"equivalent or comparable to residential homes."

That led to the May 1988 revised regulations.

The Government's reaction has not been commendable. They have been unprepared to grant a total concession to the elderly—I would not quibble with that—and they could not withdraw from existing concessions for obvious political reasons, so instead of minimising the anomalies and making the best of a worthy situation, which dictates that concessions should be granted, the Government decided on extremely restrictive regulations of the existing concessions—the May 1988 revised regulations—giving the absolute minimum and holding back everything they could. The result has been rigidity, anomaly and, politically, the worst of all worlds.

I shall not discuss the May 1988 regulations in any great detail. There are four regulations and I shall concentrate on the fourth, although for the information of the House, I shall refer briefly to the others. The first qualification for concession refers to accommodation specifically provided for retired people over the age of 65 and certain categories of disablement. The second qualification is a resident warden or one who works for at least 30 hours a week. The third is a communal facility within a common boundary and the fourth, on which I wish to concentrate, is:

"There shall be a group of at least four dwellings with a common and exclusive boundary encompassing all and only the accommodation."

That is God's gift to anomaly. I shall criticise it specifically in a moment, but first I have a few general criticisms of the overall picture.

The Government are misguided and appear mean in their institution and rigid interpretation of the regulations. I regret that the unsatisfactory background, the unfairness and getting the balance wrong are not wholly restricted to the subject of this Adjournment debate. It is pretty obvious, bearing in mind the increased numbers of elderly people, that there is a tendency for more sheltered housing to be built or converted from mainstream housing by local councils, particularly in urban areas, although I represent a rural constituency. That is the worry to the Home Office of the Kirklees decision.

There are an increasing number of scattered units of accommodation for the elderly on many large estates across the country in the midst of mainstream housing. Instead of facing up to that and spending a little more money—and therefore not having to face this Adjournment debate tonight—the Government have retreated into their shell. They have performed a kind of Custer's last stand over what they claim to be the original intention of the scheme, which is now outdated.

I cannot say that I shall play Sitting Bull to my hon. Friend the Minister's General Custer, but as my hon. Friend leaves this place—we must recall that General Custer did not leave—I hope that he will be prepared to consider the matter and perhaps have a word with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. I believe that this is a matter more for Ministers than for the civil servants who loyally carry out their duties and who, when they are told to be restrictive, are—and with due deference and respect to my hon. Friend the Minister, no one can be more restrictive than the Home Office or, regrettably, be so more effectively.

Many anomalies have been drawn to my attention since notice of this Adjournment debate appeared on the Order Paper. There is widespread concern not only from Leominster district council, but from the National Federation of Housing Associations, Age Concern, the Consumers Association and district councils, which have contacted me from such places as far apart as Malden and Camden.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): What about Stockton?

Mr. Temple-Morris: Yes, and from Stockton.

I want to refer to two anomalies in Leominster, with which my hon. Friend the Minister is familiar. They are examples of this ridiculous anomaly, and I hope that the House will forgive me if I mention them specifically. The first relates to Burton gardens and Burton crescent in Wembley. The accommodation there is now a sheltered scheme and it has communal facilities, a warden and a clearly demarcated section on the housing estate. However, before the warden and alarm were installed and before restrictions were imposed in 1986 making it much more difficult for tenants to buy that type of council housing, the bold tenant—no doubt encouraged by the Government—of 25 Burton crescent decided to buy his old people's accommodation. He duly did that and became the only private owner on that estate.

At the moment, Burton gardens, which runs into Burton crescent, gets the concession in toto. The part of Burton crescent up to No. 25 also receives the concession. I am grateful in that regard to my hon. Friend the Minister, who granted an additional concession to the original adjudication after my first intervention in the matter.

However, no one beyond No. 25, on exactly the same estate, receives the concession. No. 25 is preceded by the odd Nos. 21 and 23. Nos. 21, 23 and 25 are all joined together. They are old people's ground-floor flats in units of three, all joined together. Because Nos. 21 and 23 are joined to No. 25 and separated by a very small car parking space from the earlier numbers that receive the concession, they do not receive it. All the flats above No. 25 do not receive it either.

If that example is frankly ridiculous, then the second example of Cornwall gardens at Tenbury Wells in my constituency is even more so. That is a council-owned site and one turns into it from Berrington road in Tenbury Wells. Where one turns into it, there are two flats. Nos. 7 and 9 Berrington road, which are part of the wholly council-owned site. After those flats there is an entrance and right of way granted by the council to a pub car park. On the other side of that entrance the estate continues. The estate was bought as a whole, is administered as one estate and was built as one. Only that solitary little entrance to the pub car park separates Nos. 7 and 9 from the rest of the estate.

The estate has excellent communal facilities. I enjoyed a nice cup of coffee and some hospitality when I inspected it. Knowing that my hon. Friend the Minister might challenge me and say that I have not been there, I advise him that I went there in January. There is a recreation room, a laundry, a warden, an alarm system and so on.

When the two existing sitting tenants at Nos. 7 and 9 eventually cause a re-let, the full television licence fee, rather than £5, will have to be paid. The Government should do something about that practice, but they do not seem to have learnt the lesson that, if one pleases a few of the people a lot of the time, one will at least make some progress. It is not for me to lecture my hon. Friend the Minister on that matter, and he would not be responsible for it either.

I shall review some possible policies and practical suggestions in a descending scale of generosity. The first is a general concession to all pensioners, a matter on which the House voted towards the end of the last Parliament, and which I do not press tonight. The second is a concession to all pensioners entitled to housing benefit or a community charge rebate—in other words, whether they are in or out of sheltered housing. The third is a concession to all pensioners living in purpose-built sheltered accommodation. That means the public sector and—an increasing bone of contention, as more and more people spend their last savings on buying sheltered accommodation—the private sector also.

The fourth policy, which I recommend to my hon. Friend, is a concession to all pensioners living in purpose-built or adapted local authority and/or housing association accommodation. That covers all developments—urban, rural, large and small estates. That represents a logical compromise.

My hon. Friend will forgive me when I say that I do not expect a generous response from him tonight. I will not even press him for one. However, I suggest that we have less rigidity in the application of the May 1988 rules. One method would be by way of ministerial discretion. I expect that my hon. Friend will say that Ministers do not have discretion, and that therefore we are stuck with rules that have been drafted as restrictively as possible.

I have been trying to be constructive. Concentrating on what I have called policy No. 4, I ask my hon. Friend to consider that there shall be a group of at least four dwellings with a common and exclusive boundary encompassing all and only the accommodation. Therefore, a little thing such as the entrance to a pub car park completely ruins those who happen to be caught out on the wrong side of it. I suggest that we should add the words, "save and except where the accommodation is clearly part of a coherent, unified and separate sheltered housing scheme." That would get shot of many anomalies. However, I am afraid that it would not alter the major problems, as that can be done only if we address purpose-built and/or adapted public housing as a whole. If my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point, we will make progress.

I can imagine the Minister's advisers going to him tomorrow morning, saying "It is a legal nightmare. They will be challenging us here and there. The only way in which we can defend it is to keep within the corral. Minister, you cannot do this or that." It would be nice if, once upon a time, we could see an Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office doing what I want—and, if he viewed the matter reasonably independently, what he also would want.

Therefore, in the name of a little more decency, and certainly in the name of fairness, I commend what I have said and the limited, minimal solution that I have outlined to my hon. Friend.

10.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on securing this debate and on raising this subject. It is one in which he has taken a persistent and concerned interest on behalf of his constituents, as his detailed promenade down Burton gardens and other local streets, and his other many exchanges with the Home Office, have shown. I am grateful to him for providing a useful opportunity this evening to explain why we changed the

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

concessionary licence scheme nearly two years ago, and to clear up, I hope, some of the misunderstandings and misconceptions that seem to have arisen since.

I start by explaining briefly how the scheme evolved, and why it became necessary to change it. The scheme was formally established on a statutory basis on 1 January 1969. It was intended to rationalise the television licence requirements in old people's homes. Previously, residents in some homes had been treated as though they were exempt from licensing, while others were required to pay the full licence fee.

The scheme was also intended to cover sheltered housing schemes for pensioners run by local authorities or housing associations which were considered to be directly comparable with old people's homes. At a later date, the scheme was extended to cover disabled or mentally handicapped people living in similar accommodation. The scheme was thus introduced for the best of motives, to correct what was seen as an anomaly. Entitlement was clearly linked to the type of accommodation occupied, and the way in which it was run, rather than to the personal circumstances of the occupant.

Over the years, the number of people benefiting from the concession has steadily increased. When the regulations were changed in May 1988, that number stood at 776,000 people. It has since gone up by over 91,000. So the change was clearly not an effort—certainly not an effective effort—at covert restriction. It sprang from the necessity, after the court action to which I shall refer in a moment, to make what were believed to be the existing rules more coherent and sustainable at law.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, although I have only a little time.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister accept that changes are being made in those statistics even now? Some of my constituents who receive the concession are being told, even at this stage, that it will be withdrawn. Does not this need clarifying?

Mr. Lloyd: It has been clarified. That was the whole purpose of the change. The position was anomalous before, as the court decision suggested. Although some people have lost, undoubtedly a great many more can now benefit.

As I have said, the change sprang from necessity after that court action. Thus, the figure now exceeds 867,000 people, and 80 per cent. of those beneficiaries live in sheltered housing schemes rather than conventional residential homes. It is the application of the regulations to people in sheltered housing—my hon. Friend referred to this specifically—that seems to cause most uncertainty.

As hon. Members will remember, early in 1987 the scheme ran into particular difficulties following a successful High Court action by Kirklees metropolitan borough council. It had sought judicial review of our decision not to issue the licence to the occupants of some council accommodation. We had thought that the employment by the council of officials to visit all council tenants to collect rent and to sort out housing problems did not constitute a communal facility, as required by the regulations then in force.

The court disagreed, and that judgment has far-reaching implications. It called into question our other interpretation of the regulations—that the accommodation must form groups and be specially provided for pensioners or disabled people.

It quickly became clear that the Kirklees judgment had effectively opened the way for local authorities to bring within the scheme large numbers of people living in what was essentially mainstream housing. By providing some sort of visiting care service or communal alarm system, they could claim that the accommodation was specially provided and formed a group with a communal facility. It was never the intention that the scheme should expand in that way, as I think my hon. Friend will agree, and it would have been very expensive in terms of revenue lost to the BBC.

We therefore had to act to protect the BBC's finances, and to avoid the complete breakdown of the scheme. A simple solution would have been to abolish the scheme, but we did not want to take away a long-standing concession which had benefited many people. We therefore considered a number of options for change. These included the possibility of linking entitlement to a social security or other benefit; but there was no consensus as to the most appropriate linkage, and to grant the concession to pensioners receiving a particular benefit would have provoked claims for similar treatment from non-pensioners in receipt of the same, or broadly comparable, benefit. That would have widened the scope of the scheme considerably, and could have been even more anomalous than the previous arrangements.

Moreover, we believe that that type of approach would have been wrong in principle. The television licence fee is not a proper instrument of social policy. The right way to help the less well-off is through the pensions and benefits system, leaving it to individuals to decide for themselves how best to spend their own money. After much thought, therefore, we concluded that the most sensible thing to do was to restore the underlying intention of the scheme. As I explained earlier, this was to benefit retirement pensioners and disabled people living in residential homes, or in sheltered housing schemes which were directly comparable with such homes.

To give effect to this decision, we introduced new regulations which defined more closely the type of sheltered accommodation that would qualify in future. These regulations came into force on 19 May 1988.

To qualify as equivalent to a residential home under the new regulations, sheltered accommodation must now satisfy the following conditions. First, it must form part of a group of at least four dwellings within a common and exclusive boundary. That is where the examples that my hon. Friend gave fall outside the rules. Secondly, it must be specially provided by way of erection or conversion for occupation only by retirement pensioners or disabled people. Thirdly, it must be provided or run by a local authority or a housing association. Fourthly, it must be served by a full-time or residents warden. Fifthly, there must be a communal facility within the boundary intended to meet the need of the resident. Perhaps I might explain why we imposed those conditions and say a little about how we apply them in practice.

Mr. Devlin: I am dealing with a case where concessionary television licences have been withdrawn because the buildings are not joined together. That was not on my hon. Friend's list of five conditions. I raised the matter with the Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), one Question Time but I have received no answer since.

Mr. Lloyd: The concession would not have been withdrawn from someone who was in receipt of the concession. Nor would it have been withdrawn because the buildings were not joined together. It might have been withdrawn because the buildings were not within an exclusive boundary. I cannot deal from the Dispatch Box with a case of which I know nothing except what my hon. Friend has just said. If he would like to communicate with me about it, I shall be happy to reply and explain.

The reason why there must be a group of four dwellings within a common boundary is that the housing must be seen to form a cohesive, self-contained group, encompassing all and only the accommodation in question—just like a residential home.

We cannot accept, for instance, that a line drawn on a map round some parts of a mixed housing estate constitutes a common and exclusive boundary for the purposes of the regulations.

Thus, sheltered housing interspersed with mainstream housing cannot qualify. Nor can sheltered housing units physically separated from others by things such a shops, car parks or non-sheltered housing be regarded as part of the same scheme for concessionary television licence purposes.

We realise that local authorities sometimes choose to regard these separated housing units as part of a single scheme for their own administrative purposes, and find it hard to understand why we cannot do the same. The difficulty is that, when running a statutory scheme, it must be made clear—the Kirklees judgment established that—which accommodation qualifies and which does not. Hence our insistence on comparability with a residential home and the need for a common and exclusive boundary.

It would have been extremely difficult to devise a formula that would have allowed some separated housing units in reasonably close proximity to qualify, while excluding other units further afield which did not seem to be part of the scheme. If we had sought to do that, we should have provided God's gift to anomaly, to use my hon. Friend's colourful phrase. That would have been unworkable in practice and would undoubtedly have produced those anomalies on which the Kirklees judgment was predicated.

I now turn to the warden condition. In our deliberations, we considered carefully whether it would be right to include schemes served by a visiting or mobile warden. That is the case in my hon. Friend's constituency. We concluded that it would not. We recognise that many local authorities see mobile wardens as a more cost-effective way of caring for the needs of their elderly residents, and we welcome that. But the fact remains that to extend the scheme in that way would run counter to the long-standing principle. The reason for including sheltered housing schemes in the first place was that, as generally organised, they were regarded as being on par with residential homes, including the provision of resident warden.

My hon. Friend made several suggestions about how we might consider the rules. Obviously, we shall keep the scheme under review and make a particular point of reviewing his suggestions, but we can offer no prospect of further change, and I would mislead the House if I said otherwise. The ministerial discretion would be a vehicle for huge further anomalies and further opportunities to take these matters to court. Therefore, we shall not follow that avenue. We shall look carefully at his suggestions and those of any other hon. Member or organisation. I can see no real opportunity for any change in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Temple-Morris *rose*—

Mr. Lloyd: As the time is coming when I must sit down, I cannot give way to my hon. Friend. I am grateful to him for enabling me to set out this complex issue which, although designed as a helpful concession is, alas, still a source of misunderstanding and resentment.

The motion having been made after Ten o-clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

HAPPISBURGH LIGHTHOUSE BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

1. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in reducing waiting lists in the past 12 months.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The £31 million waiting list fund for 1989-90 will enable around 100,000 extra in-patients and day cases and 90,000 out-patients to be treated from the waiting lists by the end of March 1990. We have sent a management team into the 22 districts with the longest waiting lists, and as a result waiting lists in those districts have reduced by 12 per cent. and the number of patients waiting over a year by 17 per cent., with further reductions planned. Nationally, provisional figures for September 1989 suggest that waiting lists, in particular the numbers waiting over a year, have fallen since March 1989.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Secretary of State think that, in the interests of open government, it would be sensible for the Government to collect statistics nationally on out-patients awaiting appointments? In audiology, there is often an 18-month or two-year waiting list. Does he agree that the BBC statistics collected recently, which show that massive cuts would have to be made in a third of health authorities if spending is not increased, would be made worse if the true national statistics for waiting lists were available? Those statistics would show what people are experiencing rather than the propaganda put out by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Department.

Mr. Clarke: We keep collecting more statistics on waiting lists and we collect accurate information, which we disseminate. Recently, for example, we added figures on the waiting lists for day-patient treatment, as that treatment now represents a much bigger proportion of work.

The BBC survey to which the hon. Gentleman referred showed no results of the type that he described or anything like that. The statistics show that some districts are having difficulty keeping within their cash limits this year, but all districts are not only spending much more money than in previous years, but treating more patients and expanding their services.

Mr. David Howell: My right hon. and learned Friend has shown considerable determination in tackling the waiting list problem. Does he agree that at least part of the problem is caused by short-term budget cuts that must be made in certain hospitals? Is he aware that in my local hospital, the Royal Surrey county hospital, short-term budget cuts have had to be made because no funding is available for the large number of patients who come to that hospital from other districts? Is not it a crazy system that prevents excellent hospitals, such as the Royal Surrey, from providing the patient care of which they are capable, as they cannot get the money, because, apparently, the accounting system does not allow them to do so?

Mr. Clarke: It has always been a habit within the National Health Service for some authorities to expand their services rapidly for about 10 months of the year and then, towards the end of the financial year, to start to make short-term changes to try to keep within their cash limits. That demonstrates the failure of the present system to enable people to plan steady expansion of services in line with the steady growth of funds. I agree with my right hon. Friend that, in future, districts will be much more able to match their funds to the growth of patients. Districts that take in many patients from outside because of the quality of their services will find that the necessary funds come with those patients.

Ms. Primarolo: Does the Secretary of State accept that the money given to cut the waiting lists represents a blunt instrument? Many district authorities are concerned about the way in which they must allocate their budgets. Yesterday Bristol and Weston district health authority expressed its great concern about how the waiting list money was allocated, as it means that that authority cannot take into consideration pain and suffering or target lists of pain and suffering that may exceed 12 months in the next few months. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman review that criterion with a view to being much more sensitive about distributing that money?

Mr. Clarke: Our waiting list initiative will be overtaken by our White Paper reforms when they are brought into practice. They will have the beneficial effect that I have just described to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). In admitting patients, all hospitals take account of the gravity of the case, and the pain and suffering involved. We have to remember that more than half the patients in the National Health Service go for treatment and do not have to wait at all. Of those who go on to waiting lists, about half go into hospital within five weeks. It is not just a queue. People are admitted according to their clinical priority. Where there are serious problems, pain and suffering, we must not alarm people by making them think that waiting lists get in the way.

Private Health

2. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers his Department has in the monitoring of private hospital medical charges and private medical insurance premiums.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): None. However, health care providers and insurers operate in a competitive market, which helps to control their fees and subscriptions.

Mr. Lee: With the number of people covered by private medical insurance now approaching 10 per cent. of the population, increasing public concern about the level and variation of charges, continually escalating premiums and the fact that the Government now have a direct vested interest because of tax relief for the elderly, will my hon. Friend consider appointing a private sector health commissioner to police this sector and investigate complaints?

Mr. Freeman: The latest figure is that 12 per cent. of the population is covered by private insurance. Some 15 per cent. of elective surgery is performed in private hospitals. It is not the Government's responsibility to control those costs. I share my hon. Friend's concern, but it is for the patient, when he or she takes out an insurance policy to read the small print and be aware of what the charges may be for elective surgery in the private sector.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Minister will not monitor the excessive charges of private hospitals, will he at least condemn them? Does he agree that it is an outrage that BUPA, the British United Provident Association, should have charged £168 for a cotton swab and £983 for a drug that cost £13? How does that happen in a competitive market? Now that we know, thanks to the National Audit Office, that the NHS can do most operations at half the cost of private hospitals, would not the Minister get better value for his money by putting public money into public hospitals rather than by paying for tax relief on inefficient, private ones?

Mr. Freeman: I think that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed about the National Audit Office report. If he reads it carefully, he will see that the NAO reported that, for the £50 million that the National Health Service spent in private hospitals on long-term contracts for 30,000 patients, it got "good value for money".

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On several occasions I have asked the Department of Health for comparative figures on the costs of NHS operations, only to be told that the information is not collected centrally. Is it not about time that we did so, to find out why there are such vast differences in the cost of the same operations in different health districts?

Mr. Freeman: Through the introduction of the new performance indicators, we have the first year's results for 1987-88, and will shortly have the 1988-89 figures. They will enable my hon. Friend and other National Health Service patients to compare the performance of districts and hospitals, one with the other.

Speech Therapists

3. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the salary levels for speech therapists.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Agreement has been reached on speech therapists' pay for the period April 1989 to September 1990 and the new pay rates have been promulgated today. The settlement gives across-the-board increases in pay of 9 per cent. over an 18-month period.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Minister appreciate the extent of the crisis of morale among speech therapists working in the National Health Service? Why are they so poorly paid in relation to, for example, physiotherapists or occupational therapists? Does not their poor level of pay justify their feeling that the contribution that they make to the National Health Service is undervalued? What studies have the Government carried out to satisfy themselves that the low pay does not have an adverse effect on recruitment?

Mrs. Bottomley: Speech therapists are most certainly valued within the National Health Service. Under the new arrangements, their starting pay will be £9,487 ranging up to £22,087. The Department of Health NHS management advisory group is collecting information about recruitment and retention, and we shall look at it.

Mr. Devlin: I welcome the fact that speech therapists' pay has increased by 19 per cent. in real terms since 1979, but does not the fact that theirs is an all-graduate profession and the fact that they can so easily enter other areas of activity mean that they should be rewarded far more generously if their numbers are to be maintained and expanded?

Mrs. Bottomley: I assure my hon. Friend that there has been a considerable expansion in the number of speech therapists over the past 10 years. There are about 80 per cent. more speech therapists than there were 10 years ago. Their new starting pay level makes them more comparable with others in the Health Service and, more importantly, in the private health sector as well. But pay is not the only factor in recruitment and retention. The first report of the Select Committee on Social Services suggested a number of other areas where their needs could appropriately be met within the Health Service.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister agree that there will be insufficient speech therapists to achieve what the Government say are their community care objectives and that, because of the starting salary, many young people are denied the right to enter a worthwhile and rewarding profession?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of speech therapists to the provision of care in the community, but I remind him that there has been an 80 per cent. increase in their number. Speech therapists' starting salary has increased by 46·2 per cent., from £3,800 in 1979 to £9,400. The comparable increase in starting salary when the Labour party was in power was a mere 12 per cent.

Mr. Rowe: I agree that those are encouraging figures, but does my hon. Friend agree that it might be better for

speech therapists if they left the Whitley council and, taking advantage of the new arrangements for community care and the Health Service, seriously considered setting themselves up as independent, non-profit making trusts to tender their services to all the contractors who might wish to buy them?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is a long-term champion of speech therapists. I am meeting members of the College of Speech Therapists next week to discuss their concerns about future arrangements. Under the new regime, it is intended that they should continue to be able to receive patients on the basis of self-referral. The new salary structure will be an improvement and an enhancement, but they will want to discuss many other ways in which they can deploy their services under a future regime.

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

4. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far by his Department, by district health authorities and family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: So far in 1989-90 expenditure on review-related initiatives in the NHS as a whole stand at just over £80 million.

Mr. Lamond: How is it that the Government can cheerfully find £85 million to set up a monstrous bureaucracy of accountants and clerks who will be busy pushing accounts and receipts across a table to one another, but cannot find one tenth of that to help to overcome the tremendous hardship that people are suffering as a result of the ambulance workers' dispute?

Mr. Clarke: I am sorry that one year after we produced the White Paper entitled, "Working for Patients", the hon. Gentleman has not yet found time to read it. If he did so, he would realise that it has nothing to do with employing large numbers of accountants and clerks. The expenditure that has so far been incurred, includes, for example, expenditure on 100 extra consultants to tackle the waiting lists, on introducing quality control of clinical services, known as medical audit, and on pilot projects to introduce a new system of contracts to be entered into between district health authorities and hospitals. That £80 million has to be set against expenditure on the Health Service as a whole of £29,000 million next year and the £5,000 million increase in two years alone that we are proposing for the NHS.

Mr. Sims: Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider spending more money on ensuring that the general public are acquainted with the Bill's proposals and philosophy, and thus counteract some of the misleading information that has been given by certain professional bodies and by the Labour party?

Mr. Clarke: The White Paper is still available. It is written with clarity and there are explanatory leaflets to accompany it. There are strict rules governing the use of taxpayers' money for publicity and advertising. I have never been able to match the advertising budgets of the people who spent so much money last year on disseminating misleading versions of the reforms. Nevertheless, my experience of the Health Service tells me that the climate of opinion is changing rapidly among all groups of staff within the NHS, and I am sure that that will rapidly communicate itself to the general public.

Mrs. Wise: Why did not the Secretary of State answer the question, which relates to expenditure
"to prepare for the implementation of the Natioal Health Service and Community Care Bill"?
Why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman want the House to know the exact figure? Why does he prefer to muddle it up with expenditure on consultants? How can it be lawful to spend any money on implementing a measure that has not yet received the approval of the House?

Mr. Clarke: I answered the original question with precision and accuracy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The question relates to the Health Service review, and the introduction of, for example, clinical audit is extremely important. As to the Bill itself, those aspects of it that require statutory changes will not be implemented until the Bill is passed. If I were to interpret the question as narrowly as the hon. Lady suggests, I should have to answer, "Nothing." I described the money that has been spent on the National Health Service review—on desirable things, not on the idiotic things that publicity earlier this year implied lay behind the White Paper.

NHS Pay Disputes

5. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether pay disputes involving any group of National Health Service workers have been to arbitration since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, Sir.

Mr. Hague: I welcome today's talks on the ambulance dispute, but does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his answer exposes the double standard of Opposition spokesmen and union leaders in calling for it to be referred to arbitration, while never referring any dispute to arbitration when Labour was in office? Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to point out that referring one claim to arbitration would be very unfair to the majority of Health Service workers, who settled their claims without recourse to industrial action?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be unfair to other workers, and an impossible way of running the Health Service, if groups of people only had to go on strike long enough to win their way to arbitration. I do not believe that the people who demanded arbitration ever seriously expected that it would be resorted to. Nor do I imagine that the Labour party, in supporting them, ever expected that either—Labour never went to arbitration in similar circumstances. We are all glad to hear of the talks today. The management has always made it clear that it is prepared to re-enter talks to resolve the dispute on the basis that it described—and talks have started today on that basis. I trust that every right hon. and hon. Member hopes that those talks will succeed and that the dispute will be resolved.

Mr. Strang: I hope, as the Secretary of State does, that the talks will succeed. I put it to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, judging from his utterances earlier in the dispute, the best contribution that he can make throughout the talks at the Advisory, Conciliation and

Arbitration Service is to keep his mouth firmly shut on the respective merits of the management and trade union claims.

Mr. Clarke: My remarks throughout the dispute have been consistent——

Mr. Tony Banks: Yes—consistently bad.

Mr. Clarke: In attempts to inflame the dispute remarks were attributed to me that I trust those who attributed them will not repeat.

The Government and the Health Service management have made it clear that they are anxious to see talks resumed, and the basis on which they could resume has also been clear for some weeks. I am glad that common sense has dawned and that talks have restarted.

Mr. Bowis: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, rather than invoking arbitration, the concept of pendulum pay bargaining may be worth considering? That may be a way of meeting the public demand that disputes in which health, life and safety are put at risk should not be part of our industrial relations system.

Mr. Clarke: I am keenly in favour of pendulum arbitration in small manufacturing companies, and so on —linked usually with single-union deals and no-strike agreements. The ambulance dispute involves so many issues that it is unlikely that those elements could play a part—and the unions with which we are dealing would never enter into a no-strike agreement of the sort that some companies have entered into with unions.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State accept that the whole House will welcome the fact that his Department has now begun talks with ambulance staff, and the whole country will want those talks to continue until they succeed? In the light of his own repeated refusal to intervene to find a solution, on the ground that management must be free to manage, will he assure the House that management is now free to negotiate and, in particular, that if management wishes to include arbitration or a pay mechanism in the solution, he will not invervene to prevent that?

Mr. Clarke: As I said in my earlier answer, not only did no Labour Secretary of State ever refer such a dispute to arbitration, but no Labour Secretary of State ever intervened in the way that the hon. Gentleman has been urging me to throughout the dispute. If he took the office of Secretary of State for Health, to which he aspires, and then decided that if a strike went on for long enough he would intervene to tell managers to pay the claim, I can only say that he would be a disastrous holder of that office, from the point of view of the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best possible way to facilitate a speedy and honourable end to the dispute is not to make party political comments—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hayes: Such comments inflame the situation and a sensible silence by Ministers, officials, Opposition spokesmen and everyone else involved will lead to a quicker end to the dispute.

Mr. Clarke: Of course, advice from my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) about the need to keep silent on these grave matters is welcome, and I shall certainly take note of it. On the earlier part of his question, negotiations today are being carried on by the chief executive on behalf of the National Health Service executive, and they will ultimately no doubt move on to the Whitley council. Those concerned are free to negotiate there, and that is where the dispute should be resolved. It is the desire of many hon. Members to bring in a party political and a Government context and to keep attributing to me every aspect of the dispute that gives rise to the feeling that has been described.

Dental Charges

6. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effects of the introduction of charging for dental inspections.

8. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effects of the introduction of charging for dental inspections.

Mr. Freeman: The number of dental examinations in the September quarter of 1989, the latest available statistics, at approximately 7·4 million, represented a reduction from the year previously, at approximately 7·9 million. With a few more quarters' statistics, the underlying trend will become clearer. The annual number of dental examinations has gone up gradually in recent years, and we expect this long-term trend to continue.

Mr. Smith: In the light of that answer, can the Minister explain how, as a result of a survey among all dentists carried out in my constituency, the Vale of Glamorgan, it was shown that dental inspections have decreased by up to 20 per cent? The time lag between inspections has now gone beyond the recommended level and it is particularly worrying that 18-year-olds are not having inspections, but merely waiting until they need treatment. When asked to comment, dentists said that the dental health of the nation is suffering and that it will get worse. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that?

Mr. Freeman: It is important to appreciate that the charge for examinations under the National Health Service is £3·45, which represents 75 per cent. of the cost. No one disputes that examinations appear to have decreased immediately after the introduction of charges, but we believe strongly that the long-term trend of an increase in examinations will shortly reassert itself.

Mr. Rees: It is no use for the Minister to hope for the long-term trend to reassert itself. This is an important element of preventive medicine, and in all areas the number of inspections is falling. It is a serious matter. What will the Government do about it?

Mr. Freeman: Some 50 per cent. of all patients who have National Health Service examinations are exempt from the charges. We believe that the long-term trend will reassert itself. The right hon. Gentleman may say that that is a hope and an expectation, but we firmly believe that the upward trend will continue.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree that people over 18 have a good cognisance of the value of preventive medicine, having received free medical care until school-leaving age, and that asking them to make a

modest contribution to the cost of dental inspection in no way undermines our ability to keep their health high on our list of priorities?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The money raised through charges goes back into the Health Service and, indeed, helps to improve the quality of dental care.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to benefit dental patients is to make further progress on the new dental practitioners' contract, which will improve the relationship between patients and their dentists? Many members of the dental profession support it, but others have grave doubts. It would greatly assist those charged with the responsibility of persuading their colleagues to accept the new contract if my hon. Friend could tell the House—not now, but very soon—that the Government have no plans to increase dental charges.

Mr. Freeman: I cannot give my hon. Friend that commitment—he would not expect me to be so specific—but I can say that we have received some very positive encouragement from the profession. We shall not know the final outcome for another six months, but we are very encouraged by the response so far.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister provide evidence to back up his assertion that, to use his own words, the long-term trend will reassert itself in the form of an increase in the number and proportion of people undertaking dental examinations? Does not the current plain evidence suggest that the present charging structures need to be reversed, and that the current trend is making nonsense of the emphasis on preventive medicine?

Mr. Freeman: I have cited the statistics as fairly as I can. There was a reduction of 6 or 7 per cent. in two comparable quarters. It is not surprising that some deferment of examinations and some reduction in the number of patients going for treatment should follow the introduction of charges, but we hope that the long-term trend will indeed reassert itself when the 50 per cent. of people who have to pay charges appreciate that the treatment is good value for money.

Community Care

7. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about community care for the profoundly mentally handicapped in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have received a number of representations. The Government are actively encouraging the development of a range of well co-ordinated health and social services for mentally handicapped people and their families.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend ask the chairman of the North West regional health authority to see for himself the superior quality of care provided by voluntary homes such as Brookvale in Bury, South—and provided at half the cost of that provided by Bolton's crisis-ridden neighbourhood network homes?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, I will ask the chairman to do that, and I am sure that he will visit Brookvale. I hope to be in Bolton myself in May, and to join my hon. Friend in visiting some of the hospitals in his constituency.

Mr. Eastham: While we are discussing seriously handicapped people in the north-west, may I draw to the Minister's attention the case of Cranage Hall? Many Manchester Members have received correspondence expressing grave concern about possible closure from people who do not know what they will then do about their handicapped children.

Mr. Freeman: I am not familiar with that case, but if the hon. Gentleman cares to write to me I will give him a full response.

Some 800 hospital patients in the north-west have been resettled in the community, with proper funding from the health authorities. That is a very creditable record.

Mr. Sumberg: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) in saluting the work of Brookvale and its excellent staff in my constituency. Is my hon. Friend the Minister aware that it is a fine example of co-operation between public funding and private giving? He is welcome to come and see some of the work being done there.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There are many examples of both the private sector and the charitable sector co-operating with district health authorities and local authorities in providing services for the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware of the presentation by Barnardo's to Members of Parliament last week about the daunting problems of mentally handicapped young people in the north-west and elsewhere? Is he aware of the protests by parents that their children, after their school years, often go from school to scrap heap, and that they are increasingly denied speech therapy even during their school years? Will he meet representatives of Barnardo's as a matter of urgency to hear at first hand their plea for immediate action?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Dickens: I thank my hon. Friend for the additional resources that the Department of Health has given to the north-west, in response to representations from all north-west Members of Parliament of all parties, but will he be sure not to approve the closure of any mental hospital in the north-west until he is fully satisfied that adequate alternatives have been developed? That is most important.

Mr. Freeman: I give my hon. Friend that categorical assurance. I thank him for referring to the increase in cash resources for the north-west—of 7·21 per cent.—which should permit a real development of services.

Family Planning

9. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government continue to regard family planning as an important preventive service which contributes to maternal and child health and to the stability of family life.

Mr. Meale: The Minister is aware that there are more than 1,800 family planning clinics in Britain, but is she also aware that, because of the new capital charges, many district health authorities may be encouraged to sell those premises rather than pay the price of retaining them?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's comments. The fact is that a growing number of individuals are choosing to go to their general practitioners rather than to family planning clinics. I understand that the seven places that provide family planning services in the hon. Gentleman's own district health authority, amounting to a total of 58 sessions, are quite secure.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend has a long record of interest in the matter. Will she confirm that the district health authorities, as well as the family practitioner services, have a role to play in family planning and that that is not unconnected with the worrying upward trend in teenage abortions?

Mrs. Bottomley: In our guidance to the health authorities we make it clear that we see a role for them in providing family planning clinics, particularly for the young. We are sponsoring three research projects—in Hackney, Milton Keynes and south Sefton—to find out how services could better be provided for young people.

Ms. Harman: Does the Minister not realise that, because of cash limits, one quarter of all health authorities are cutting their family planning services and that some, such as Chichester, Cambridge and Trafford, are closing all their family planning clinics? Will she promise to carry out a review because otherwise there will be an increase in unplanned pregnancies?

Mrs. Bottomley: Once again, the Opposition are showing their preference for places rather than patients. The evidence clearly shows that patients have increased their use of family doctors by 37 per cent. in the past 10 years and that they have reduced their use of family planning clinics. General practitioners could not provide family planning services at all in the National Health Service until 1976. The evidence is clear that skills have been built up, that training has improved and that patients are demonstrating that they would rather go to their general practitioner to discuss these subjects than to a clinic—in the order of 2:1.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my hon. Friend aware that no decision will be reached about Trafford's family planning services until next month, so the assertion by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was wrong? The hope is that the family planning services in Trafford will continue as usual.

Mrs. Bottomley: If agreement cannot be reached locally about a substantial change of health premises use, the matter comes to Ministers. I assure my hon. Friend that no case has come to Ministers for decision. It is for the district health authorities to ensure adequate provision in the light of local circumstances and the proper use of resources.

Trent Regional Health Authority

10. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Trent regional health authority; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have no plans for a special meeting with Sir Michael Carlisle at the moment, but I shall be meeting the chairmen of all the regional health authorities in March to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Duffy: Given the recent allocation to the Trent authority for 1990-91 and the certainty that the increased distribution to its constituent health authorities will be absorbed by inflation, can the Minister assure me that the Sheffield health authority will not find that it has to retrench because of capital limits as well as cash revenue limits and that it will not be driven to restricting the services that it provides?

Mrs. Bottomley: In view of the increased resources to the Health Service generally, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are major opportunities to provide high quality care. With increasing expectations and changing demographic patterns, all health authorities must be sure that they use their resources to the best effect. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the capital programme in Sheffield is the biggest in the Trent region, with improvements of the order of £38 million taking place at the Northern general hospital.

Mr. Michael Morris: May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the National Audit Office report, "Financial Management in the National Health Service", which itemised the basic problem that the Treasury agreed a certain figure for pay and prices and the Department issued a different one? Can the chairman of the Trent health authority have confirmation from my hon. Friend that in the coming year pay that is agreed nationally will be fully funded nationally?

Mrs. Bottomley: The pay levels are very much what we anticipated and funded. It is clear that all regional and district health authority chairmen have to ensure that resources are used effectively and properly to take account of pay and of patients' needs.

Newham General Hospital

11. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when stage 3 of the development of Newham general hospital will be complete.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that phase III of the Newham hospital is unlikely to start until after 1995. If further resources become available to the North East Thames regional health authority through an improvement in land sales income, the capital programme will be reviewed.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister aware that that reply will cause bitter disappointment and a sense of betrayal in the London borough of Newham, where phase III has been a central plank of Newham's future services since 1984 when the regional health authority gave its approval and put phase III into its capital programme? Is not it crazy and immoral that the National Health Service is funded partly by property deals, and now that high interest rates have

knocked the bottom out of the market we shall not get our hospital? Is the Minister aware that it is doubtful that he will save much money because there will have to be extra capital and revenue spending at St. Andrew's hospital and that phase III is doubly necessary because of the expanded population caused by docklands development? In view of all that, will he receive a deputation of Newham Members of Parliament to discuss the matter?

Mr. Freeman: I should be glad to receive such a deputation. In answer to the main part of the hon. Gentleman's question, it is not incorrect that the National Health Service should receive something like 20 per cent. of the total capital funding programme from land sales income. That is appropriate. Some £1,000 million is provided by the taxpayer for the capital programme and a further £200 million to £250 million comes from land sales income. That is greatly to be welcomed.

Complementary Medicine

12. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of practitioners of complementary medicine; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: On 29 November 1989 I met, at their request, representatives of the Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and of the General Council and Register of Osteopaths. It was agreed that a further meeting in a few months' time might be helpful.

12. **Mr. Tredinnick:** What arrangements is my hon. Friend making to safeguard the freedom of complementary medical practitioners after 1992? Is he aware that there is widespread concern among doctors in the faculty of homeopathy that they are being insufficiently consulted about the radical changes proposed by the EEC?

Mr. Freeman: There are two parts to that question. As regards the first part, because all the professions in complementary medicine are not registered and there are no statutory qualifications needed to practise, there will be no impact of 1992 upon those professions. In regard to homeopathy, because the medicines are natural there should be no effect upon homeopathy as result of EEC proposals on regulating the introduction of medicines.

District Health Authorities

13. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consequences he expects from the introduction of funding district health authorities by residents in 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: Districts that send more patients for treatment outside their boundaries than they receive will have an increase in their funding in 1991-92 to enable them to pay, through contracting, for such services. In the first year, we expect that existing patterns of service will be broadly unaltered.

Mr. Coombs: In welcoming that important part of the Government's health proposals, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that they will benefit efficient districts such as Kidderminster, which attracts patients from outside, will next year give £90 million extra to the West Midlands regional health authority and, most importantly, will increase competition, efficiency and use of the Health Service for all those patients who most need it?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments. An additional fact that represents a change from the earlier working papers on the Health Service reforms is that from 1991-92 the first step in weighted capitation will commence in relation to allocations by regions to districts.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Thompson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the rebate system for the new community charge is considerably more generous than the old rate rebate system, particularly for those households in the lowest income band who should see, on average, a reduction of 26 per cent. in the proportion of their income that they pay to local government? Does my right hon. Friend agree that they will gain that benefit only if local authorities such as Norwich city council control their expenditure firmly and efficiently and resist the temptation to raise the level of charge?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I confirm that households in the lowest income band will see a lower proportion of their income paid to local authorities. That is because community charge benefits are more generous than rate rebates were and because many of the single adult households who will benefit from the change are pensioners and others on low incomes.

To answer the second part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question, I agree that local authorities should make strenuous efforts to keep their expenditure down. It is reported that some have nevertheless suggested a figure of £370 or more for community charge. If we had retained domestic rates instead of the present community charge, that would have led to an increase in domestic rates of 35 per cent., which is totally unacceptable.

Mr. Kinnock: When people live in a Tory district, in a Tory county, under a Tory Government, whom do they blame for their very high poll tax?

The Prime Minister: All local authorities, whatever their political complexion, should strain to keep down their public expenditure so that they can keep down their community charge. Far more Labour than Conservative local authorities are extravagant, with the highest community charges.

Mr. Kinnock: Why does the Prime Minister try to take refuge in fiction? Does she not realise that there are plenty of Conservative Members and others in her party who could tell her that the whole arrangement was a fairy story from the start, to use the words of her hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire)? Is not that why

only one authority in the whole country has been able to set its poll tax at or below the level specified by the Government?

The Prime Minister: Not all the community charges have been set. We are perfectly well aware, from the answer that I gave previously, that some authorities are taking refuge in the change to have higher expenditure. Therefore, it is our intention, when the community charge is finally set, to say precisely what the increase would have been in domestic rates had that taken the place of the community charge, so that local people can judge whether their authority has been wise or just plain extravagant. They will find that far more Labour authorities and those under no overall control will have far higher spending than most Conservative authorities.

Mr. Kinnock: Does not the Prime Minister yet understand that people will pay not what might have been but the much higher charges that will be inflicted on them by her and her Government?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the majority of local authority spending is met by the taxpayer and by business; the rest is met by the community charge payer. When councils load on extra expenditure, it is borne by the community charge payer. People will be able to see which are the most extravagant authorities. In any case, they will all prefer the community charge to Labour's roof tax.

Q2. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amos: Will my right hon. Friend persist in her determination to lift the voluntary ban on investment in South Africa, and will she confirm that other countries are investing there?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, President de Klerk has taken fundamental decisions which have gone further in the direction of ending apartheid than those taken by any previous Government. He is determined to end apartheid. In such circumstances, and given the actions that he has taken, we believe it right, step by step, to lift some of the sanctions, in particular the voluntary ones. With regard to the ban on investment, six other Community countries have a voluntary ban. We are not the only country to have a voluntary ban, and we are not suggesting the lifting of those sanctions which are enforced by order.

As my hon. Friend knows, it is not possible to do anything about profit from investment being reinvested in South Africa; sometimes it has a compound nature within and without South Africa. My hon. Friend will be aware that BMW South Africa has just announced the latest £25 million instalment in a five-year investment programme which is worth £120 million. That means jobs, security and an improvement in living standards for the work force, and should be welcomed.

Q3. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michael: What advice has the Prime Minister for the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne)?

The Prime Minister: The report of the Select Committee is serious and must be considered carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) will want to consider what it says very carefully. In due course, and after consultation with others, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President will say when the report should be debated. I would think that it would be courteous to leave it at that.

Q4. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speller: What has gone wrong with the arithmetic relating to the community charge in England? Why are low-spending, low-rateable value authorities such as North Devon and Mid Devon which previously levied less than £190 per adult, having to levy more than £300? Is that the fault of those who are levying the charge locally or those who organised it?

The Prime Minister: The figure which my hon. Friend mentions of £300 for the community charge in North Devon and Mid Devon is based on an increase of more than 19 per cent. in spending by the county council and 21 and 15 per cent. increases for North Devon and Mid Devon respectively. If the authorities continue their present pattern of spending, the community charge will be £210 in North Devon and £220 in Mid Devon. I hope that Conservative authorities will maintain their present tradition of prudent budgeting and well-managed services.

Mr. Ashdown: Is inflation still to be the judge and jury of the Prime Minister's Government? If so, how does she explain the fact that Britain's inflation has been higher than the European average for eight out of her 11 years, higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average for nine out of her 11 years and higher than that of any of our industrial competitors for 11 out of her 11 years? Does she realise that if inflation is to be the judge and mortgage misery the charge, with that record there is only one verdict—guilty, guilty and guilty?

The Prime Minister: The present inflation rate, based on the retail prices index, at 7·7 per cent. would have been low for the Labour Government, whom the right hon. Gentleman's Bench chose to support year after year. For us, it is high, and to bring it down remains our priority. I must point out to the right hon. Gentleman that this country's record on increasing jobs and on creating jobs has produced a low level of unemployment of 5·7 per cent., which is lower than that in almost any other country in the Community.

Q5. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jack: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that her Government would never countenance following policies that would impose a 59·5 per cent. tax rate on wage and salary earners? Has she had a chance to see recent

newspaper reports suggesting that a tax rate of 59·5 per cent. is precisely the policy being pursued by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that we should never think of putting up a tax rate of 59·5 per cent. and that we shall continue the policy of lower taxation, which has brought about extra enterprise, more jobs and a higher standard of living for this country than it has ever known before. I refer my hon. Friend and Opposition Members to the report, "Social Trends", and I must point out that under our policies the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers contributed not only a larger amount to the Exchequer, but 40 per cent. to the yield of income tax. That is on a policy of reducing taxation which gives incentives.

Q6. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clelland: Does the Prime Minister believe that there is any connection between the fact that homelessness increased by 45 per cent. between the end of 1986 and the end of 1988 and the fact that under her Government council house building has fallen from 111,000 per year in the 1970s to only 21,000 per year in the 1980s? Does not that show that the Government lack any concern for the needs of people at the lower end of the income scale?

The Prime Minister: It has been our policy to encourage home ownership, and it has increased from 11·5 million homes in owner occupation to 15 million. Many people have had a chance under our Government that they would never have had under a Labour Government. On homelessness, the Government announced an extra £250 million to help provide homes for the homeless and an increase in money from the Housing Corporation for housing associations, rising from about £800 million at present to £1,700 million in the next two to three years. That is a large allocation of taxpayers' money for alleviating homelessness.

Q7. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend shocked that ILEA can produce only 137 A-level students in French throughout London? Does not that indicate that years of big spending and comprehensive schools do not necessarily produce the goods?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Big spending does not necessarily produce the best education results and ILEA is proof positive of that. I hope that when ILEA is disbanded very soon the separate district education authorities will have a much better record and a lower level of expenditure than ILEA managed.

Mr. Graham: Is the Prime Minister aware that more than 500,000 people in Scotland cannot pay the poll tax, yet Tory councils are going to put a huge poll tax burden on the people they represent? How many people in the Tory shires will not be able to pay the poll tax and how much of that is due to increased inflation?

The Prime Minister: Bearing in mind that the community charge in Scotland meets only 14 per cent. of the expenditure of local authorities, and that Scotland's earnings are about the fourth highest in the United Kingdom, I believe it is not that people cannot pay their community charge; it may be that some have been led not to pay it on wrong advice of others.

Shipbuilding (Wearside)

3.30 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the decision by the European Commission on shipbuilding and ship repair on the Wear.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I saw Sir Leon Brittan on 2 February to discuss the proposed sale of certain sites of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. Sir Leon Brittan made it plain that he would not accept any proposal predicated upon a return to shipbuilding even after the expiry of the five-year period.

I saw the Anglo-Greek consortium yesterday and told it of the Commission's views. I said that limited facilities to undertake a ship repair and refurbishment operation at the NESL North Sands site would be allowed. It is considering the offer. The enterprise zone at Southwick will be designated as soon as possible. It is likely that the Tyne and Wear development corporation will now proceed with its plans to redevelop the St. Peter's Riverside development site.

Ms. Quin: Will the Minister accept that the latest pronouncements of the European Commission in the person of the Government's own appointee, Sir Leon Brittan, are such as to make future shipbuilding on the Wear, even after the five-year period, virtually impossible? Does the Minister's statement mean that the Southwick yard, which is one of the most modern in Europe, will be bulldozed and that it cannot be used for future shipbuilding activities? Will the Minister comment on the secrecy surrounding the agreement with the European Commission in December 1988? Did the Minister understand the agreement that was entered into by the Government at that time? Will he make the details public to us, because they have never been fully revealed?

The Minister's failure to understand has meant that would-be purchasers of North-East Shipbuilders Ltd., or parties which wanted to place orders in those yards, had their hopes raised during last year and then dashed, as it appeared that the European Commission would not allow those activities to take place. The Minister has made play of the enterprise zone. Does he accept that an enterprise zone would have been possible for Sunderland, based on unemployment levels and previous shipbuilding job losses in the town, but that the people of Sunderland, while seeing advantage in an enterprise zone, do not want one in return for the closure of their shipyards and their shipbuilding facilities?

Hon. Members will no doubt raise their constituency interests in supplementary questions, but will the Minister accept that there are important national implications in the decision of the European Commission? At a time when Japan is taking the lion's share of the boom in shipbuilding orders, when German yards are organising joint ventures with their counterparts in East Germany and when Britain has had more job losses in shipbuilding than any other European country, could not the Government have stood up for British shipbuilding and the Sunderland yard more than they have done?

In this connection, will the Minister comment on the editorial in today's *Lloyd's List* that it is simply unacceptable to have a rump of a shipbuilding industry which is utilised only when the Japanese and South Korean order books are full? Are not the Government guilty of failing to recognise the value of the shipbuilding industry and the role that it can play in our industrial future?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady asked a variety of questions, and I shall seek to respond to them. On the allegation of secrecy, there has been no secrecy in this matter. She will recall that the whole matter was considered at considerable length by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. I had the pleasure of appearing before that Committee and explaining events.

On unemployment in the Sunderland area, the hon. Lady will be pleased to know that, although in December 1988 unemployment was about 26,154, or 15 per cent., I am glad to say that in the 12 months until December 1989, it fell by three percentage points to stand at 12 per cent.

I confirm that it is unlikely that shipbuilding will return to Sunderland. The hon. Lady should bear in mind the fact that the development plans of the consortium developed over a period. I make no criticism of that; I simply state that that is what happened. The plans started off as ship repair and refurbishment plans. Then they embraced an element of shipbuilding. Then shipbuilding became the core of the plans. As recently as January of this year, the plans suggested that all the work should be done at Southwick. It was a constantly developing programme.

The plain truth is that shipbuilding is a cyclical industry. I am afraid that shipbuilding in Sunderland has consumed vast quantities of public money. In no sense would the Government be justified in continuing to subsidise the activity in the way that they previously had.

The hon. Lady should be more bullish about the future of Sunderland. She should bear in mind the fact that we put in place an extensive remedial package which included £45 million worth of remedial measures—in particular, the enterprise zone. I hope that that will create between 3,000 and 4,000 jobs in the town. I believe that the future of Sunderland is extremely good. It has been greatly improved by being based on a diversified, strong local economy, which is what we are achieving.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although the Labour party has no grounds for complaint because of its now near-obsession with commitment to the EEC and the development of broader powers there, will my hon. Friend the Minister seriously consider that there is a serious democratic problem when a non-elected civil servant in Brussels can instruct the British Government and Parliament, irrespective of their wishes, that shipbuilding without special aids cannot continue in a part of this country?

In view of this devastating blow for shipbuilding and democracy in Britain, will the Government begin to wake up to the enormous threat of destruction of our democracy of transferring power from elected Parliaments to the non-elected bureaucracies? What is the point of rejoicing at what is happening in eastern Europe at people's escape from a centralised bureacracy, when that is what we are creating in western Europe?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid, much though I respect my hon. Friend, that I do not accept his analysis. In December 1988, we notified the Commission of the closure of the yards. We put forward a series of remedial proposals, which were accepted on the basis of the closure of the shipbuilding capacity in Sunderland. If we wish to renotify

any further scheme, we must go to the Commission with the full plans. The Commission has unfettered discretion on whether to approve those plans. That is what has happened, and it is consistent with the practice that has been approved in this place.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Does not the Minister accept that, when he says that the Anglo-Greek proposal changed several times, he ignores the fact that the consortium changed them as it tried to keep up with the goal posts that the European Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry kept moving? They began by defining closure as shipbuilding without subsidy changed it to no shipbuilding for five years and now have a scorched earth policy, saying that we cannot retain the assets that would allow for a resumption of shipbuilding after five years.

Is it not the case that even the modest ship repair proposal that is to be allowed will have to have every acre of land and every piece of equipment that is purchased scrutinised in Brussels just to make sure that it may not be used for shipbuilding in the future? Given that British Shipbuilders, the Tyne and Wear development corporation, Sunderland council, the local Members of Parliament, and the Members of the European assembly, all welcomed the Greek proposal for Southwick—I believe that the Minister himself gave it some support—what is the hidden agenda that leads the British Government, in the most subservient way, to give in to every arbitrary and legally dubious whim on which Sir Leon Brittan decides? Can the Minister honestly tell the House that, if the right hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) had understood what the notorious December 1988 package really meant, he would ever have agreed to it?

Mr. Hogg: I make no criticism of the Greek consortium. The hon. Gentleman knows that it changed its plans. That is not a result——

Mr. Clay: Because of you.

Mr. Hogg: That is not a result of the Department of Trade and Industry changing the goal posts; it was because we pressed the consortium hard on the viability of its proposals—and on whether its plans offered the prospects of good quality and permanent jobs. It was against that pressing that the consortium identified in its plans that the main element would be a return to shipbuilding.

There are mixed views even within Sunderland on this matter. There is a powerful case for saying that it is not in Sunderland's interests to return to shipbuilding, and that Sunderland's economic future would be very much better served by the broadly based and diversified economy that the remedial measures that we have put in place will bring about.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): Will my hon. Friend accept support for his position from his hon. Friends, simply because he has no real alternative? Will he take every opportunity to emphasise the positive aspects of what is happening in the area in question? To save further mix-ups of the type that might have happened over the last couple of years, will my hon. Friend also undertake to clarify with the European Commission just how long the conditions that it has set up are meant to be in force?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The European Commission's policy, effectively, is that, during the period when one is required to give notification of a proposal, it will not accept a proposal that is predicated on a return to shipbuilding. I repeat that such a scheme or proposal will not be acceptable to the Commission. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that one needs to be positive about this. The diversified, broadly based economy that our measure will bring to Sunderland is very much in the interests of that town and will free it from independence upon a cyclical industry, which is not in the long-term interests of Sunderland.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): If the private sector wishes to preserve Sunderland for shipbuilding, why is the state, in the person of the Minister, intervening to prevent it? I thought that the Conservative party believed in letting the private sector take a lead in these matters. How does the Minister defend depriving the whole of the north-east of England of intervention funding for its shipbuilding industry, and yet continuing to fund such support for Harland and Wolff in Belfast?

Mr. Hogg: Two separate points are raised in that question, and I shall address them both, if I may. First, in so far as the proposals are predicated on a return to shipbuilding, the Commissioner has made it wholly plain to me that such a proposal would not be acceptable to the Commission.

The hon. Gentleman's second point dealt with private sector against private sector. However, he has omitted to realise that we have a viable private sector alternative for both Southwick and North Sands. For Southwick, we have the enterprise zone and for North Sands, we have the TWDC's St. Peter's Riverside development.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but I can tell him now, and I do tell him now through you, Mr. Speaker, that, from the point of view of Sunderland's future, the TWDC prefers its development for North Sands to that of the Greeks.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is it not the case that, in the past 10 years, the north-east has suffered an extremely painful transition from old, declining industries to new, sunrise industries and that employment opportunities have improved dramatically in the past two years? Given that there are plans on the drawing board for a major redevelopment of the centre of Sutherland, it would not be right to take such rearguard action, which presents a nostalgic view of the north-east as a traditional shipbuilding area—which is no longer the case. We should turn our backs on the past and press forward with the future.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has a deep knowledge of the problems of the area. In the past 12 months, unemployment has fallen by three percentage points, which is a dramatic improvement.

My hon. Friend makes a valuable point by suggesting that there are real dangers in being too dependent upon a cyclical industry such as shipbuilding. It is better by far for the economy of the town to be broadly based and diverse. That will be the effect of the St. Peter's Riverside development and of the enterprise zone.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is the Minister aware that he is talking nonsense when he says that opinion in Sunderland is divided on this issue? Every conceiveable strand of opinion—of the borough council, Members of Parliament, the local Tory newspaper and the chamber of commerce—is satisfied that a return to shipbuilding is in the best interests of Sunderland. Is it not a fact that Sunderland and his Department have been well and truly stitched up by the EEC?

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Sunderland has one of the most modern shipyards in western Europe, but we are about to sit and watch it being demolished—that is akin to a scorched earth policy. It will be a crime if the shipyard at Southwick is allowed to be demolished. We should at least keep it mothballed for four or five years, so that the opportunity to build ships again in Sunderland can be taken up when it comes, after his Government have been swept away.

Mr. Hogg: Let us analyse the hon. Gentleman's remarks by considering the last point that he made. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Southwick site should be mothballed for five years—in other words, no productive use should be made of 40 acres for about five years. That cannot be—*[Interruption.]* That cannot be in the interests of Sunderland, especially when one bears in mind the fact that there will be an enterprise zone on that site, which will create many jobs. We expect that 800 jobs will be created on the part of the enterprise zone now covered by the Southwick site.

So opinion in Sunderland is divided, but there is also a division between what people say in public and what they say in private. There is a strong opinion in the town that recognises the dangers of being dependent upon a cyclical industry, and which sees the advantages of the enterprise zone at Southwick and of the TWDC's development at North Sands. There is a great deal of support for them and, on reflection, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join that support.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is it not true that shipbuilding is still a labour-intensive industry? That is why, in relatively advanced economies such as Japan, shipbuilding, with the exception of the recent cyclical upsurge, has had a reduced importance in its economy. It is a complete mirage to offer people false hope that an industry such as shipbuilding is an industry of the future, especially bearing in mind the appalling history of awful management and poor labour relations in that industry and the huge subsidy that must be paid for each ship built in Europe.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I am afraid that the track record of shipbuilding in Sunderland over recent years was simply not good. It consumed large sums of public money and required great subsidies. He is right to draw attention to the financial perils associated with returning to shipbuilding in Sunderland. It may be relevant for the House to know that the financial advice that we received on the Greek consortium's plans was that they were fraught with considerable risks of failure.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an Opposition day and statements should be confined to shipbuilding and ship repair on the Wear.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is not the announcement of an enterprise zone a ministerial admission that the Government are in despair at what remains of regional policy? Is not the Minister aware of the evidence that his Department gave to the National Audit Office, that it will cost £30,000 per job to create a job in an enterprise zone and that, for that reason, the Government had virtually abandoned enterprise zones? Is he not also aware that those jobs that were created came largely from elsewhere in the locality, and that those that were new were generally in retailing or wholesaling, and were part-time and low-paid?

Mr. Hogg: I can only suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should reflect on these matters before he asks such a question. If he had the time to visit, for example, Scunthorpe or Corby, to mention just two places, he would see the blatant absurdity of the question that he has just asked. Enterprise zones are an extremely effective way of getting assistance to those areas that need it most. The zone will be an important part of the regeneration of Sunderland. A little more homework would improve the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): There has been reference to the cyclical nature of this industry, but is not a continuing factor the domination of the world market for merchant shipbuilding by far eastern yards, which continue to offer ships at prices that are millions of pounds less than are quoted in Europe? Is it not unrealistic to expect that to change? Will not Sunderland's future be better with high-tech industries that will be attracted by the enterprise package? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the package is already proving successful in attracting industries with a future that is bright and that it will reflect future pride and glory on the town of Sunderland, in the way that shipbuilding has in the past?

Mr. Hogg: I can indeed give my hon. Friend the assurances that he seeks. He has been a powerful advocate of the interests of his part of the country. He is entirely right to say that we have seen some important industries coming into the north-east. He is most certainly right to draw attention to the capacity that exists for shipbuilding in the far east, where many shipyards have been mothballed. I question very much whether shipbuilding will be the highly profitable industry that some Opposition Members suggest.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Minister aware that I attended a conference recently in America where the discussion was based on getting goods, men and equipment across the Atlantic in case there was a war in Europe? The conclusion of the conference was that there was a marked shortage of merchant shipping to carry out those tasks. Therefore, how is it that, when there is a shipyard in Sunderland with the best equipment and skilled men for building ships, the Government intend to go abroad to increase Britain's merchant shipping? Is not that ridiculous?

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Gentleman will recall, we tried to find a bidder for the NESL yard for many months before the decision was made in December 1988 to close it. I am afraid that, for many years, shipbuilding in Sunderland was making enormous losses and had to be

subsidised by public money to a huge extent. It is not right, and is not a proper use of public assets, to continue with that policy, and we shall not do so.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister has sought to blame Leon Brittan for the decision, but has also sought to argue in the House that it was the right decision. Will he clarify whether, in talking to Leon Brittan, he urged the case for the consortium to be allowed to go ahead on behalf of local jobs or simply accepted Leon Brittan's decision—or even welcomed it?

Mr. Hogg: I have not tried to blame anybody; I have explained the situation. The Commissioner made it clear in discussion—I urged the contrary point of view—that he would not allow shipbuilding to return to Sunderland in the circumstances being proposed by the Greek consortium. That is the explanation that I have given the House. When we came to contrast the Greek proposals for Southwick and for North Sands with the alternatives, it was far from clear that, on its merits, the Greek proposal should be preferred. For example, the Greek proposal for the North Sands Riverside development involved taking up to 20 acres of land that would otherwise form part of the TWDC's development. Another factor was that the TWDC development will provide about 850 jobs, which would not have been compatible with the Greek scheme.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Minister confirm that, when the Government decided to install remedial measures in the Sunderland area, they had to go to the EEC for permission for such regional aid and did Her Majesty's Government give the undertaking that the shipyard would be closed? If so, under what regulation did the EEC issue such an edict, when was it debated by the House and what view was taken of it in the House?

Mr. Hogg: On the latter detailed questions, I shall have to write to the hon. Gentleman, as he would expect. With regard to the main part of this question, the position in broad terms—I say "broad terms" because it was the subject of extensive evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry—is that we had to notify the EEC of the £45 million package of closure aid that we were giving in Sunderland, and that was approved on the basis of the irreversible closure of shipbuilding in Sunderland. If the hon. Gentleman is asking whether we gave a written undertaking to that effect, I think that the answer is no.

Points of Order

3.56 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you notice. Question 74 in my name on today's Order Paper was submitted to the Department of Health on 6 February, but I discovered that it had been transferred to the Northern Ireland Office. I told the Table Office that that was wrong, but I was informed that that was the Department of Health's decision. I pursued the matter, and I have finally received an apology today. It is ridiculous that, if a Northern Ireland Member who takes an interest in the affairs of the kingdom writes to a Department, the matter can be referred to the Northern Ireland Office. Is that, intentionally or unintentionally, another attempt to make Northern Ireland an appendage of the Kingdom rather than a full party to it?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order, because it has enabled me to look carefully into the matter.

As the House well knows, I and my predecessors in the Chair have frequently ruled that the transfer of questions from one Department to another is a matter for Ministers, and that the Chair cannot intervene.

However, on this occasion, the Department of Health has clearly recognised that it made an error in transferring the hon. Gentleman's question to the Northern Ireland Office, since it has reappeared on today's Order Paper addressed to the Secretary of State for Health in its original position in the shuffle.

I understand also that Question 135 from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was about to be transferred in error to the Secretary of State for Scotland, but it was kept after representations from the hon. Gentleman. Question 142 from the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) was similarly transferred to the Secretary of State for Scotland without apparent justification, and has not been re-transferred.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) has not in the end suffered from the erroneous transfer, but it does appear that the Departments concerned, in particular the Department of Health, have not taken sufficient care over the transfer of questions which hon. Members have a right to expect. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has received an apology from the Department of Health.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order relates to the Education (Student Loans) Bill, and it is one of which I gave brief notice to you and to the Under-Secretary of State with special responsibility for higher education.

Last night, the Secretary of State for Education and Science issued a press statement announcing that he might amend the Bill to force or coerce university and college authorities into what he described as "co-operating" with the administration of the already discredited student loan scheme. That would mark a further major departure from the scheme's administration as approved by this House.

As the Secretary of State must have contemplated that idea for many weeks, do you agree, Mr. Speaker, that the right hon. Gentleman has yet again shown contempt for this House, by waiting until after the Third Reading before

[Mr. Jack Straw]

making his announcement, and by making a press statement rather than a statement to the House? Have you received any intimation whether the Secretary of State intends to make a statement to the House, as he should?

Mr. Speaker: I have not received any such intimation —and I am, of course, aware that the Bill is currently under consideration in another place.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House will be aware of the dastardly attack made on the Father of the House at the weekend. He is not at all well today, and cannot take his usual place in this Chamber. Would it be in order for you, Mr. Speaker, to send him, on behalf of the House, good wishes for his health and for his speedy return?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the whole House shares the hon. Lady's sentiments. I sent the Father of the House a message on Monday, but was unaware that he was so unwell today. I shall do as the hon. Lady suggests.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the news to which my point of order refers only broke after 12 o'clock, it was not possible for me to table a private notice question on the decision by British Steel to close Ravenscraig, the steelworks in my constituency, for another week from 25 March. Such a decision, arising from a short-term reduction in demand, greatly angers the steel workers and the public in general in Scotland, and is capable of gross misinterpretation if Ministers cannot be called to account immediately and make a statement. Has the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the Secretary of State for Scotland sought leave to make a statement, to allay any misunderstanding that might arise?

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) makes a very good point. The production pause to which he refers is a bad decision, dictated by short-term considerations. I emphasise to you, Mr. Speaker, how important it is for the Government to keep the House informed of developments. A great deal of anxiety is felt about the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the remarks of both hon. Gentlemen will be conveyed through the usual channels.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I refer to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner). You will be aware, Sir, that the incident at the Royal Albert hall last Saturday night involved acts of violence against several right hon. and hon. Members. During the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), a smoke bomb was thrown, and various flour bombs were thrown throughout the proceedings—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those events took place in another chamber—the chamber of the Royal Albert hall. I share the hon. Lady's concern, but they are not strictly a matter of order for this place.

Miss Widdecombe: My point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that those incidents were part of a picket by a group called the "Stop the Amendment" campaign. Various hon. Members are closely associated with that campaign. Do you, Mr. Speaker, think that it is honourable conduct for hon. Members to be associated with such a campaign?

Mr. Speaker: If anything of that kind occurred in this place, I would take a very poor view of it.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Further to the points of order raised by the hon. Members for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), Mr. Speaker. The whole House will have been disturbed that the most senior figure in this House, the Father of the House, was left after a cowardly attack on Saturday night with his arm in a sling and with a blackened eye, having been pushed to the ground and his head crushed against a lamp post. He had been explaining to a perfectly proper public meeting the details of a Bill currently before Parliament.

That must certainly be a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. Are you prepared to call upon the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to investigate that incident? Do you agree, Mr. Speaker, that it has implications for right hon. and hon. Members who go about their proper duties in pursuit of parliamentary democracy and who, in the course of doing so, are subject to thuggery and intimidation? Surely that cannot be right.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the whole House will judge that to be an absolutely reprehensible episode. However, I cannot have responsibility for the safety of Members when they are outside the Chamber. Of course I have great concern for the Father of the House. As I have already said, I have sent him a message, and I shall do so again today.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Further to what the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) said, obviously all hon. Members deplore what happened at the weekend. However, surely it cannot be in order for the hon. Lady to stand and impugn other hon. Members of the House and to say that somehow they endorsed or had some knowledge of the attack that took place, or knew that it was going to take place. That is to impugn the integrity of those who happen to disagree with her. Surely she should withdraw that imputation?

Mr. Speaker: I think that we had better get on with the Opposition day debate.

Unadopted Roads

4.5 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to the procedures whereby householders and frontagers may seek the making up and adoption of a road by a local authority; and for connected purposes.

I know how anxious the House is to debate the Royal Shakespeare Company, because nothing can be nearer to the Labour party's manifesto than "A Midsummer Night"s Dream". However, I shall limit my remarks to 10 minutes.

The Bill is aimed at bringing up to date and simplifying the law on private or unadopted streets. It is a tangled area of the law and one which causes a great many problems and misunderstandings. Those familiar with and involved in highway law are only too well aware that private streets often mean trouble. The perception of the public—the home-owners and frontagers—is that, under the existing rating system which is being phased out with the introduction of the community charge in five weeks' time, owners of properties in private streets usually pay lower rates, and the property prices are often lower than for surrounding dwellings, fronting adopted roads.

What so many of those home-owners often fail to understand are the possible consequences of private street status, and many get a nasty shock when they find that they are liable for accidents, and that they have to make up the road surface, and dig up and re-lay the road for water, gas and electricity, often completely at their own expense.

At first sight, to many people the price differential, and in the past the small differential in the rates bill, have seemed thoroughly attractive in the short term. However, in the long term, the liabilities accompanying a private highway far outweigh the small benefits passed on by the rating authority for the lack of a paved footpath, a highway or street lighting. Some people prefer the quiet life of an unadopted road. My Bill contains no element of compulsion.

Much of the present legislation dates back to the 19th century, and although some new developments involve private streets, those generally cause relatively few problems. There are well-established procedures whereby developers use the advance payments code to agree with the highway authority to make up the streets throughout a new estate. A consultation document has recently been produced by the highway authorities and local authority associations about how the law on unadopted roads should be improved.

The Bill allows district councils to contribute to the cost of street works. At present, they are prevented from doing so. Frontagers to public footpaths should have to pay for the associated street works, and vice versa. The cost of making up a public footpath should be included in the cost of the street works.

The Bill will provide increased flexibility for serving notices, and will ensure that there is provision to recover the cost of street works on behalf of a frontager, when the owner is unknown.

The Bill will allow authorities to disapply the advanced payments code when they decide to do so, and will empower authorities to release deposits after four years. In some cases, authorities have held deposits against private street works. The value has dwindled because of inflation and, with the passage of time, has become meaningless when measured against the initial cost of the road works. However, the Bill would include provisions to allow an authority to decide a rate of interest on deposits, and would include a fine of £1,000, for non-compliance, when the builder or the owner does not carry out the work to the satisfaction of the highway authority.

This potholed area of the law is not all gloom and doom. I am pleased to be able to say that local authority associations and the house builders have formulated a new agreement, which will be an improvement on the old one.

It has been estimated that the country contains more than 4,000 miles of unadopted road, and that it would cost over £2,000 million to make them up. As so often happens, Scotland has already addressed the problem: the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and the Security for Private Road Works (Scotland) Regulations 1985, SI 1985/2080, make the law on private streets much simpler, and remove some of the difficulties.

It appears that there is complete agreement within the Department of Transport that the current system in England and Wales needs to be simplified. Unfortunately, it is not a high priority for the Government, and to make any changes will be a complex and technical task. Nevertheless, given the existence of 40,000 unadopted roads in England and Wales and the phasing out of domestic rates, I feel that the system cannot be allowed to go on bumping along in a rough and ready way as it has, in many ways, since the 1930s.

One of my constituents has spent much of his retirement researching the legal liability of his own unadopted road, tracing it back to the Isle of Wight Highways Act 1813, which was subsequently repealed in 1925. Until that repeal, any island road that had been dedicated to the public was automatically repairable by the local authority. That small extract of the legal history of just one road in my constituency will, I think, give the House a taste of the complexity of the unadopted road system—five years of research by a retired civil servant endeavouring to establish the legal and financial liabilities for the unadopted road running past his house.

I understand that the last Department of Transport survey was carried out in 1972: it was established then that England and Wales contained 40,000 unadopted roads, amounting to 4,000 miles. It is thought that no significant change has been made since the survey.

The main thrust of my Bill, which provides for the paving, levelling and lighting of unadopted roads, is to ensure that frontagers can in future make their decisions on the basis of a simple majority, either in number or in the value of property. It is extraordinary that the nation can elect a Government by a simple majority, while residents whose houses front on to unadopted roads are prevented from making provision for their own comfort, enjoyment and safety—and for enhancing the value of their properties—by complex, outdated and outmoded legislation that requires everyone to be in total agreement before works can proceed. That cannot be right, and I know that I speak for thousands of home-owners when I say that we look to the House to replace a musty, outmoded tangle of legal nightmares with modern legislation that is easily available and acceptable to every estate that wishes to make up its roads, and to have them adopted by its local council.

Question put and agreed to.

[Mr. Barry Field]

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. Ian Taylor, Miss Ann Widdecombe and Mr. David Evans.

UNADOPTED ROADS

Mr. Barry Field accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the procedures whereby householders and frontagers may seek the making up and adoption of a road by a local authority; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 76.]

Opposition Day

[9TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Electricity Industry

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.14 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the Government's obsession with electricity privatisation which is pushing up electricity prices and undermining Britain's commitment to reducing acid rain.

The electricity industry has not yet been privatised, but electricity prices are already being pushed up unnecessarily, to add to the industry's assets. The Government's commitment to combat acid rain is in danger of being set aside in an effort to reduce the industry's liabilities. That is being done to suit the City, which wants to take over the assets of the electricity industry but not to take on any of its liabilities. We can be fairly sure that the needs of the City will be given priority because the present Secretary of State has only one task: to sell off the electricity industry before the next general election, whatever the cost to the consumer, the balance of payments, the prospects for British industry or the damage to the environment.

We know from answers to parliamentary questions that the Secretary of State is buying advice on electricity privatisation from no fewer than 47 different companies, at an estimated cost to the taxpayer of nearly £37 million. Those companies include no fewer than 13 firms of estate agents and 10 firms of accountants. There are marketing advisers, people who are described as head hunters and even salary advisers. There is even a firm called Anderson, Mori and Rabinowitz, which is improbably described as a firm of Japanese lawyers.

Not one firm on that list of 47 is advising the Secretary of State on the interests of the consumer. Furthermore, not one of those 47 firms is advising the Secretary of State on the environmental aspects of privatisation. Nothing could more clearly show what the Government's priorities are.

That is why the Secretary of State announced last Monday what might be described as the third leg of the Tory inflationary spring treble. Domestic consumers will have to pay more for their electricity, just as their poll tax falls due and their housing costs increase. It is almost as though the Chancellor of the Exchequer had asked each Cabinet Minister to make a special contribution to inflation, since I have not even mentioned the fares increases or the increased water charges that will also be due.

The electricity price increase, of £30 to £40 for domestic consumers, is quite unnecessary and was imposed by the Government. It does not result from rising costs. During the last three years, the generating boards' fuel costs have fallen by 7 per cent., but the average price charged for electricity has increased by 13 per cent. and the generating boards' profits have increased by 90 per cent. Under the new coal contract, rightly imposed by the Secretary of State, fuel costs to the generating companies are to fall further, as British Coal is obliged to absorb most of the cost of inflation.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, during the last five years, the cost of electricity to domestic consumers has fallen in real terms and that the cost of electricity to industrial consumers has fallen by 10 per cent.? However, when the last Labour Government were in power, the price to domestic consumers went up significantly in real terms over five years.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman is what might be described as an old stager in our debates on energy. The general circumstances surrounding energy prices world wide are different from what they were 10 to 15 years ago.

Last year, the electricity industry as a whole made a profit of £777 million. Within that sum, the London board made a profit of £72 million, Southern board £65 million, Eastern board £70 million, East Midlands £50 million and Yorkshire £49 million. Only two of the remaining boards made a profit of less than £29 million last year.

The industry is doing so well that last November, the chief executive of National Power, Mr. John Baker, said that there was a good chance that domestic electricity consumers would get through 1990 with no price rises. But Mr. Baker had not reckoned with the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman was so keen to push up prices to domestic consumers that he did not even wait to find out what costs the area boards would incur under privatisation.

When my office rang every board last week, they said that they did not know quite what their price increases would be, because they still did not know from the generating companies or the grid company what prices they would be charged for electricity or for the transmission of electricity. All they knew was that the Secretary of State had said that they could put prices up by a bit more than the rate of inflation and they certainly intended doing that. They all promised to ring back when they knew anything more, but none of them rang back. It is quite clear that the increase is unnecessary and unwanted. It was invented in Whitehall as a response to pressures from the City.

The Secretary of State said last Monday that the price increases that he has imposed will not be much of an increase in real terms. An increase of £30 or £40 may not be very real to him or to his well-heeled City advisers or even to the Prime Minister—despite the extra costs of her electric bath treatment—but a £30 to £40 increase will be real enough to pensioners, to families whose child benefit has been frozen, and to millions of others, coming as it does on top of mortgage interest rate increases, rent increases, the poll tax and fare increases, not to mention those newly privatised water charges.

It is all unnecessary; it is just intended to help the Secretary of State sell off the electricity industry. That decision makes it clear that the Secretary of State could sacrifice anything on the altar of privatisation. We cannot really blame him for that; it is his job.

Not only the consumers have been given low priority. We now hear stories—leaks from the generating companies and from the Department of Trade and Industry and counter-leaks from the Department of the Environment—that the Secretary of State is prepared to jettison the fight against acid rain if that will help keep the ship of privatisation afloat. Before we consider what is happening now, it is necessary to look at what has happened over the last decade.

By the end of the 1970s, it was generally accepted that emissions of sulphur dioxide from power station chimneys helped cause acid rain. In Europe, particularly in West Germany—the only other country in Europe with a large modern coal industry—they started to set standards to reduce those SO_2 emissions. The West Germans eventually set about installing flue gas desulphurisation equipment on all their modern coal-fired power stations—a total of 33,000 MW. That has put them at least a decade ahead of Britain.

In Britain, we behaved like the environmental chancers that the Government are. Nothing has yet been done, despite pressure from Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, scientists and the general public. In 1984 and again in 1985, the Cabinet rejected proposals for action. Finally, in 1986 the Prime Minister announced that Britain would install FGD equipment on 6,000 MW of generating plant. But nothing was done. To this day, not a single major power station in Britain has been fitted with FGD equipment.

Not only did Britain do nothing, but our Government tried to prevent the setting of European standards, and succeeded in delaying and watering down those standards. All that was done in what has become Britain's role of tail-end Maggie—whingeing and whining that Britain knows best, and in any case it would all be very difficult and expensive.

In 1988, the British Government had to accept target emission reductions of 20 per cent., by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003. Those are among the lowest standards in Europe and were accepted by our European partners only because British Ministers argued that the medium-sulphur British coal industry needed to be protected and that flue gas desulphurisation equipment would take a long time to install. On the basis of those statements and arguments, honestly made, our European partners agreed to that reduction in standard. To move away from the introduction of FGD equipment will mean that our European partners could rightly demand, immediately, higher standards than the ones we have adopted.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the largest employers in Scotland and in Renfrewshire is Babcocks, which has been encouraged to develop power stations which would eventually reduce acid rain? The news he has mentioned will be a catastrophic blow to constituents in Renfrewshire, who will probably face further job losses. It seems that every announcement by the Government creates further and deeper unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend is perfectly right and I shall move on to the industrial consequences of the Government's short-sighted policy in a moment.

Eventually, Britain had a programme to install FGD equipment on 12,000 MW of generating capacity. That policy was confirmed as recently as mid-December by an Environment Minister and it was estimated to cost £2 billion. The programme was to start with the installation of FGD equipment at the 4,000 MW Drax power station, which would by itself meet the 20 per cent. target reduction for 1993.

Last November, at the United Nations, the Prime Minister made a speech which *The London Standard*

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moderately described in a memorable headline as "Maggie's plan to save the world". It reported that she had proclaimed:

"We already have a £2 billion programme of improvements to reduce acid rain emissions from our power stations."

It now appears that that is no longer true. It seems that the Prime Minister has given up her plans to save the world. She appears to have found a higher calling; she wants the electricity industry sold off before the next general election.

Presumably the 47 expensive advisers have told the right hon. Lady that a £2 billion programme to clean up the environment is the sort of spending that the City does not like, at least not if it is done by an organisation that it wants to buy on the cheap.

The installation of FGD equipment at Drax will now not be sufficiently far forward to meet even the 20 per cent. target reduction set for 1993, so the generating companies are asking the Government if they can burn low-sulphur coal to make up some of the difference, the oil refineries and industrial uscrs are being asked to make even bigger reductions in their emissions to make up for the shortfall. They are advising everyone that they do not think they will be able to make up that shortfall. The generating companies have said that they would like to be able to import low-sulphur coal instead of installing FGD towards the later and higher targets.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Will the hon. Gentleman explain what his policy really is? On the one hand he wants British coal to continue to be burnt, and he wants it to be burnt cleanly. On the other, apparently he does not want anybody to pay the price for that clean-up by way of higher prices for electricity. What is he really asking for?

Mr. Dobson: Labour policy is that FGD equipment should have been installed in the 1980s, that it should be installed now, and that the generating companies should get on with the job and thereby meet Britain's international obligations. We believe that the people of Britain would be prepared to pay the price for cleaning up the environment. The Torys' friends in the City are not prepared to pay that price. Although FGD is expensive and takes a time to install, it has the merit that it removes 90 per cent. of sulphur dioxide from chimney emissions.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is it not a fact that electricity revenues increased by £1 billion in 1988-89 and that at least part of the price of the installation of the systems about which my hon. Friend is talking could have come from those revenues?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend and I think along the same lines; he has anticipated what I intended to say, and I shall come to that point shortly.

The present proposals to substitute low-sulphur coal for the medium-sulphur deep-mined British coal that is currently burned in British power stations will, at best, cut sulphur dioxide emissions by half, because low-sulphur coal contains about half as much sulphur as the average British deep-mined coal. There is no question of using no-sulphur coal, because there is no such thing. Enormous quantities of low-sulphur coal will be required to achieve a reduction similar to that which would be achieved by installing FGD on 12,000 MW of plant, as promised by the Prime Minister in New York.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman must make up his mind. To deal with the relatively high content of sulphur in British coal, we either spend a couple of billion pounds installing new plant or we import coal from Colombia and other countries in South America. He is against the importation of such coal, but wants immediate expenditure on capital equipment. Which way is he going? He must make up his mind.

Mr. Dobson: I am entirely lost by the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I have made it quite clear that capital expenditure should be made, and where the money should come from. I simply do not know why the hon. Gentleman is rabbiting on.

Until now, low-sulphur coal has been given low priority by this short-sighted Government. When they took office, there were 57 collieries in the low-sulphur coalfields of Kent, Wales and Scotland. All the Kent mines have now closed. The number of Welsh mines has been reduced from 37 to six, the number of Scottish mines from 16 to one, and Monkton hall is in mothballs. As a result, British low-sulphur coal capacity has been reduced to a third of its level when the Government took office. If the Secretary of State wants low-sulphur coal, I challenge him to say, either now or in his speech, whether he will insist that Monkton hall be reopened immediately and that the threat of closure be lifted from the remaining six collieries in south Wales. If he will not, it will mean that he prefers foreign coal to British coal.

The Government have encouraged more opencast mining and propose to give it another boost under the Coal Industry Bill, which is currently being considered in the other place. Besides all the environmental problems that result from opencasting, coal from opencast mines in Britain, with the exception of Scotland, has another major disadvantge—a higher sulphur content than deep-mined coal. In both respects, the Government's policy has made it more difficult for Britain to mine the low-sulphur coal that it needs. Therefore, most low-sulphur coal will have to be imported.

That poses other problems. I hardly need remind the House that last year Britain had a record trade deficit of £20,000 million. In cash terms, our trade in gas, oil and coal did little better than break even, and in tonnage terms we had an overall fuel deficit of 14 million tonnes, including 12 million tonnes of coal imports. To meet the 1998 target set by our European partners may require a further 30 million tonnes of low-sulphur coal imports, and 50 million tonnes may be necessary to meet the 2003 target.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) said, that is not the only trade disadvantage that would result from abandoning the FGD programme, because it would also harm British boiler manufacturers, who were hoping for contracts to install the FGD equipment. They have put much money and effort into preparing for that work. Had this short-sighted Government got on with desulphurisation in the 1980s, like West Germany, British companies such as Babcock Power and Northern Engineering Industries would be well placed to compete for contracts to clean up the dreadful chimney emissions in eastern Europe.

However, the latest news means that those companies are likely to be told by the people in eastern Europe to whom they are trying to sell their skills, "Why should we give contracts to you? You have not even done that work

in Britain. You have no experience and you cannot compare with the achievements of Deutsche Babcock." That is another example of the Government's lack of concern for British industry.

Why is FGD to be abandoned or severely cut back? After all, it would best counter acid rain, best help British manufacturing industry, best secure the long-term future of the coal industry and best help the balance of payments. The answer is that the flue gas desulphurisation programme is threatened because it would cost money.

No one should be fooled by the claims that the electricity companies cannot afford it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said, the electricity companies are rolling in money. Last year alone, they repaid £1,779 million to the Government, they self-financed investment of £1,492 million and they still made a profit of £777 million. More than £4,000 million was slushing around in their accounts in one year. If they have a £4,000 million surplus in just one year, they must be able to find £2 billion over the next six or seven years for this vital environmental programme.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman makes much play of the fact that the electricity industry has made a profit of £770 million. Is he aware of the value of the investment in the electricity industry? Does he not agree that, were the same amount of money to be put into the Post Office, the electricity industry would earn more than it does by the supply of electricity?

Mr. Dobson: It appears that the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy wants to get rid of the electricity industry and to put the money in the Post Office instead. I must remind him of another point. According to the annual reports of the various electricity boards in England, Wales and Scotland, to which the Secretary of State referred me when I asked him about the value of assets, the total net value of assets is £35,000 million, which the British people have invested. We now understand that the Secretary of State will sell them off to his mates in the City for less than £10 billion. There will be a lot of our money swilling around in the hands of people in the City.

We must accept that a great deal of negotiating is going on. For all I know, all the rumours may have been put out by the electricity industry because it wants to make it appear that it is skint and needs money. Perhaps it will agree to introduce FGD into its power stations, in accordance with the Prime Minister's promise, providing it receives a green dowry from the taxpayer as a sweetener at the time of privatisation. Such a sweetener is not necessary, and should not be given.

Let me make it clear today that the next Labour Government will require the generating companies to meet the European targets—and to meet them by the installation of FGD equipment. Let me also make it clear that we believe that it would not be fair for any excess installation costs which result from the delay now being sought by the companies to fall on consumers. Those extra costs will not result from anything that consumers have done, so any future requests from the companies to pass on such extra costs to consumers will get an unsympathetic reaction from the next Labour Government.

Flue gas desulphurisation equipment can be installed in the sure and certain knowledge that it will work. Once such equipment has been installed, operators have the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances without raising sulphur dioxide emissions. That does not apply to a policy that relies on low-sulphur coal. That is a high-risk policy. For a start, there are severe doubts about Britain's ability to obtain secure supplies of the vast quantities of low-sulphur coal that would be required. Even if they were obtainable, at a reasonable price, the low-sulphur option would be vulnerable to such factors as an unexpected increase in demand for electricity, or the lack of availability of nuclear power from Britain, or even nuclear power imported from France.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): There is an important point about the operation. Is it not a fact that the desulphurisation process on coal with a high sulphur content results in an increase in the amount of CO_2 going into the atmosphere, thereby increasing the other major problem of the greenhouse effect, whereas using coal with a low-sulphur content, from whatever source, does not involve that process and therefore does not create the increased CO_2 effect, which is one of the major problems which the world has to face?

Mr. Dobson: The differences between the two, as the hon. Gentleman knows, are not that large. We have given a clear undertaking to our European partners to reduce acid rain. We should get on with that, rather than pretend that we are making a shabby compromise for the sake of the greenhouse effect. It has nothing to do with the greenhouse effect; the Government are concerned instead about the counting-house effect in the City.

The low-sulphur option, if pursued, would lead to massive closures of collieries, which could never be reopened. If collieries are closed in part of a shipyard, it would probably be impossible to sink a safe shaft thereafter.

To augment low-sulphur coal by burning natural gas, as some people suggest, would be typical of the Government's wasteful and short-sighted energy policies. It would do even more harm to the coal industry and to the balance of payments. It would also rapidly deplete our natural gas reserves, which should be put to better uses than generating electricity, as laid down in an EC directive.

Not to go ahead with FGD would mean placing less reliance on the most efficient stations on the system. Equally at risk would be those collieries and coalfields which supply such power stations. The British collieries which supply the stations to be converted to low-sulphur coal would also be at risk. The Nottinghamshire coalfield would be most vulnerable, in view of the proposals for coal import facilities on the Humber, and for gas-fired power stations also on the Humber. The low-sulphur-coal approach, according to estimates given to me, could reduce the Nottingham coalfield to just three pits by the end of the decade.

The Secretary of State has been praised for progressing his privatisation programme and for untangling the knotted nonsense that he inherited from his predecessor. I concede that, from that narrow point of view, he deserves credit for the progress which he has made towards the goal of privatisation set for him by the Prime Minister. But I should remind him that there are more important things in the world than pleasing the Prime Minister. That may be an unusual concept for members of the Cabinet, but it is nevertheless true.

I remind the Secretary of State of his own experiences. After the House voted to televise its proceedings, the Prime

[Mr. Dobson]

Minister wanted the right hon. Gentleman, as Leader of the House, to do what he could to delay and obstruct the coming of the cameras. After a time, perhaps as a result of my advice, the Secretary of State rightly decided that it would be better to go down in history as the man who got the cameras in rather than the man who did the Prime Minister's bidding. He showed considerable ingenuity in coming up with a formula for televising the House which was acceptable to nearly everyone. He showed even more courage in telling the Prime Minister that she would have to go along with it.

The Secretary of State should show those characteristics again. He should take the Prime Minister aside and tell her that the fight against inflation and the battle against acid rain cannot be reconciled with Cecil's potty scheme for electricity privatisation. He should tell her to give priority to the consumers and to the environment. He should tell her to choose between pleasing her friends in the City and breaking her public promise at the United Nations.

The privatisation of electricity is already proving expensive to consumers, damaging to the environment, harmful to the balance of payments, crippling to British manufacturers and inflationary. It is time for the Government to think again. Above all, the Secretary of State should not agree to the backsliders' charter on acid rain proposed by the generating companies and his city advisers. Our country and our European neighbours deserve better. The advisers should turn their attention from trying to fiddle the figures to thinking of something more important.

For the last decade, Britain has been the dirty old man of Europe. It is time to look ahead. We should make sure that we lead the way in the international effort to make the new Europe a better and cleaner place, to ensure that, by 2000, the skies are clear, the trees are growing again and the lakes and rivers are restored to their original purity. That is what our people are looking for in the 1990s. They will not forgive those who put privatisation before those hopes and aspirations.

4.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the significant progress made by this Government in preparing the electricity supply industry for privatisation; welcomes the introduction into the industry for the first time of real, visible and effective competition which will turn the industry from a producer centred monopoly into a truly consumer oriented industry; welcomes the downward pressure that this will put on customers' electricity bills and the upward pressure on standards of service; welcomes this Government's intention to see a radical restructuring and strengthening of pollution control through the Environmental Protection Bill; and welcomes this Government's commitment to complying with the requirements of the European Community's Large Combustion Directive.'.

I do not know what I have done to deserve praise from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), even in such an oblique way. After all, for three years I spent my time trying to nurse him as shadow Leader of the House by feeding him titbits to try to get him to ask sensible questions, but he rarely did so. I suspect that he was trying to establish a passage of time between his obvious and complete lack of grasp of accountancy principles or economics—I do not know whether that accounted for his demise from his employment with the Central Electricity Generating Board or whether it was election to the House——

Mr. Dobson: I got a better job.

Mr. Wakeham: He got a better job—as a Member of Parliament, no doubt—so that was that.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments on the televising of the House, he knows that, after the decision of the House, I paused to consider what to do; I think that I paused for about 20 minutes before I went on television and announced that I had accepted the decision of the House. He knows full well that I worked very hard indeed to try to implement that decision, with his co-operation.

Having got over the shock of praise from the hon. Gentleman, I welcome the further opportunity so soon after last week's statement to bring the House up to date with our continuing progress and to put on record the performance of the electricity industry under this Government.

In just six weeks' time, Britain's electricity industry will undergo a dramatic transformation. From the end of March—when 16 new companies will be created—the old electricity supply industry will disappear. In its place, we will establish a competitive market in power. For the first time ever, there will be genuine competition in electricity supply.

The vesting day for the new companies will mark one of the last hurdles for this, the most complex privatisation ever undertaken. From there, the Government will move ahead and complete the privatisation of the industry in the lifetime of this Parliament, just as they have pledged all along. Then, for the first time, workers in the electricity industry and consumers of electricity alike will have the chance to invest in 14 of the 16 new private companies we will be creating, and to take part in the world's biggest and most exciting privatisation.

The motion tabled by the Opposition talks about electricity prices. These are, of course, a matter for the industry and it has yet to announce its proposals for the coming year. I indicated to the House just over a week ago that I saw no reason why there should be any increase in the average price of electricity this year. I am now able to inform the House of my latest thinking. I repeat that it will be for the industry to announce its proposals on prices. These will, of course, vary between the boards, depending on their individual circumstances, as they have always done. The likelihood now is that the average price increase overall for electricity consumers in April should be below the current rate of inflation.

In fact, many industrial customers—those who consume more than 1 MW—will for the first time be negotiating prices in a truly competitive market, and will benefit from price reductions. Where they are not able to do so—perhaps because they need time to negotiate—we have sought an undertaking from the industry that it will use its best endeavours to offer a one-year real price freeze. Overall, I anticipate a significant reduction in the average price paid by customers who consume more than 1 MW.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall give way in a moment, but I want to finish dealing with prices.

Customers who take below 1 MW will benefit from regulation and the change to the price control that I announced last week. As I said then, I see no reason why the average price to these customers should rise by much more than the current rate of inflation this year. The price control should prevent any further increases before the end of March.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Secretary of State recognise that, as a result of the enormous and unnecessary increases in electricity prices in 1988-89, were it not for privatisation, the electricity industry could easily be in a position to reduce prices, rather than simply freeze them?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall address that very point in the latter part of my speech.

I was frankly amazed at the sheer cheek of the motion tabled by the Opposition. The Labour party knows a thing or two about electricity price rises, because it was under the Labour Government that prices rose.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose——*

Mr. Wakeham: Indeed, a former Labour Cabinet Minister stated:

"The last Labour Government, of which I was a member . . . caused a massive increase in electricity charges".—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1983; Vol. 143, c. 813.]

The size of the increase was staggering. During the last five years of the Labour Government, with inflation raging out of control, domestic prices increased, in current terms, at a rate equivalent to 2 per cent. every six weeks, or a staggering 155 per cent. over the five-year period.

If we look at domestic prices under the last five years of this Government on the same basis, we see that they increased by some 21 per cent. Under Labour, they would have increased at a rate equivalent to that percentage each year.

The picture is clear. Where Labour puts prices up, the Conservatives bring them down. I simply cannot comprehend the Opposition's allegations that preparation for privatisation has put up prices when it is clearly not the case.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Wakeham: I wish to finish this point. I shall give way in a moment. I may clarify some of the points that the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise.

The simple truth, demonstrated by the Opposition motion, is that the Labour party is confused. As usual, Labour Members want it both ways. They oppose the tough line that we have taken with the coal industry, which has resulted in the stabilisation of prices. They oppose the necessity of raising the return on the assets employed in the electricity supply industry, although the return has still not reached the 5 per cent. that they themselves set when they were in power.

The fact is that prices would not be any lower if electricity remained in the public sector, and for many consumers they would be a good deal higher. The reality is that the pressures on the electricity supply industry will all be to hold or reduce prices as competition develops. That will be good news for the consumer.

Mr. Eadie: Using the right hon. Gentleman's phrase, does he agree that there is an element of bare effrontery when he draws a distinction between the period of Labour Government and that of the Conservative Government? Does he not realise that there was an oil crisis then and that billions of pounds were being passed across the exchanges for oil? Incidentally, if we pursued his policy, we would pass billions of pounds across the exchanges. Does he not realise how many billions of pounds his Government have had as a consequence of North sea oil? It is bare effrontery for the right hon. Gentleman to quote those statistics to the House.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman likes, I will quote the figures by direct comparison, taking out the inflation factor, which was substantial and caused partly by price rises and partly by oil prices. During the last years of the Labour Government, industrial electricity prices increased by 6 per cent. in real terms and domestic prices increased by 9 per cent. in real terms. In the last five years of this Government, industrial prices fell by 10 per cent. and domestic prices by 8 per cent. in real terms. Industrial prices are lower than they have been since 1973. That is a perfectly good answer to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Wakeham: No. I must get on a little. I will give way in a minute.

The Opposition are also on shaky ground if they accuse *—[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) will keep calm for a moment. The Opposition want to raise prices. They do not like it when someone tells them the facts.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I am intrigued by the Secretary of State's analysis. I have listened patiently to him. In December 1973, OPEC quadrupled oil prices. In the mid-1970s we were contemplating a $35 to $40 barrel in money terms. We now have a $19 barrel. World oil prices and, indeed, world energy prices have fallen in real terms. The Secretary of State knows that, and he should not try to take credit for it.

Mr. Wakeham: I was simply stating the facts because the Opposition referred to the price of oil. The important point, which the Opposition cannot wriggle away from, is that, under their policy of seeking a 5 per cent. return on assets, prices today would be higher under a Labour Government than they are under the Conservative Government.

The Opposition are also on shaky ground if they accuse the Government of weakening the protection of the environment. It was this Government who signed the EC large combustion plants directive in 1988. It is this Government who are intent on a radical restructuring and strengthening of pollution control through the Environmental Protection Bill. It is this Government who are in the forefront of international efforts to see that the greenhouse effect is taken seriously.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Wakeham: Is it on the directive?

Mr. Home Robertson: No.

Mr. Wakeham: In that case, I shall not give way.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Secretary of State should save himself some time and give way now.

Mr. Wakeham: In June 1988, the Government and the Governments of the other EC member states reached agreement on the terms of the large combustion plants directive. Under this directive the United Kingdom will reduce the level of airborne sulphur dioxide emitted by existing large combustion plants—such as coal-fired power stations. For the United Kingdom, the objective is a 60 per cent. reduction in our sulphur dioxide emissions, based on 1980 levels, by the year 2003, with intermediate reductions of 20 per cent. by 1993 and 40 per cent. by 1998.

The Government have also undertaken to reduce the United Kingdom's emissions of nitrogen oxides—another pollutant implicated in the formation of acid rain—by 30 per cent. on 1980 levels by 1998.

The essence of the directive is a commitment by member states to reduce their emissions of acid gases. It is not a commitment to any specific form of abatement technique.

The retrofitting of power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment is an important means of reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide. Contracts have been placed for the retrofitting of the 4 GW Drax power station. But there are other means, too. For example, greater use of natural gas in power stations would not only reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, but would help control our emissions of carbon dioxide. That could prove of greater value as part of the strategy to combat global warming.

I assure the House that the privatisation of the electricity industry will not affect United Kindom compliance with the terms of the directive. The Environmental Protection Bill will provide the Secretary of State for the Environment and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution with adequate powers to ensure compliance with the directive.

Mr. Salmond: May I take the Secretary of State back to his argument on the virtues of competition? I read his speech in Aberdeen last Friday. How will the cross-border competition work? In particular, how can we export Scottish electricity generated by coal at 4p per unit or by advanced gas reactor at, perhaps, 8p per unit when there are proposals to build 3,000 MW of gas-powered electricity stations in the north-east of England which will produce electricity at 2p per unit? Is not that a recipe for one-way competition? The competition will not be from north to south. From a Scottish perspective, can the Secretary of State really argue that it is a good deal to allow gas from Aberdeen to be sent to the north-east of England to out-compete the Scottish electricity industry and Scottish industry as a whole?

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that the whole of Scotland is not as pessimistic about the fortunes of the Scottish economy as the hon. Gentleman. When I was in Scotland, I talked to a number of people involved in the electricity supply industry there, who believe that they can compete —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman quotes a lot of figures. It is not for me to discuss the details of contracts to which I am not party. I am convinced that Scotland has the ability to compete; that Scotland will compete on electricity and be very welcome in our system, in which it will play its part.

Mr. Salmond: What about the price of the AGR system?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me a question to which, in my view, I have given him the answer.

I always take a lively interest in the pronouncements of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and his colleagues. Both he and his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) have come up with some interesting new policies on the environment recently.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras wants to introduce a new merit order based on environmental friendliness—by which, we must assume, he means nuclear first and coal last. The hon. Member for Dagenham—taking time off from the roof tax—has said that Labour would stabilise carbon dioxide emissions within five years and then embark on a major programme of reductions.

It seems to me that both hon. Members have committed themselves to policies without working out what impact they would have on our economy—and more specifically on the coal industry. The combination of those policies could have a devastating impact on the industry and on the workers in the industry that many Opposition Members represent. Perhaps the hon. Members have not done their homework, or perhaps they should think a little more before committing themselves to such policies, but until they come clean we can only assume one thing—that a Labour Government would be disastrous for the coal industry.

Mr. Dobson: I assume that the Secretary of State is referring to a speech that I made in Wakefield on 21 November. It would have been better if he had told the House that I did not announce the merit order as part of Labour's policy. I said——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): The hon. Gentleman is recanting.

Mr. Dobson: No, I am not recanting at all. I said, "I don't pretend to have all the answers"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—unlike Conservative Members who always have all the answers. I said that I was seeking advice about one idea that which force the generators to take the environment seriously. If the Secretary of State—and, presumably, those who helped him draft his speech and who are now sitting in the Box—had looked carefully at my speech, they would not have seen any suggestion that there should be comparisons between gas, electricity and coal because we are looking at the comparative merits of one gas-fired method against another and of one coal-fired method against another. I hope that the Secretary of State will stop this canard, which he has run out half a dozen times already.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, I am glad that an element of bipartisanship has broken out. We can agree that the hon. Gentleman does not know all the answers. However, more seriously—some important issues are involved—I give the hon. Gentleman this undertaking. If he has any plans about how he would like the merit order to be altered from the point of view of the environment, and if he will send his proposals to me, I will ensure that they are considered by the experts in the Department and I will give the hon. Gentleman a perfectly adequate answer. I mean that seriously. I am happy to cast a slide rule or two over the hon. Gentleman's proposals.

Mr. Home Robertson: When the Secretary of State has the slide rule out, and since his experts are to assess the environmental impact of different types of power, will he take this opportunity to say something about the circumstances in which the offshore wave power programme was rubbished by people in his Department, we assume, back in 1982? Is he prepared to make a further statement now on whether that programme will be started again?

Mr. Wakeham: I came to the Department on 27 July 1990—*[Interruption.]*—no, 1989, and I have not briefed myself on what happened in 1982. However, if the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me about it, I shall be happy to look into the matter.

Even before it is accomplished, privatisation has had the effect of stimulating new thinking about methods of electricity generation in this country. The scope and incentives for combined heat and power, for the burning of gas and for renewable energy sources have become much clearer. All these are to be welcomed on environmental grounds. As I said on 12 February, around 300 projects have been put to the area boards in response to our policy of encouraging the development of commercial renewable energy sources.

There has been some ill-founded comment that we have overlooked the interests of independent generators in framing our privatisation proposals. This is not the case. The promotion of competition in generation remains a key objective.

As far as the existing generators are concerned, there are about 100 projects selling to area boards under the terms of the Energy Act 1983. My predecessor announced a year ago that we had agreed five-year transitional arrangements with the area board chairmen to ensure that the changes that we are bringing about do not materially affect the working of those independent power contracts that had been agreed against the backdrop of the Energy Act 1983. The object of the transitional arrangements is to ensure that the generators are no worse off in revenue income terms than at present.

Nevertheless, not all generators currently selling under 1983 Act terms could have been covered by these arrangements, since some 40 of those projects predate the 1983 Act. I have been considering this further and am pleased to say that my proposal is to extend the transitional arrangements to all existing independent generators, regardless of when the plant investment was made.

The successor companies of the area boards will, therefore, make available 1983 Energy Act terms to all existing generators who wish them, for a period of five years after vesting. I believe that that will give all independent generators now on the system an oportunity to come to terms with the new market environment that we are now creating.

As for new entrants, there is a substantial interest among the independent sector in entering the generating market. Lakeland Power and NORWEB, of course, led the way last October with the signature of a long-term power sales contract from the Roosecote station in Cumbria. I am glad to say that this particular project is progressing well. As we speak, the staton is undergoing conversion to burn gas and it is hoped that Lakeland will be supplying power by the winter of 1991.

I hope and believe that more will follow. We know of around 20 other major generation projects in prospect and negotiations between the companies concerned are actively under way. I hope that the emerging final details of the new regime will assist in bringing such negotiations to successful conclusions. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras talked a great deal about the Government's record and policies——

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It says here—he has it typed out.

Mr. Wakeham: Well, I do not think that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can object to me commenting as such, because he said very little about his party's record and policies. Perhaps he is a little embarrassed to talk about them. But if he will not, I shall. I shall set the record straight—and the record is clear. Labour is the party of electricity price rises. The Conservatives are the party of electricity price reductions. Labour in government did nothing to clean up the environment. The Conservatives in government are taking the lead throughout the world in tackling environmental problems. Labour believes the answer to everything is renationalisation. The Conservatives believe in free enterprise——

Mr. Dobson: While the right hon. Gentleman is talking about policy, does he recognise that on 13 December 1989 an Environment Minister said in a written answer that meeting the anti-acid rain commitment

"will involve a range of measures by United Kingdom industry, including retrofitting at least 12,000 MW of electricity generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation equipment."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. *717*.]

Is that still the Government's policy, or has the Secretary of State just changed it?

Mr. Barron: Let us have a straight answer.

Mr. Wakeham: We shall meet that directive in the most sensible and practical manner. Global warming and carbon dioxide are important factors, and we have given a clear undertaking to meet the directive.

The contrast between the two parties could not be starker. Where Labour failed, this Government have a proud record and sound policies. I commend them to the House.

5.9 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to follow the preposterous speech of the Secretary of State. We can only assume that he is looking for an early ministerial reshuffle, as it is obvious that he does not want to be in charge of the electricity industry as it goes towards privatisation.

It is true that energy prices rose in the 1970s following the Yom Kippur war, when fuels costs quadrupled. After 1980, however, the reason for high electricity prices was the industrial devastation that had reduced demand and left the industry with a substantial surplus of generating capacity. That problem should have been resolved, but we now face massive price increases for no good reason.

I was present when the Secretary of State's predecessor came to the House to say that electricity prices had to rise by 15 per cent. in 1988 and by up to 7 per cent. in 1989 to pay for capital investment. Hon. Members who were present then will recall that. We pointed out that the

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Central Electricity Generating Board had already budgeted for adequate capital investment without price increases and, during the passage of the Electricity Bill in Committee, we established that electricity prices had gone up for no good reason, as the board's capital expenditure programme had been met from its budgeted sums before those price increases. Those increases have put a heavy burden on domestic and industrial consumers.

In the past two years, the Government have been fortunate, as the winters have been relatively mild. Had that not been so, there would have been a scandalous number of hypothermia cases and similar conditions. What the Secretary of State has said today brings no comfort to the domestic consumer. He has promised that prices will not rise above the level of inflation, but inflation may well reach 8 per cent. this year and any price increase will be a significant burden on those already paying too much for their electricity.

Whatever the Government may say, the share of income devoted to electricity and fuel costs by the poorest 4 million people in our country is already excessive. They cannot afford to buy electricity shares or water shares. The private water companies recently demonstrated what privatisation means. They are now telling the fire authorities that they have no obligation to provide free water for fighting a fire. Before long, the private electricity generators will say that they have no obligation to provide heat and warmth for the poorest of our country.

It is bad enough for the Government to impose hardship upon the poor, but, while maintaining their arm's length relationship with industry, they should remember that they have an obligation to supervise the British economy. On Saturday, I spent the evening talking to employees of the steel industry who are members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the ISTC. They are anxious not only about their jobs, but about rapid developments that will take place in the months ahead. Their anxiety is shared throughout the steel industry and the chairman of United Engineering Steels, Mr. Pennington, wrote to me recently to express his anxiety. I am sure that the Minister is aware of that anxiety.

The signs are that we are heading for an industrial recession. Between December 1988 and December 1989, steel production fell from 363,000 tonnes to 343,000 tonnes; between November 1988 and November 1989, steel production fell from 360,000 tonnes to 330,000 tonnes. Those falls are significant and serious, as the steel industry is typical of a number of high-technology, high-energy-using industries. Those industries know that, if we enter a tighter, more competitive international market, our competitors will behave with a great deal more intelligence than the Government have displayed since 1979.

As competition increases and tightens, our competitors in France, Germany and elsewhere will recognise that intelligent support from the state and intervention by the Government will be helpful in maintaining their share of international trade. Our Government should remember that, for companies such as Rotherham Engineering Steels Ltd., the price of power may account for more than 20 per cent. of production costs. The Government will not provide such support, but how will we generate the import revenue to pay for the enormous importation of low-sulphur coal, as envisaged by the Government?

The Government have wiped out the British low-sulphur coal industry, and they intend to rely upon imports. In the 1990s, it is inevitable that the premium enjoyed by that coal will increase. Within the decade, I estimate that it will cost £50 a tonne. Because of the Prime Minister's betrayal of her commitment to serve the cause of decency in the environment, we shall be forced to buy low-sulphur coal from abroad, and that will mean the equivalent of a balance of payments demand of £3,000 million.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hardy: I would rather not, as I promised to make a short speech—perhaps to enable the hon. Gentleman to make his own.

The Prime Minister and her Government have betrayed the commitments to the environment that she gave several times 18 months ago. This most recent betrayal comes as no surprise; we have seen it all before. As a result of the failure of the Government's energy policy, British industry and exporting companies such as Rotherham Engineering Steels Ltd. may face a serious competitive disadvantage. That will affect the national economy and the employment potential that industry should command.

This should not be a matter for party games; what is at stake is too serious. The Government's handling of the energy economy will endanger the well-being of the country, pose a threat to our exporting industries and cause hardship to the poorest sections of our community, who are already suffering a great deal. The Government's failure poses a danger to the health of the nation as they cling to the idea that the leukaemia-friendly nuclear industry is helpful to the environment. The facts are far too serious to allow the Government to continue with their preposterous approach.

5.17 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): When my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) announced his plans for the privatisation of electricity, he made the wise decision to split the generating board in two. He also made the important decision that the distribution companies could generate electricity and that other companies should be able to generate electricity by the use of private capital. One part of that privatisation plan was not how I would have wished, however—that relating to nuclear power.

We could have privatised the electricity industry as a whole, but we excluded the nuclear part and kept it as a separate public company. The third report of the Select Committee on Energy for 1987-88 said in paragraph 147:

"independent witnesses were unanimous that, because of commerical discount rates, and the price of coal, unsupported, private companies were most unlikely to build nuclear power plants."

In a speech in this House on 12 December 1988, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who has now left the Chamber, spoke of the wisdom of having a separate publicly owned nuclear company. I said that there was a right and an obligation to buy non-fossil electricity, but asked where the obligation was to build nuclear power stations or generating sets

based on renewable sources. It seemed to be a one-sided relationship, with an obligation to buy but no obligation to build.

At that time—admittedly, I am going back more than 12 months—there were arguments for a separate public company for nuclear power stations, so that the generation of nuclear electricity would be guaranteed. There was also an argument for a separate company to prevent the nuclear component from eroding the selling price of National Power and PowerGen—particularly National Power. There was also an argument that we should retain a centre of nuclear excellence in terms both of operating nuclear power stations and of research and development. There was, and still is, a case to have a separate nuclear company so that there would be public confidence in nuclear energy, especially with regard to safety.

Above all, the main point made in that debate was that it was essential to keep nuclear generation separate from other forms of generation, so as to prevent the true costs of the nuclear industry from being concealed. They were the costs of capital, fuel, waste disposal and decommissioning. It seems that, due to the accoustics and the speed of sound in this Chamber, it takes about 12 months for noises from Back Benches to travel the 10 or 15 ft to the Front Benches.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken the bold decision to put nuclear generation into a separate company—Nuclear Electric. The fact that the decision has been taken a little later than one would wish does not change the fact that it was a bold, wise and correct decision, and I congratulate him on it.

I add to the congratulations offered by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the magnificent job that they are doing in completing the privatisation programme in the scheduled time. The vesting date will be 31 March. There is little doubt that my right hon. Friend is the right man for the right job at the right time.

Mr. Dobson: How would the hon. Gentleman describe the Secretary of State's predecessor?

Dr. Clark: I am talking about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, whom I congratulate on the work that he is doing at present. He is creating competition that will result in downward pressure on prices. Through competition, he will also encourage upward pressure on standard of service, which will benefit everyone using electricity.

We have heard much this afternoon about acid rain, which is principally caused by burning coal and producing sulphur dioxide. There are other forms of pollution, including that caused by carbon dioxide, which causes the so-called greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide comes from burning not only coal, but all fossil fuels. It seems that, whether we are talking about acid rain or the greenhouse effect, it is either burning fossil fuel or, more specifically in terms of acid rain, burning coal, that is the problem. The difference between the two is that we can scrub out sulphur dioxide and prevent acid rain, as has been said, but we cannot do much now, if anything, to remove carbon dioxide, which causes the greenhouse effect. The only way we can do so is to think of other forms of electricity generation, whether renewables or nuclear.

There is a principle—it is presently being embodied in legislation—that the polluter pays. With the privatisation of electricity, I am certain that that principle will continue. The price of electricity must reflect the price of removing such things as sulphur dioxide and preventing acid rain. If we were not careful and did not have privatisation, we would be in a cost-plus position, where the cost of the measures would be passed straight to the consumer by the generator. With privatisation and the competition that will ensue, the cost of removing pollution will be kept to a minimum and will result in a downward trend, not an ever-spiralling upward one.

In the long term, there is little doubt that the nuclear programme and renewables are the solution to removing acid rain. However, we must concede—our Select Committee report showed this—that it is unlikely that the nuclear industry can make much of a contribution during the next 10 or 20 years. Therefore, we should perhaps look towards renewables.

In his statement on 12 February, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy commented on the fact that the non-fossil fuel obligation would also encourage the development of commercial renewable energy sources. He reminded us this afternoon that about 300 projects have been proposed to the area boards in response to that policy. We await with considerable interest the second order, that he will introduce, which relates specifically to renewables. We look forward to learning about the success of many of those 300 projects.

Let us also hope that some of the money that is now being saved from nuclear research and development can be directed towards renewables. A little pump priming—if I may be excused the pun—in the renewable direction will have a great deal of benefit. Nuclear research is expensive, and it would not require more than a small percentage of that money to be diverted to renewables to have a significant impact on the number of renewable sources, their viability and their commercial success.

I still believe that, in the long term, the nuclear industry gives us the best options for constant availability of energy. In due course, as fossil fuels rise in price due to their scarcity, nuclear electricity will have advantageous prices and will be pollution-free.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's last remarks. As Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, he knows full well that, while we have been taking expert evidence on this subject recently, no one has been able to give the exact cost of nuclear energy in the future, including decommissioning.

Dr. Clark: I grant that it is difficult to know what the cost of nuclear energy will be in future. However, it is also difficult to know what coal, gas, or oil will cost. One fact we do know is that coal, gas and oil are declining in world reserves, whereas the amount of uranium is largely untouched. Basic cost graphs will show that the cost of fossil fuel will increase as it becomes scarce, and the cost of nuclear energy will either remain stable or decrease as technology improves. We know that there is plenty of uranium to fuel the stations.

When the nuclear industry recovers from its temporary setback and starts rebuilding stations, I am certain that they will be in the private sector, as they are in America.

[Dr. Clark]

There is no reason why they should not be in the private sector here in due course, although it is not appropriate at present, for the reasons that I gave earlier.

I am disappointed that the review of the nuclear industry has been delayed until 1994. That will probably mean that there can be no new nuclear power stations before then. I wonder what will happen to fill the gap left by the cancellation of the three pressurised water reactors that are no longer to be built.

The work on finding sites for nuclear waste must continue regardless of the nuclear review. We have to be sure that we have the advanced technology for disposing of nuclear waste by 1994, when there will be another boost in the build of nuclear power stations. The nuclear industry will then be able to keep prices down, without the pollution which results from the burning of fossil fuels.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. If hon. Members limit their speeches to 10 minutes, all those who wish to speak will be able to do so.

5.29 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): It is amazing to hear the complacent way in which the Government defend the privatisation of the electricity industry, given the shambolic way in which it has been conducted over the past year or two. The Government have turned cartwheels; advice from Opposition Members and others outside the House, once treated with contempt and rubbished, has proved to be correct and has ultimately been accepted, but only after confidence in the Government's handling of the matter has been shattered. But that only came about because the City was not prepared to buy the package that was originally proposed. I agree with the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) that, in the circumstances, the Secretary of State has made the best of a bad job, but I am sure that he and his predecessor are not the closest of friends as a result.

I am not convinced that the electricity industry has been privatised with the interests of the consumer in mind, with the objective of keeping down electricity prices or with the objective of dealing with the environmental problems associated with electricity generation. It has been done with the voter in mind, as a means to buy votes. However, the Government's economic policies are now in such a mess that it is difficult to see how they can issue such a bribe without aggravating the problems that they have created.

The nuclear power industry has proved most embarrassing to the Government. We were first told that nuclear power was the cheapest form of electricity, even though for years it has been apparent to anybody who looked at it closely that that was not the case, and that it was expensive. At least privatisation flushed that fact out so effectively that the Government were forced to pull it from the sale, as I and others warned at the outset they would have to do, because it would not be a saleable proposition.

Not only is the nuclear industry uneconomic, but it cannot be claimed to have all the benefits that the hon. Member for Rochford described. Safety problems occur far too frequently for us to be complacent about existing nuclear power stations. Only last week there was an incident at Hinkley Point. The industry maintains that there was no significant problem, but it was only a matter of luck that there were no serious consequences. The incident was certainly outside the budgeted safety provisions. In other words, it should not have happened. In addition, there are the problems of leukaemia clusters and the genetic transfer of leukaemia at Sellafield.

That raises serious questions about whether the THORP project is the money spinner that the Government suggest. At the end of the day, that will prove to be a major cost and environmental liability. The project should never have been embarked upon. The idea that it will win us large quantities of foreign exchange in the short term is likely to be outweighed by the difficulties of maintaining the safety of that plant and dealing with the large volumes of radioactive waste that will be produced as a by-product.

The nuclear industry has no useful contribution to make in the foreseeable future, and it should be phased out during the next 15 to 20 years. That will require a radical reassessment of what our electricity supply industry should look like in 15, 20 or 25 years' time.

I agree with the Secretary of State that the Labour party's motion is a little cheeky. It is certainly bald, and it says little if anything about the Labour party's alternative. It is extremely negative in its approach. One of the Labour party's problems is that, fundamentally, it likes the electricity supply industry the way it was—a huge, centralised monolithic structure.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No, I am trying to be brief.

To make the point more forcefully, during the Lib-Lab agreement, the Labour Government's objective was a single electricity company for the United Kingdom. It was one of the small negative benefits of that period that the Liberals in government refused to accede to that objective, and we were right to ensure that the regional structure was maintained. It is necessary to ensure that the industry has some transparency and comparability.

There is room for competition within the supply industry. That has never been a problem for me or for my party, but I am not convinced that the structure that has been created is likely to be the definitive answer. Restructuring will inevitably take place over the years. I am not wholly convinced that there will be a proliferation of new small suppliers, but that is the direction in which the electricity supply industry should move in the next few years, so that we have much greater variety, scale and size of generation.

Another mistake in the way in which the industry has been structured and has instinctively operated over the past 10 or 15 years is that, when demand has risen, the response has been to build a series of new giant power stations. That era should be behind us. That is one of the better reasons why the PWRs should be cancelled: not just because they are nuclear stations but because they are of a scale and type that is not relevant to the future structure of the industry.

We want smaller-scale generating capacity, which can be much more efficient because it can use combined heat and power systems and district heating systems and in other ways operate at a level of efficiency which will reduce environmental pressures as well as fuel requirements.

Environmental pressures must be addressed from the outset. The Government should be setting targets not only for the reduction of acid rain but for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. That can be done only if one sets out the objectives for three to five years ahead and then works out how they can be achieved. The Minister says that the Government aim to achieve a 60 per cent. reduction in acid rain by 2003. The EC wishes to achieve that by 1995, so the Government are clearly not moving as fast as they should be.

The practicalities of reducing carbon dioxide emissions are not too acute in the short term. I had the privilege and pleasure of opening a sheltered housing complex in my constituency last week. It was built by Gordon district council and is claimed to be the most energy-efficient housing complex in operation in the United Kingdom. For £30,000, a substantial reduction in heating costs has been achieved. The project cost £1·44 million and the 32 units cost £1 per week for all heat and light, using condensing boilers, triple glazing, high insulation and low-energy lighting.

It is also estimated that carbon dioxide emissions from that building have been reduced by 50 per cent., compared to what would have been the case if that £30,000 investment had not been made. Building standards and an energy audit for the introduction of such new systems in a variety of buildings could quickly reduce fuel consumption and carbon dioxide output. Radical measures of that kind are needed if the environmental pressures created by the electricity supply industry are to be reduced.

The Government told the United Nations that they believed that it was possible to reduce the demand for electricity by 60 per cent. within the next few years—that is, a 60 per cent. increase in efficiency. However, in written answers that I have received even in the last few weeks, the Government insist that they believe only a 20 per cent., saving is achievable. How do the Government explain that differential? What is being done to achieve even a 20 per cent. saving?

One must ask also what is being done about renewable sources of energy. After conservation has been exploited —that must be the priority—alternative energy resources must be dramatically expanded. Scotland has the best wind profile in Europe, yet that resource is not being developed at anything like the rate necessary. In fact, one company involved dropped out of the market because the pace of development did not allow it to survive.

We should be setting ourselves the clear objectives of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 30 per cent. over the next 15 years, introducing a system of emission control licences to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide and of other greenhouse gases released by energy generation, developing renewable energy resources on a much greater scale, and changing the nature of the coal industry to ensure that we do not continue losing low-sulphur reserves, as we have done over the past year or two. We should also phase out the nuclear power industry by 2020, if not before.

All that is achievable and would bring the substantial benefits of savings to the consumer, reductions in electricity costs, reductions in fuel poverty, and reductions in the impact of the adverse effects of electricity generation on the environment.

5.41 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I welcome the privatisation of the electricity supply industry and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the effective grasp of the reorganisation that he has shown. In 1979, I and the late Jocelyn Cadbury, both working in the energy group, first drew up a report suggesting splitting the electricity industry into eight coterminous generating and distribution companies, as the first step to achieving a competitive situation. At that time, many technical objections were made, which outweighed the advantages. A decade later, the dream that I and the late Jocelyn Cadbury had of a more flexible and more competitive system is coming to fruition.

We are about to embark on a new era in electricity generation now that the old Central Electricity Generating Board monopoly is to be broken. With the emergence of two new private companies, National Power and PowerGen, together with the newly emerging independent generating companies such as Lakeland Power Ltd.—which has reached agreement to sell the output of its 225 MW power station in Cumbria to NORWEB—we can see all the pressures of competition being brought to bear on prices. I am confident that, within a few years, all the exaggerated fears of the Labour party that electricity prices will rise by 25 per cent. will be proved groundless—just as they were in the case of other major privatisations.

The Government can be proud of the success of their privatisation programme. Twenty-nine major former state sector companies have been privatised since 1980. Almost 45 per cent. of the former state sector and nearly 800,000 jobs are in private hands and are prospering accordingly. That has resulted in a trebling in the number of United Kingdom shareholders to more than 9 million. Ninety-nine per cent. of British Gas employees bought shares, and it would be a salutary lesson for Labour to poll all those employees, asking whether they really want to go backwards and see the renationalisation of the gas industry. Domestic gas prices fell by 16 per cent. in real terms in the five years from 1984 to 1989, and British Telecom charges have fallen by 5 per cent. in real terms since November 1986.

The statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last week that average electricity prices will increase below inflation is good news for everyone. It means, of course, that once again, Labour has got it all wrong, with its scaremongering forecasts of huge price increases.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Hannam: Because of the time limitation, I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman—but I can prove if necessary that such a forecast was made by two Labour Members.

History has shown that there were massive price increases under Labour Governments. Between May 1974 and May 1979, domestic electricity prices increased 9 per cent. in real terms, compared with an 8 per cent. fall between 1985 and the present under a Conservative Government. Under Labour, industrial electricity prices rose 6 per cent. in real terms, but have dropped 10 per cent. under a Conservative Government. As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said:

[Mr. Hannam]

"The last Labour Government, of which I was a member —I take my share of collective responsibility for this—caused a massive increase in electricity charges."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 813.]

I have no doubt that the diversity of supply that the Electricity Act promises will materialise.

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth) *rose*——

Mr. Hannam: In view of the comments of Mr. Deputy Speaker, who asked right hon. and hon. Members to curtail their speeches, I think that I had better carry on.

I mentioned Lakeland Power's 225 MW station, and there is also the ICI-National Power-Enron proposal for a £1 billion gas-fired power station using combined heat and power, which would generate 1,500 MW. Thames Power has plans for a series of five or six generating plants, including a huge 1,000 MW station at Barking, which would supply nearly one quarter of London electricity board's peak demand. South-Eastern electricity board, London Underground Ltd., British Coal and Whitchurch hospital in Cardiff all have schemes that would produce downward pressure on prices and much greater efficiency in energy production.

By seeking out the cheapest source of supply, the 12 area supply companies will promote competition among the generators, with the national grid acting as the market. They will be able to generate electricity themselves or to purchase it from new independent generators. The requirement to purchase a percentage of their needs from non-fossil fuel sources will help to ensure security of supply and encourage the development of renewable sources of power. I wish that the non-fossil fuel percentage could somehow have been extended to include combined heat and power, which must be more greatly encouraged as one of the most energy-efficient means of generating and using electricity.

I support the decision to separate the nuclear power element of the industry at this stage. It is vital to keep nuclear capacity, not only for security of supply but on environmental grounds and a longer-term supply basis. Within a few years, fossil fuel prices will without a doubt begin to rise again and nuclear power will become price-competitive in the United Kingdom—as it is in France, Japan and West Germany. Alternative renewable resources of non-fossil fuel generation will also play an increasingly important part in our energy equation.

The Government are right to help research into, and evaluation of, various forms of electricity generation. Although I should not like to put my money on any particular schemes at this stage, because we have seen their order of priority chop and change over the years, I believe that the Mersey tidal barrage will succeed, as will wind farms on our windier islands. I note the remark of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), that Scotland presents special opportunities in that context. The landfill gas schemes that are proliferating are also likely to succeed.

The impending privatisation of the electricity industry has given a huge boost to the development of such projects —so much so that 300 schemes have been submitted to area boards for consideration under the non-fossil fuel obligation. Important to us all is the effect of energy production and use upon our environment. A great deal more has to be done in respect of cleaner production and energy efficiency. As I pointed out in an earlier intervention, a process that removes a pollutant such as sulphur dioxide or the lead from petrol can increase the amount of carbon-dioxide going into the atmosphere. That problem will not go away, as has been made clear in all our discussions with environmental organisations.

We need imaginative new initiatives throughout the whole area of energy efficiency, if we are to properly protect our environment, as the hon. Member for Gordon said. All the present evaluations show that the best opportunities for environmental benefit probably lie with transport, through increasing car engine efficiency and through new attitudes to travel systems.

In recent discussions with Friends of the Earth, it was pointed out that our present policy of creating industrial estates and new factories far away from the houses in which the employees live creates huge transport problems. It results in vast commuter traffic and use of cars. As many of the new industrial plants are quiet and clean and use new technology, perhaps our planners ought to consider whether we should go back to integrating some of the plants and industries with the housing for the people who will work in them, and so help to produce an answer to one of our environmental problems.

We now spend six times the amount that we spent in 1979 on energy efficiency. The Electricity Act places a duty on the Secretary of State and on the Director General of Electricity Supply to promote energy efficiency and economy by suppliers, and to promote the efficient use of the electricity which they supply.

However, the energy efficiency of British buildings is not satisfactory compared with that in other European countries. The programme of energy saving in the early 1980s produced a significant upturn in the awareness of the importance of energy efficiency among industrialists, business men and domestic householders. Now is the time to regenerate—if I may be allowed to use that phrase—full awareness of energy saving and the benefits to the consumer and for future generations. Energy audits, insulation, double-glazing, building design and electronic controls—those are a whole range of actions and options that need to be encouraged, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will pursue them vigorously together with Ministers in other Departments.

The Opposition motion has effectively been torpedoed by my right hon. Friend's announcement of a lower-than-inflation price structure. I ask the House to support the Government amendment.

5.51 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred to the fact that the Government are buying advice from 47 companies. If the Government were sincere in their beliefs about the work and the worth of the Energy Select Committee and other Select Committees, there would have been no need for them to spend that sort of money.

I thought that I saw four members of the Select Committee here today. That pleased me, although I think that the Chairman has now left the Chamber, as has the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). All four were party to the Energy Select Committee's third report of 6 July 1988. I may be wrong about the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), but I think they all were a party to it.

The Government never wanted that report to be published. Hon. Members may recollect that, on one particular morning, the Select Committee was to discuss the possibility of taking evidence and producing such a report, and because of pressure from the Whips, Conservative Members were supposed to object to such an investigation. Unfortunately, for some reason, some Conservative Members failed to turn up to the Committee, and the Opposition Members—we do not usually split on political lines—were then in the majority. That is why that report saw the light of day.

That was an excellent report, in which the Committee advised the Government—who were hell-bent on shoving forward their privatisation programme, and had produced a White Paper with very little consultation on electricity privatisation—that they were in danger of producing spatchcock legislation *[Interruption.]* The Committee suggested that the Government might be well advised to defer the implementaton of the legislation until they had had sufficient time to consider it.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East wanted to know what spatchcock legislation means. I am prepared for that one. I have been asked that question many times, and I have failed to answer it, but now I have found the answer. I understand that a spatchcock is a cock bird, a bird unplucked or unhung, and not ready for cooking. I think that that explains the word, and the motives behind the Select Committee's decision. The Committee saw the dangers of that hasty legislation.

I believe that the Select Committee has been proved right. They produced a report after seeking much expert evidence. I would have thought that the Government would have been wise to consider that report, but no, they did not. The Select Committee said in its third report;

"First, we are worried about the costs of nuclear power . . . Secondly, if there are to be additional costs from nuclear power, we are concerned about where they will fall."

In recent times, as the present Chairman knows well, we have taken much expert evidence in Committee on the cost of nuclear power. Why did the electricity supply industry and Lord Marshall get their sums wrong? Why has the country been told for many years that the comparison of costs between coal and nuclear showed that nuclear was always much cheaper? That was never true; it was probably hidden from the public and from the Government—in fairness to them.

Mr. Dobson: For a time.

Mr. Lofthouse: Yes, for a time. But it was certainly hidden from the country.

The Secretary of State has not altered one word in his speech about the nuclear sector, part of which will be generating electricity in Britain. The big question mark over electricity prices is, how much will it cost, bearing in mind the proportion of 25 per cent. generation by non-fossil fuel? We are aware that there will be a colossal cost, and no one knows the real cost of decommissioning. Somewhere down the line someone will have to foot that bill, but who? It will not be the private sector. Nuclear power generation has been pulled out of the sale because it would not be attractive to the private sector. I appreciate that there have to be alternative sources of energy, but I do not believe that effort and money should be put into the nuclear industry.

When we talk about costs, we immediately think of financial costs, but of leukaemia clusters and other things there are greater costs. Evidence is now coming to light in some areas of nuclear activity. Nobody knows the extent of the problem. It has been denied for many years, but now people are beginning to wonder. What a cost we may have to be prepared to pay for the nuclear generation of electricity. What a social cost, and what misery we may cause families.

There is also a risk of major accidents. I believe that the reason for pushing nuclear energy as an alternative supply is purely dogma. It is to whip the miners, who have never been forgiven and never will be while the Government are in power. The Government will live to regret the day that they ran down the coal-mining industry to the extent they have. Once mining cannot meet the demands of the next generation of industry in this country, we shall have to pay through the nose for coal—whether it is desulphurised or not. That is purely a result of dogma. I hope that the Government will think again, and will do what they can to provide some nuclear power costing.

No less a person than Lord Marshall, on whose guidance the Government have relied for many years, told the Select Committee only last week or the week before that he agreed with the view in its report that the Government had produced spatchcock legislation, and Conservative Members know full well that that view is correct. He also said—in his final question to the Committee's Chairman, I believe—that, after 25 years of advising Government, he had failed. I believe that he is now a very disillusioned nuclear scientist, as are many of his friends.

If costing is to be fair and properly controlled, there can be no place for nuclear power generation.

6 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I should have thought that it was obvious that, on an Opposition day, the Opposition—in this case, the Labour party—should choose a subject on which they had a good record when in office, and on which their spokespersons were renowned for the accuracy of both their research and their pronouncements. Labour's record on both electricity prices and care for the environment is woefully and pathetically weak. Far from being a shining beacon of achievement and endeavour, it is hardly measurable in megawatts. Candle power would be more appropriate: even in that context, however, it is short on the light of inspiration and long on the wax of fudge and obfuscation.

Let us look first at Labour's record on prices. Between 1974 ad 1979, domestic electricity prices rose by 9 per cent. in real terms. Under the present Government, between 1985 and 1990, they fell by 8 per cent. in real terms. Opposition Members may not like the figures, but they represent the truth. Under Labour, industrial prices rose by 6 per cent. in real terms; they have fallen by 10 per cent. under the present Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "That was 10 years ago."]

I hear Opposition Members protest that their record was established 10 years ago. Has anything changed? Have they learnt anything? Is their understanding of the electricity supply industry any more intelligible, and are their predictions any more accurate?

In December 1988, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) forecast a 25 per cent. rise in electricity bills as a result of privatisation. Misleadingly, he lumped together the 1988 rise, the forecast rise for 1989 and the fossil fuel

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

levy, which was already an integral part of electricity bills. Earlier in the debate, the Secretary of State announced that this year the average price for all consumers would increase only in line with inflation. The hon. Member for Sedgefield was some 17 percentage points out: I wonder whether that is why he has moved to employment. As recently as last September, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said that industrial customers faced rises of between 15 and 25 per cent. in April, but it was announced today that the Government had obtained an undertaking from the industry to offer a real-terms price freeze, at least to the larger industrial users.

Under privatisation, downward pressures will be exerted on prices as a result of competition between generators. Prices will also be strongly regulated through the control of transmission and distribution pass-on costs and the firm and rigid implementation of the pricing formula, RPI minus X plus Y. The fossil fuel levy—which has just been set at 10·6 per cent. of the final sales to be borne by all customers—does not represent an additional cost, because the nuclear costs are already included in electricity bills. As recently as November last year, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) predicted that the levy was likely to be about 15 per cent.

Privatisation has brought about an entirely new competitive structure for the industry. At over 10 MW, customers will be entitled to contract supply; at under 10 MW, they will be entitled to a tariff supply from the public electricity suppliers. At over 1 MW, customers are free to obtain supplies from any supplier, and from March 1994 those at over 100 KW will have that option. In March 1998, all customers will be free to seek alternative supplies. That will achieve a well-ordered phasing in of total competition, stabilising the market. PowerGen will testify to the fact that the present position is uniquely competitive.

Labour's energy policy is entirely irresponsible. If Labour had its way, electricity supplies would depend entirely on the coal industry, and we would be in hock to the National Union of Mineworkers. Not only do Labour Members ignore the need for security and diversity of supply; they have shot themselves in the foot in the second part of the motion, which refers to the environment. I note that the motion, rather than dealing with the environment as a whole—as did the original version—confines itself to acid rain. Where is Labour's consideration of the problems of carbon dioxide and the greenhouse effect?

Any future Labour Government who failed to protect the country from the whims of the NUM or the OPEC cartel would be guilty not of selling off the family silver, but of giving it away under duress. Where is Labour's consistency? When in office, the party backed nuclear power. Labour Members were responsible for the disastrous AGR programme; they started the PWR programme, and now they cannot ditch it fast enough. With what would they replace it? Why, with carbon-dioxide-producing coal-fired power stations, of course.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that between 60 and 65 per cent. of the greenhouse gases are produced through energy use, and that half the global warming effect is produced by carbon dioxide. In this country, 80 per cent. of carbon dioxide comes from the burning of fossil fuels—oil, gas and coal. About 36 per cent. of our carbon dioxide emissions is caused by electricity generation, and another 11·6 per cent. by solid fuel.

Labour's plan to replace nuclear power with fossil fuel would increase carbon dioxide output by about 53 million tonnes per annum—25 per cent. above the current levels. What hope is there of reaching the Toronto target of a 20 per cent. reduction by the year 2005? Each PWR saves 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. Surely it is somewhat premature, and a little irresponsible, to rule out entirely the future of PWRs in this country and in the wider European dimension?

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moss: I must press on: other hon. Members wish to speak.

The most significant change in the electricity supply industry is the Government's non-fossil fuel obligation. In 1990-98, 8,000 MW of nuclear power is to be contracted under the levy. Renewables have also been given a major boost: some 300 new projects have been submitted to the area boards, including one in the Wash, near my constituency—an offshore wind generating farm.

The response from the renewables, and from industries seeking to build renewable generating capacity, has been so overwhelming that the Government intend to give the area boards two more months in which to negotiate with prospective operators before laying a second non-fossil fuel obligation order relating specifically to renewables. Only under privatisation has the importance of renewables come to the fore: it has been the key to unlock their potential.

I cannot allow the debate to end without some reference to energy efficiency. The Government's proposals in the Electricity Act break new ground. The Act places a duty on the Secretary of State and the Director General of Electricity Supply to promote energy efficiency on the part of suppliers, and also efficient use of the electricity that they supply.

Spending on energy efficiency is now six times as large as it was some 10 years ago. Since 1983, the Energy Efficiency Office has helped to achieve annual energy savings worth over £500 million. There has been a dramatic improvement in the United Kingdom's energy ratio. Consumption of electricity has remained unchanged since 1979, but in the meantime the gross domestic product has risen by over 20 per cent.

The Labour party is committed to renationalising the electricity supply industry. Not a word, however, has so far been said about how it intends to do that. Will it have a CEGB mark 2, with all its attendant cost-plus accounting procedures, with a bulk supply tariff imposed from above by the monopoly supplier, and no questions asked? Will the Labour party buy back the shares of millions of investors? If so, what price will it pay for the shares? It is the same old package of political interference, customer irrelevance and large subsidies from the taxpayer.

Nothing positive has been said by the Opposition in the debate. They have given no details of what they plan to do. They have offered nothing new or beneficial regarding electricity prices. They have offered nothing that is either viable or workable that would help to improve the environment. As we have come to know, they never did and they never will.

6.10 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): As the debate progresses, we can see that nothing but lies, damned lies, are provided as information by Conservative party headquarters. I was surprised when the Secretary of State referred to the Opposition's barefaced effrontery, yet he ignored entirely what happened between 1974 and 1979. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) drew his attention to the political and economic climate at that time. Oil cost $40 a barrel. Its price increased three times, just like that. The country had to pay over £5 billion across the exchanges for oil. No previous Government enjoyed the bounty that this Government have enjoyed of £70 billion to £80 billion in North sea oil revenues. However, the Secretary of State had the barefaced effrontery to compare the economic climate then with the one that we have now.

What worries me even more about the Secretary of State's speech is that it seems that there is to be no energy policy, either for price or for production. I referred to the problems surrounding energy costs across the exchanges. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to the fact that the Government's energy policy would lead to the contraction of the coal industry, thus committing the nation to a £3 billion deficit across the exchanges. The Opposition believe that such a policy is illogical.

The Secretary of State does not appear to understand the political consequences of the Government's pricing and energy production policy. He said that there would be a further massive contraction of the coal industry: that pits which produce low-sulphur coal will inevitably have to close. It would be economic lunacy to adopt an energy policy that led to the loss of our indigenous supply.

Scotland well illustrates the lunacy of the Government's energy policy. A few weeks ago I was asked to meet local authorities and British Coal to discuss the serious position in Scotland, where the coal industry has been decimated. In a political sense, the Conservative party in Scotland will not thank the Secretary of State for Energy. Its standing in the opinion polls in Scotland is about 16 per cent. If his policies are pursued, the consequences for the Conservative party in Scotland will be dire.

At that meeting, we discussed Longannet colliery and two other pits that are mothballed. The Frances pit is mothballed, although it produces 45 million tonnes of the best coal in Europe, since its sulphur content is very low. The other pit that is mothballed is Monkton hall, which is in my constituency. It will remain mothballed for two years, according to the agreement that was reached. However, I have little confidence, after the Secretary of State for Energy's speech, that the pit will be reopened after two years. He referred to the conversion of coal-fired power stations to gas. How much that will cost I do not know, but the Secretary of State said that when he was in Scotland he was impressed by the fact that all those to whom he spoke in the electricity industry were optimistic about the future.

Scotland has three power stations with a capacity of 13,500 MW, of which 3,500 MW is produced by coal. Scotland produces 90 per cent. more energy than it needs. We require an outlet for that capacity. The Secretary of State for Energy did not provide us with much hope. Ministers told us that they intended to strengthen the interconnector so that some of the additional capacity could be exported. That capacity—13,500 MW—has already been paid for. It is already available. The interconnector could take the output of between 1·5 million and 2 million tonnes of coal, but nothing is going through the interconnector. Scottish industry is locked into legal battles in the courts.

The question is whether the South of Scotland electricity board should take more coal-fired energy. The people at Longannet are worried about what is to happen; so are the people at Monkton hall and Frances. Ministers have said that the intention is to strengthen the interconnector, but that would cost about £80 million and take three or four years.

I am glad that the Minister of State, Scottish Office, is sitting on the Treasury Bench, since he waxed eloquent over the fact that all that needs to be done is to strengthen the interconnector. However, even though I met the local authorities and the Coal Board, the reality is that nothing is being done about the interconnector. Having listened to the Secretary of State for Energy, I have very little confidence that anything will happen.

I believe that the Government have decided further to contract the coal industry. If they have decided not to go ahead with low-sulphur coal at Monktonhall, not to get an agreement at Longannet, not to strengthen the interconnector, which can export 1·5 million to 2 million tonnes of coal output, I am afraid not only for the miners, but for the Conservative party in Scotland. I hope that the Government will take to heart what I have said because it has political consequences for them.

6.20 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I am sure that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the Secretary of State for Energy has blown some of his circuits as he has discovered the anomalies in the privatisation machine which his predecessor, the current Secretary of State for Transport, left him. One major anomaly is the big fix, which means that he attempted to get rid of a great monopoly generator and supplier of electricity and replaced it with a duopoly, the two companies of which have been allowed to carve up the most lucrative markets.

It is a tribute to the present Secretary of State's political nous that he recognised that the big fix was likely to crank up electricity prices and wind down public support for the Government. He has opened up the supply sector to a wider range of generators, and I welcome that, although the range is still far too restricted, and planned additional generators are still too thin on the ground.

I should like to quote Doug Rodger, a representative of the Chemical Industries Association. I am sure that the Minister will know that that organisation represents intensive users of electricity. He said that large industrial consumers would be much happier with a longer transitional period than is currently being offered on pricing. They are not convinced that new generators will be entering the market to provide the promised competition.

Mr. Rodger expressed the hope that the new mechanism would be open to scope and flexibility when all the details became clear. Government sources, however, indicate that licence prices and the operation of the price

[Dr. Kim Howells]

control formula are likely to be reviewed as late as 1995, which they believe is too late for heavy industrial customers if the terms prove inflexible before then.

How would it be possible to assure people such as Doug Rodger that they will not be priced out of an increasingly competitive market after 1992? Not by searching the world for parcels of relatively cheap low-sulphur coal. Low-sulphur coal is rapidly becoming a premium fuel, with premium prices attached, and major customers such as the United States, Germany, Denmark and Britain are seeking increasing amounts of the stuff. Nor will prices be reduced by relying on increased imports of French nuclear-generated electricity, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said.

Apparently, the electricity which comes to Britain via the cross-Channel interconnector has been the target of a number of our newly privatised area distribution boards. I was informed yesterday by a very distinguished and authoritative source that Electricité de France has lately received a number of distinguished British visitors. A delegation from one of our southern English area electricity boards visited Paris. I am told that they enjoyed a marvellous lunch in the Eiffel tower and they asked Electricité de France whether they could purchase some of its surplus electricity. "Of course," said EDF—I shall not put on my Clouseau accent—"How much are you prepared to offer us for it?" The delegation replied, "We will offer you what the CEGB offered you for it." There was a French shrug, they smiled and said, "We will think about it."

A week or so later, a delegation from another southern English area electricity board arrived, who again enjoyed a splendid lunch up there in the Eiffel tower and afterwards asked EDF, "Would it be possible for us to purchase some of your marvellous, cheap electricity?" "Certainly," said EDF, "But how much are you prepared to offer us for it? We have already had one offer from a neighbouring area electricity board." The delegation replied, "We will offer you 10 per cent. more than they offered." No doubt Electricité de France ordered another glass of Medoc and said, "We shall think about it. We have some other visitors arriving."

The following week, a delegation for another electricity board—I shall not be too specific; I am aware that I have a mortgage to pay—arrived in Paris, enjoyed another marvellous lunch in the Eiffel Tower and said, "We should like to buy some of your electricity." "Certainly," said EDF, "How much are you prepared to offer us?" "We will offer you 10 per cent. more than that outfit from southern England offered you," was the reply. That is no way to secure cheap supplies of electricity to guarantee the future of British industry.

Mr. Eadie: They will get it as long as there is not a drought.

Dr. Howells: Exactly.

My very bitter but distinguished source informed me that it was fine to buy French electricity, as long as the CEGB remained a monopoly purchaser. He said, "We could screw them rotten," as far as the price was concerned. But we no longer have such a monopoly. We will find it increasingly difficult as a nation—borrowing my distinguished source's phrase—to screw any nation or transnational corporation that possesses the fuel that we decide we need. That includes Colombian coal, South African coal, middle eastern oil and French nuclear-generated electricity. We will have to pay the going rate for any electricity we purchase in future and for any other fuel that we may need to generate electricity.

I do not believe that we should reduce ourselves to a nation that travels around the garage forecourts of the world looking for cheap bags of coal or cheap cans of oil in the hope that we will be able to muddle through, as we have so often in so many crucial and strategic sectors. We have to make the most of our abundant natural resources. We have had it easy until now. I am not defending the strategies of the past, whether they have been implemented by Labour or Conservative Governments.

We have had disastrous fuel policies in the past and we have landed ourselves with a dirty, stinking, unimaginative generating industry which was frequently determined by monopoly characteristics and not by the needs of consumers and which favoured the building of huge power stations and corporations to supply those power stations —whether it was undemocratic British Coal or secretive British Petroleum. We need a complete and imaginative review of the way in which we generate electricity in Britain. We should not begin that review by making our nation a hostage to fortune.

6.30 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): I am anxious, in the brief time available to me, to explain that, as a student of energy policy for 20 years—I readily declare my interest as an energy consultant—I have seldom heard so much inconsistency and hypocrisy from the Opposition Front Bench. Labour Back Benchers have been somewhat less inconsistent.

All the energy policies that Opposition Members have been advocating for the last 20 years are now happening as a result of electricity privatisation, yet they do not have the courage to admit it. All that they have been campaigning for—greater energy efficiency, a chance for renewable energy to come into play, greater environmental control, combined heat and power, less pollution and greater competition in affecting prices, enabling industry to shop around—is happening as a result of privatisation, yet they oppose it.

Opposition Members have mostly been opposed to the nuclear industry. The electricity privatisation proposals have, for the first time, exposed the real cost of nuclear, an aspect which Opposition Members have been raising for many years. They, and some of us, have been campaigning on behalf of new coal technologies—fluidised bed technology and so on—which the CEGB continually refuse to consider.

All that is now happening because of electricity privatisation, yet Opposition Members are opposed to it. I have never heard so much inconsistency and hypocrisy as I have heard from Opposition spokesmen today, yet everything they want is happening.

Mr. Dobson: Where is it happening?

Mr Rost: All the policies that Opposition Members have been advocating over the years are now coming to fruition as a result of the Government's proposals to privatise electricity, yet they are still opposed to privatisation. I wish that the occupants of the Opposition

Front Bench would have the guts to say why they are opposed to electricity privatisation, when they must know that we are at last beginning to realise all the objectives of energy policy for which they, and many of my hon. Friends, have been campaigning over the years.

6.32 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I recall the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) arguing in the House not long ago about the need for a combined heat and power policy. He wanted it written, as a policy, into the Electricity Act 1989. He knows, as vice-president of the Combined Heat and Power Association, that those attempts failed both here and in the other place. How can he say that electricity privatisation is providing a helping hand to the nation, in view of his previous utterances about combined heat and power?

The House should be grateful to the Opposition for providing this opportunity to discuss the position of the electricity supply industry. I regret that the Secretary of State is not in his place, because I want to congratulate the Government on their sense of humour in writing into their amendment the way in which, in their view, we should recognise

"the significant progress made by this Government in preparing the electricity supply industry for privatisation".

It is clear from what we have heard—perhaps I should say, from what we have not heard—from the Secretary of State today that we are witnessing another chapter in the shambles of the saga of privatisation that has continued for the last 12 months.

The first element of shambles was the removal of the magnox stations from the flotation. On 27 September last year, the Secretary of State said in a radio interview that the Government believed that the AGRs and PWRs should be part of National Power. It was not long before he changed his mind and removed them from the sell-off.

There then followed a series of changes that will prevent, rather than encourage, competition. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) talked about competition, but accepted that we would have to wait until 1998 before that competition was introduced. That represents a considerable time scale in the energy industry, and in electricity in particular.

In addition to the eight-year protection period for distribution companies, we had the introduction of the price mechanism. In Committee on the Electricity Bill, the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) spoke about the poor pricing system, and said that it would resemble bidding on the stock exchange for electricity. We fear that the sort of competition that Conservative Members speak of in relation to electricity cannot exist.

There followed the moratorium on direct contracts and the continuation of cross-subsidisation. All that has not been sorted out from the point of view of heavy industry. Many other matters remain to be settled, despite the statements in December 1987 about the way in which the Government would privatise the electricity supply industry and introduce competition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) spoke eloquently about electricity prices. In 1988, electricity prices went up by 9 per cent., at a time when there was no need for an increase, certainly not from the point of view of the industry. They went up by 5 per cent. in 1989, again for no real reason; massive profits were being made by the generating and supply companies.

The Secretary of State said that a further rise was on the way. I am not clear whether he meant to say that it would be below the rate of inflation. If we interpret that as meaning another increase of 7 per cent., then that, too, is totally unnecessary at a time when the industry is making massive profits as a result of the investment that has been made in it over the years.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East spoke about my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referring to a price rise of 25 per cent. It is all very well for the Government to talk in their amendment about

"the downward pressure that this will put on customers' electricity bills",

but how can such a downward pressure exist when increases of that magnitude are occurring?

Privatisation is not about reducing prices: it is about raising them, before and after the sale of the industry—before the sale, to fatten up the industry and, after the sale, to meet the demands for higher profits. I regret that the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) is not in his place, because he likened the rate of return for the CEGB, as it was, to the profits of the then Post Office. It is clear that, if the sort of investment that is being made in the electricity industry had been made in the Post Office, a higher rate of return would have been required.

The London business school conducted a study into the subject of rates of return and the drive to maximise them. That study concluded that prices in the electricity industry could rise by as much as 33 per cent. by 1995, after privatisation. It also suggested that, if the industry stayed in the public sector, with its present rate of return, prices could fall by 12 per cent. That is the crux of our argument.

It was all very well for the Secretary of State to argue in terms of a target of 5 per cent. based on the last Labour Government's White Paper on energy policy, but he did not finish the story by saying what National Power and PowerGen believe should be their rate of return when the industry has been sold off. We are well aware why he did not do that, for he would have been predicting the sort of electricity price increases that were postulated by the survey conducted by the London business school. We need regulations to ensure that, if the sale goes ahead—I am by no means sure that the industry will be floated in the way that the Government believe—the consumers are protected.

We are faced with a threat not only to cancel the Government's programme to deal with the problem of acid rain, but it is being suggested that the programme is not of any great worth. In 1986, the CEGB first announced a 6,000 MW FGD programme. In November 1987, the Government signed the EC large combustion plant directive, which increased the FGD programme to the CEGB's estimate of about 12,000 MW.

It took until February 1989 for the CEGB to give the go-ahead for the retrofit at Drax. It now looks as though that will complete only half its first stage, even though estimates suggest that changed circumstances have increased the amount of coal burn that must be retrofitted to achieve the limits laid down in the EEC directive. Indeed, the estimates have increased the figure to about 20,000 MW because of the changes that have been made.

Conservative Members have been trying to raise the flag in favour of the PWR. But the cancellation of the three

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

PWRs has meant our having to retrofit a large amount of coal burn than would have been the case between 1986 and 1988.

On 17 May last year, the CEGB issued a press release proclaiming the successor company's commitment to the environment. It gave a pledge that

"all existing major coal fired stations will be fitted with special burners to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions and many will be fitted with sulphur removal plants."

What has happened since last May? Why does the Secretary of State refuse to reaffirm that commitment?

Short-term economic gain has led to the reduction of the FGD programme. Originally, the contract was for six burners at Drax, but I understand that that may have been reduced to two.

The Secretary of State said that he would give my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras an undertaking, but how much faith can we have in undertakings given by Secretaries of State for Energy? The previous Secretary of State for Energy, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), said in a debate on the coal industry:

"I am able to confirm today that we have asked the privatised generators to continue to plan on the basis of installing 12,000 MW of FGD capacity during the 1990s . . . If we were to revert to low-sulphur coal, we would have to import massive quantities from overseas. The fitting of Drax and other stations with FGD equipment will ensure that there is a substantial market for British Coal".—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. *764-65.*]

Everyone knows what has happened between May and today. The Government have decided to sell to those who want to make profits from electricity privatisation. They are prepared to sell out not only the consumer but the environment.

The Minister must know that we have insufficient capacity to import the amount of low-sulphur coal necessary to meet the low-sulphur directive. Twelve large coal-fired power stations retrofitted with FGD would be necessary to meet the new estimate of 20,000 MW. Plant will be replaced, but it will not be enough drastically to limit SO_2 emissions. We shall have to consider small types of plant that can burn efficiently using circulating fluidised bed combustion.

The hon. Member for Erewash said that we are now seeing freedom in electricity generation and the development of clean-coal technology, but that flies in the face of what has happened since I have been a Member. Labour Members, with the support of some Conservative Members, have argued time and again for the Government to match the amount being spent on developing clean-coal technology at Grimethorpe.

Mr. Rost: The hon. Gentleman has criticised me, but, like the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), he keeps referring to the high profits made by the CEGB. Is he aware that, if it had correctly costed nuclear power, it would now be showing not a profit but a loss? It has fudged the figures. If its costings had been done on a commercial basis, it would have shown a loss.

Mr. Barron: The CEGB has been making a profit. I accept that there have been fudges.

Mr. Dobson: Or fiddling.

Mr. Barron: As my hon. Friend says, its costs may have been fiddled, but that does not explain why the Government have decided to ring-fence the expensive nuclear power industry and guarantee it a generating base for the foreseeable future, leaving other more profitable means of electricity generation to fight with foreign coal in the market.

In 1988-89, the revenue of the electricity industry increased by £1,000 million. It made profits of £777 million, paid back £1,779 million to the Government and made capital investment of £1,492 million. On my reckoning, that means that £4,000 million was available to it in that year. The Secretary of State smiles; no doubt many people in the City will smile when they realise that that will soon be up for auction.

A retrofitting programme will have to go ahead. Even if the Government abandon it for short-term economic gain, it will have to come some time. It will offer Britain several major benefits. It will create and maintain jobs in the beleaguered power engineering industry, which, despite having the technology and expertise, has been starved of orders over the past decade. It will ensure markets for coal that is mined in Britain, thereby maintaining jobs in an industry that has been cut to the bone and keeping reserves accessible for the future.

Despite all that the Secretary of State said about the British coal industry and how well it has done over the past five years, the Government cancelling the FGD programme is a stab in the back for everyone who works in the industry, from the smallest coal mine to Hobart house. If manufacturing industry had done half as well as the coal industry in Britain over the past five years, we would not be in the economic mess we are in at present.

The retrofitting of FGD will contribute to relieving pressure on the balance of payments by eliminating the need for imported coal. Our energy deficit last year, in this energy-rich country, was £567 million. Are the Government seriously suggesting that we should import tens of millions of tonnes of low-sulphur coal? If they are, what will be its cost, not to generators but to the country?

The retrofitting programme will ensure that we are capable of meeting our commitments to the international environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, we lag many years behind other industrial nations in our attitude to and action on sulphur emissions. The retrofitting programme will reduce sulphur emissions. It must go ahead, and at some stage it will go ahead. It cannot be avoided by the Government trying to ease the flotation of the electricity industry to ensure that they have a better chance at the next election. The Government are doing a disservice to consumers who will have to pay more and, more so, to the international environment, to which Minister after Minister says that the Government are committed.

6.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Tony Baldry): The Government welcome this opportunity, provided by the Opposition, to trumpet the continuing success of our energy policies, the continuing progress of our policies to improve the environment and the continuing success of our policies on privatisation.

The debate has been all too short, but some telling contributions were made by my hon. Friends the Members

for Rochford (Dr. Clark), for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) and for Erewash (Mr. Rost).

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, who is the well-regarded Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, made some telling comments. I thank him for his clear support for the straightforward and sensible decision on nuclear power, made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He rightly said that progress to the full privatisation of the electricity industry is well on course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter, who has long made a leading contribution to the development of energy policy, rightly highlighted the contribution that competition will make to continuing downward pressure on electricity prices. He rightly drew attention to the number of new independent generators who are eager to enter this new marketplace. He rightly recognised the energy efficiency and environmental benefits of combined heat and power.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, who is a keen member of the Select Committee on Energy, is correct to draw attention to the failure of the Labour party's energy policies when it was last in government, and to the wildness and inaccuracy of its predictions on electricity prices and energy policies since it has been in opposition. He is right to reiterate that we are establishing a competitive electricity market—a market in power—which will ensure that for the first time, there will be genuine competition in electricity supply.

Mr. Barron: Can the Minister tell us what the Government's estimates are on the rate of return of the newly privatised generators?

Mr. Baldry: I shall say something on the rate of return shortly. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash, who is also a keen member of the Select Committee on Energy, succinctly and effectively made clear the benefits that privatisation will bring to the consumer and to the environment.

Despite the best efforts and the good humour of the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), the debate has demonstrated beyond doubt that the Opposition have lost the argument and have got it wrong. They are wrong on electricity prices, on protecting the environment and on privatisation. Clearly, their motion is wholly misconceived. In the words of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford, they have "spatchcocked" themselves.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister agree that his hon. Friends who are members of the Select Committee also got it wrong in their report?

Mr. Baldry: I always have great regard for the reports of Select Committees. However, the hon. Gentleman would be surprised if the Government of the day agreed with every word of every Select Committee. I have great respect for my hon. Friends who are members of the Select Committee. Nothing will detract from the fact that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have spatchcocked this debate.

The position on electricity prices could not be more straightforward. In the past five years of this Government, we have seen industrial prices decrease by some 10 per cent. in real terms. Indeed, industrial prices in real terms have been on a downward path since 1982 and are now at their lowest level since 1973. Industrial electricity prices are lower in the United Kingdom than in leading industrial nations such as Japan and Germany, and are comparable with those in the United States.

There has been some comment in the debate about the position of intensive users. International tariff comparisons for very intensive customers are notoriously difficult owing to the large number of special deals, the relatively few companies prepared to reveal the real price that they pay for electricity and the unwillingness of some countries to declare the state aids that they are giving their electricity industries.

In future, users over 1 MW will be able to negotiate prices in a competitive market. Those businesses are used to purchasing commodities competitively in the marketplace. Electricity will be no different and we expect many of them to benefit from price reductions. However, because it may take them time to negotiate longer-term arrangements, we have asked the electricity industry to ensure that larger customers—customers over 1 MW—are offered a real price freeze for one year if they cannot negotiate reductions.

In the past five years of this Government, we have seen domestic prices decrease by some 8 per cent. in real terms. Indeed, in real terms, domestic prices have been on a downward path since 1982. We see no reason why domestic prices should increase by much more than the rate of inflation this year and the price control formula should ensure that the price does not rise in real terms for the next three years.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in opening the debate, we expect the average price increase overall for electricity consumers in April to be significantly below the current rate of inflation.

I want to make it clear to the Opposition, as they do not appear to recognise it when considering rates of return, that the returns earned by the electricity industry at current price levels are not excessive. Over the three years from 1985-86 to 1987-88, the returns earned were only 2·75 per cent., which was well below the average for the private sector. That was also below the greater return of 5 per cent. for the public sector set by the previous Labour Government.

The position is equally straightforward on the environment. The Government will ensure compliance with the EC large combustion plant directive.

Mr. Barron: I asked a specific question in my speech and in an intervention. What is the Government's estimate of the rate of return of the new generators when they are privatised? It is an important question when one considers the amendment, which refers to electricity prices.

Mr. Baldry: I urge the hon. Gentleman to curb his enthusiasm and to look forward with anticipation to the publication of the prospectuses for the generators. To return to my earlier point, the hon. Gentleman complains about the rate of return, although the rates of return earned by the electricity industry are not excessive at current price levels and are well below the rate of return of 5 per cent. that the previous Labour Government set.

The Government intend to ensure compliance with the EC large combustion plant directive. I must make it clear what that directive involves, because some Opposition

[Mr. Baldry]

Members, including the hon. Member for Gordon, seem confused. It was suggested that the European Community wanted a reduction of 60 per cent. in sulphur dioxide emissions by 1995. That is not the case. The directive sets limits for 1993, 1998 and 2003 for emissions from existing plants. For the United Kingdom, those are as stated by my right hon. Friend: a 20 per cent. reduction by 1993, a 40 per cent. reduction by 1998 and a 60 per cent. reduction by 2003, all compared with 1980 emissions. We are determined to meet those targets and to ensure compliance with the directive.

The Environmental Protection Bill, now before the House, will provide the Department of the Environment and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution with the power to ensure compliance with the directive. We are determined that the directive will be implemented in full. The retrofitting of the 4 GW Drax power station with flue gas desulphurisation is already in hand at an estimated cost of well over £500 million and further retrofits are in prospect. The successor companies to the Central Electricity Generating Board—National Power and PowerGen—will complete a programme of fitting low-nitrogen oxide burners to all 12 major coal-fired stations. The capital cost of FGD will be taken into account in setting the capital structure of the generators.

It is clearly important that the international community should move to stabilise carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions at the earliest possible moment.

The United Kingdom is playing a leading role in the international work on climate change. Privatisation will help. Competition and market forces will encourage more efficient, cleaner and more diverse forms of electricity generation such as combined heat and power, and combined cycle gas turbines.

At present all of us still waste far too much energy. Energy efficiency—a fuel of the future—will clearly be greatly enhanced by the rise of competition and market forces. In short, competition will have increased the efficiency with which energy is used, while our legislation contains a totally new duty for public electricity suppliers to meet set standards of performance in promoting energy efficiency.

Perhaps the Opposition's confusion, as evidenced in both the motion and their comments in the debate tonight, is a result of the fact that they still do not appreciate the contribution that privatisation can make to our economy. We have a firm belief that competition in free markets is preferable to state-controlled industrial strategies, that the promotion of enterprise is preferable to bureaucratic interference and that there should always be a business philosophy designed to meet the needs of customers and consumers, rather than the convenience of producers. In electricity, privatisation will lead to an increase in efficiency by introducing more competition, so that decisions are shaped by market forces rather than being taken by Government Departments.

Perhaps the Opposition confusion is that they still do not appreciate that we are determined to have the most competitive electricity industry in the world. Perhaps they do not understand that a radical new structure is now in place, which introduces fundamental changes in the way in which electricity itself will be traded—through a pool or spot market in which the price will be determined during every half hour of trading by the balance between supply and demand—a very competitive marketplace.

So let me make it clear. Electricity privatisation is well on course. Sixteen new and exciting companies are being created and people, including employees, will be able to invest in 14 of them. I have no doubt that in due course large numbers of those working in the electricity industry will wish to become shareholders in their industry.

There will be a completely new operating regime, with genuine competition being introduced. That competition will lead to greater energy efficiency and protection for the environment. In addition, we are determined to continue to play a leading role in tackling global warming. Competition will ensure downward pressure on prices. So our policies are good news for the customer, the consumer, industry and the environment.

The Opposition motion is misconceived and misconstrued. I urge the House to reject it and to support the Government amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 289.

Division No. 85] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*

Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McFall and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the significant progress made by this Government in preparing the electricity supply industry for privatisation; welcomes the introduction into the industry for the first time of real, visible and effective competition which will turn the industry from a producer centred monopoly into a truly consumer oriented industry; welcomes the downward pressure that this will put on customers' electricity bills and the upward pressure on standards of service; welcomes this Government's intention to see a radical restructuring and strengthening of pollution control through the Environmental Protection Bill; and welcomes this Government's commitment to complying with the requirements of the Economic Community's Large Combustion Directive.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been informed that a bomb exploded in Leicester this afternoon. An Army bomb was strapped to the back of a Sherpa vehicle, driven by an Army officer. Apparently it fell off the back of the lorry and caused an explosion that resulted in injury and damage to property. Clearly, this is a serious matter, which raises questions of why that particular vehicle carrying such a device was travelling through the centre of a major city in Britain. Have you had any intimation from the Secretary of State for Defence or the Leader of the House that a statement is to be made either tonight or tomorrow about that important issue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the whole House is sorry to hear about that incident and the injuries that have been caused. I have had no such request. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will wish to pursue the matter and seek other opportunities to do so.

Mr. Vaz: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for what you have said. Can you press the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement tomorrow about this issue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Gentleman, not the Chair.

Royal Shakespeare Company

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.14 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the Government's poor treatment of the Royal Shakespeare Company which has forced the company to announce the closure of its two London stages for four months from next November; recognises that this is consistent with the Government's long-standing neglect of the Arts, museums and libraries; notes with disquiet that this has led all four national companies into deficit; is concerned that this inhibits their excellent work in seeking to increase and widen their audiences by means of education and outreach work, and by touring in the regions; and calls on the Government to bring forward immediate supplementary grants to tackle these deficits and to increase funding for the Arts Council to allow for expansion and development.

When the Royal Shakespeare Company was forced two weeks ago to announce the closure of its two London stages at the Barbican and the Pit, it brought to a head the miserable failure of the Government's arts policy over the past 10 years. In the motion the Government stand accused of under-investment, ineptness and inactivity. While one of the world's great theatre companies closes its London base, the Minister for the Arts has been silent. He has not said a word about it. Indeed, many people wondered whether he was out of the country. In the arts we have a say-nothing Minister and a do-nothing Government. The Government seem to have no sense of pride in our culture and certainly no sense of responsibility for funding it.

If the Royal Shakespeare Company's crisis is the trigger for the debate, it is certainly not the only cause of it. Its problems are shared by arts companies all around the country which are also in deficit or severe financial crisis. Tonight the Government must account for themselves and say what they intend to do immediately about those deficits and, more generally and in the medium term, about how the Royal Shakespeare Company and other arts companies can play their full part in the 1990s.

No one in the House would dispute that the Royal Shakespeare Company is successful. It has received international acclaim and is extremely popular. Last year its productions played to about 1·5 million paying customers. Yet it is in deficit to the tune of £3 million. Why? It is certainly not because of bad management, as the Government know all too well, because in 1984 they set up a special financial scrutiny by the management and efficiency unit of the Cabinet Office, no less, under Mr. Clive Priestley.

In a 500-page document Mr. Priestley declared clearly that the Royal Shakespeare Company was well and efficiently run. That is hardly surprising when, of its £90 million turnover and £5 million grant, it returns directly to the Treasury more than £5 million in VAT, national insurance and income tax. Mr. Priestley said of the RSC in his report that it was "palpably under-funded." He recommended that the grant should be increased to £4·9 million and that it should be maintained in real terms against both the retail price index and average earnings. The Government and the then Minister for the Arts accepted that report and, to their credit, raised the grant to the level recommended by Mr. Priestley. The subsequent Minister, however—he is still in post—failed to honour that undertaking and to maintain those increases.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fisher: No. When the hon. Gentleman has heard the facts, he may not want to intervene.

In the past five years, the Minister for the Arts has not fulfilled the pledge of his predecessor. He has increased the grant by 1·9 per cent., 4 per cent., nothing at all, 2·4 per cent. and 2·2 per cent.—a total increase of just over 11 per cent. in five years, while inflation was 30 per cent. That was an enormous loss to the company as a direct result of the Minister's refusal to honour the Government's pledge.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman has made no mention of the fact that part of the deal to which he referred was the writing off of a substantial amount of debt which had built up so that the Royal Shakespeare Company could get back on an even keel and pay its way. The Royal Shakespeare Company could not make money even if it was sitting on an oil well. Rather than blame my right hon. Friend, the hon. Gentleman would do better in seeking to be a trustee of the public purse if he pointed out ways in which tougher financial disciplines could be imposed within the RSC, not by the Government.

Mr. Fisher: If the hon. Gentleman will listen to the argument, he will see that, far from being rude about the Royal Shakespeare Company's ability to make money, he should praise it, because that company has done extremely well. It has done exactly what the Government have asked it to do over the past few years. If the Minister for the Arts had honoured the pledge of his predecessor, the company would not have a deficit of this size. In cash terms, the right hon. Gentleman's failure to honour his predecessor's pledge means a cumulative loss over the years of £5·7 million. The company has a present deficit of £3 million. If the pledge had been honoured, the company would be £2 million in credit and would not have to close two stages. The figures do not add up.

There has been bad faith by the Government. Although this is a crisis of the Government's making, we have not had a single word from the Government. It is extraordinary that the Minister for the Arts does not think that this matter is worthy of note and that he has had to be dragged to the House to answer for his inaction. The Minister has taken the attitude, "It has nothing to do with me—it is all to do with the Arts Council." He is an arm's-length Minister—his arms are so long that they are a mile from his body. That is not good enough. Does the House imagine that, if the Comedie Francaise in Paris were closing down, the French Arts Minister would have nothing to say? He would not allow that to happen.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Has the hon. Gentleman seen the Minister's replies to written questions this week?

Mr. Fisher: We want a statement in the House from the Minister. We want him to take this matter seriously. We do not want written answers. We want to hear what the Government are doing about it. The hon. Gentleman can plant as many easy little written questions as he likes, but we want proper answers——

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The questions were tabled by Opposition Members.

Mr. Fisher: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) in a moment. I know that he takes a lot of interest in these matters and may ask a slightly more intelligent question.

I should like to proceed a little further with my argument. At the root of all this is not only the Government's ineptness and inactivity—the problems go wider and deeper than that. The Government's policy is totally wrong. Throughout all this, both to the Royal Shakespeare Company and to other arts companies, the Government have been saying, "Don't look to us for money. Raise sponsorship. Go out into the marketplace. Increase your income."

In a thoroughly maladroit speech, the Minister said:

"There are still too many in the arts world who have yet to be weaned away from the welfare state mentality and from the attitude that the taxpayer owes them a living."

The Royal Shakespeare Company is not owed a living. It gives back to this country far more than it gets. The Minister for the Arts continued:

"If it is any good, people will pay for it."

That is the Minister's arts policy; that is his own point of view.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be as fair as he usually is and acknowledge not only the quality of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its ability to raise funds, but his past tribute to three-year funding so that such companies can plan ahead. Does he agree that the company was planning ahead on the basis of an expected 2 per cent. increase, and that the unexpected thing was that it increased to 11 per cent.? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there must be some criticism of the management of a company that has had an extra 9 per cent., but which suddenly finds itself in such a mess?

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman has made a serious point. I shall come to precisely the point about 11 per cent. in a moment.

The Royal Shakespeare Company has had no option. Because of the three-year funding, it knew that funding for the second and third years would be well below the rate of inflation. What good is three-year funding if the recipient knows that it is being funded simply to fall further into deficit? However, because the Royal Shakespeare Company knew that that was the reality of life, it responded exactly as the Government wanted. It did brilliantly. It went out and raised sponsorship and a £1 million per year deal from the Royal Insurance Company and others. It went into the marketplace and got its plays and productions put on in the West End.

It now has an income of about £1 million per year from "Les Miserables", "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" and "Kiss Me Kate", but Conservative Members say that it is no good at making money. Those productions are admired throughout the world and have played in many different countries. They are earning foreign exchange for this country, hand over fist. The Royal Shakespeare Company is very good at making money. It has done precisely what the Government wanted it to do.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has said that the Royal Shakespeare Company could not make money if it was sitting on an oil well. The Government have been sitting on an oil well for 10 years, but for the first time in this country they are about to charge for entry to our great galleries and museums, and for the very first time the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts has had to publish a minority report stating opposition to those charges.

Mr. Fisher: My hon. Friend and his hon. Friends have produced a well worded and well thought out minority report, which has been widely read, nailing the idea that we should begin to charge for entry to our great national collections. It is interesting that the Minister has not responded to that minority report, but I hope that he will do so. It will be interesting to know whether the Minister will say that the Government cannot afford to fund the arts properly. He knows that the arts are not funded and invested in properly in this country. However, I warn him that if he uses that argument, my hon. Friend has already effectively shot it.

Last year, in the Budget, the Government had a £14,000 surplus—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the Government had a surplus of £14,000 million—or £14 billion—and there will probably be a surplus again, but it is no credit to the Government because North sea oil produces it for the Government. Even so, the Government are not prepared to invest in the Health Service, transport, culture, or in the other parts of the infrastructure of our life——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): It is the hon. Gentleman's culture, not mine.

Mr. Fisher: I disagree. The hon. Gentleman and I share the same culture, and no doubt we shall cross swords on this later. If the hon. Gentleman is paying attention, I am sure that he will recognise that he and I can agree on a great many things.

Although the Royal Shakespeare Company has been so successful, the warnings were made clear to the Government. Mr. Geoffrey Cass, the chairman of the Royal Shakespeare Company, wrote in the Arts Council's annual report last year:

"If we pare to the bone every last financial commitment, leaving no reserve for the risk that goes wrong, then the worldwide reputation of the British arts will suffer. That is the danger of current Government policy."

That was the solemn warning that the chairman of the Royal Shakespeare Company gave to the Government and although the Government did not appear to respond immediately, to the credit of the Minister for the Arts, he appeared to respond this winter.

I now return to the point raised by the hon. Member for Battersea. At last we got an 11 per cent., increase, but it was too little, too late. Although it was welcomed by the arts world, I repeat that it was too little, too late. Ten years of Government neglect cannot be repaired by one settlement that is only 3·5 per cent. over the rate of inflation. We can juggle figures on this, but we can see the evidence all around us. Every single one of the great national companies has a deficit. The royal opera house has a deficit of £3 million; the south bank centre has a deficit of £1·5 million; English national opera has a deficit of £0·5 million. Rather coyly, the national theatre does not publish its deficit, although it admits that it has one.

However, the problem is not confined to national companies, theatres, other arts projects all around the country——

Mr. Nelson: That is not true.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman says that that is not true, but the Leicester Haymarket announced a deficit of £500,000 last week. The Nottingham playhouse, the Plymouth theatre royal, the Liverpool playhouse, the New Victoria theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, the Lyceum in Edinburgh and the Dundee repertory company all have a deficit. They are all in severe financial crisis, but the hon. Gentleman is saying that that is not so.

Mr. Nelson: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will add to his list by paying the tribute to theatres like the Chichester festival theatre, of which I am a director and which, without any aid or assistance from the Arts Council, has paid its way year after year, built up a cash reserve and continues to pay its way and to provide excellent theatre at an affordable cost.

Mr. Fisher: Of course. Our case is not that every theatre in the country is in deficit, but that every national company is in deficit, as are a great many other important arts projects. Are they all to blame? Are they all at fault? The Prime Minister has a favourite trick of saying that everyone is wrong but herself. Has the Minister for the Arts learnt from his right hon. Friend? Is he going to say that all those companies are wrong and that he knows best? We need only read the Government's amendment to our motion to see that he is, because seldom can the Government have tabled a more self-congratulatory or complacent amendment. However, if Conservative Members read the amendment's claims carefully, they will see that they are not what they seem. They are Mickey Mouse figures which do not add up.

Let us examine the Government's case. They claim that funding of the arts has increased by 40 per cent. Apart from the fact that that increase includes the Property Services Agency's money for museums, it also includes, which is much more damaging, the £25 million of abolition money which is spent every year as a result of the Government's abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties. We are not talking abut new money for the arts or a 40 per cent. increase in funding, but about the transfer of money that the Government have already taken away from local authorities. The Minister knows that that is correct, and he should retract the 40 per cent. claim.

The Government claim that the museums have done well, but the purchase grant of our great national museums has been frozen for between five and seven years. The British museum has received the same purchase grant for the past 10 years. The Minister says that the Arts Council has done well, but judged against the retail price index, the increase received by the council between 1979 and 1989 has been a princely 1 per cent. If one sets that increase against average earnings—people in the arts must earn something—it represents a 19 per cent. loss. The Government's figures are phoney. The only thing that is creative in their arts policy is their accounting.

The answer is out there—arts companies, audiences and the Minister know that. Our museums are being forced to charge and their attendances have dropped by between 40 and 50 per cent. Attendance at the Welsh national museum has dropped by 85 per cent. That is a disgrace and no way to guard our heritage.

Last year, the Royal Court's theatre upstairs, the Bristol Old Vic's studio, and Kent Opera had to close. The Welsh national opera and the Hallé orchestra are facing severe financial problems. Northern Ballet has held on by an inch because of the enormous popular response that caused the Arts Council to change its mind. That all happened before the impact of the poll tax.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does my hon. Friend recognise that local government support for the Hallé will be severely threatened by the introduction of the poll tax? As a result of the imposition of the poll tax, local authorities will look for a soft option when deciding on cuts. Should those authorities be poll-tax-capped, the arts might regrettably become the soft target for many local authorities.

Mr. Fisher: My hon. Friend is right. Unfortunately, the Government refuse to accept that our culture is a serious matter and should be a statutory responsibility on local authorities. The next Labour Government will take a different view about that and I believe that that will be welcomed widely. If the Hallé goes down, people in the Lancashire constituencies, which the Government will lose at the next election, and throughout the north-west will not forgive the Government. The Government should not allow the Hallé to slip further into debt.

The Government can fool themselves, complacently, that they have done so well in the arts, but they cannot fool others. Last week, in an article in *The Times*, the Minister quoted his successes, but they are as phoney as his figures. He asked to be praised for the successful move to Birmingham of Sadler's Wells, but it is Birmingham city council, by itself, which is putting up that company's new £2 million home. The Minister had the nerve to ask to be credited for Glasgow becoming the city of culture, but he gave only £500,000 towards the costs—and only after being pressed to do so. Glasgow put up £41 million. Such is the Government's commitment.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. Friend chose it.

Mr. Fisher: Well, that is fantastic. How very kind of him. If he had chosen to give some money that would have been more helpful.

To give credit where it is due, the Minister should say that credit for the city of culture goes to Glasgow and that the credit for Sadler's Wells goes to Birmingham. The Minister did himself no justice by trying to take the credit. That perhaps reveals another side of the Minister.

Apart from being too complacent, the Government have got their priorities wrong. I know that the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is aware of that. He is probably partly responsible for it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): He does not know anything.

Mr. Fisher: Yes, he does. In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, military bands were funded by the Government to the tune of £62 million—due to the passionate advocacy of the hon. Member for Twickenham. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) enjoyed my pun. The national arts companies, all four of them, received £32 million backing from the Government—about half what was given to the military bands. There is plenty of oom-pah-pah, but little funding.

Mr. Jessel: Army bands are one of our finest traditions. They lift the spirit of the nation, enhance morale and help

[Mr. Jessel]

recruitment to the Army, and their members serve as medical orderlies in wartime. They do a great deal for our country and make a better noise than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fisher: All hon. Members enjoy brass bands. The hon. Gentleman is the parliamentary euphonium—he produces a lot of air, a lot of round mellifluous noise, and he is a delight to have around. Nevertheless, it is a strange country which decides that all its national arts companies together merit only half the investment given to military bands. That is purely comedy and the Government will judge whether it is a good balance. Compared with the rest of Europe, we are at the bottom of the league in funding the arts, with only Portugal and Ireland below us.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): The hon. Gentleman is looking at this matter entirely in terms of state funding, but the important question is the quality of the arts in this country. We have superb theatre and opera, we have had a string of wonderful exhibitions and, although its acquisition fund is so small, the national gallery acquired a string of magnificent paintings. The hon. Gentleman should look at the end product rather than the funding.

Mr. Fisher: No one disputes that we have some of the finest artists, directors, designers, actors and others in the world, but the Government will not back them. That failure not only limits wider access to the arts—that is our policy—but means that those people cannot contribute to our cultural and economic life. The Government should appreciate that the investment is cultural and economic and that such investment would reward a better return. The potential is there, but it is being neglected and theatres are closing.

In terms of funding the arts we are bottom of the league compared with other countries. The Comédie Francais receives more from the French Government than the Royal National theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company receive from our Government. What a message to send to the world! The Government who represent us care so little about the arts that they are prepared to see the Royal Shakespeare Company close. What a message that is to tourists, who usually come here not for our weather but for our heritage, countryside and culture. The message to them is "Don't bother to come to London next winter as the RSC will be closed." That message is economically stupid. If the Government were seeking to do something to sponsor tourism, they could not have handled the matter more ineptly.

The Government do not understand the economics of the arts. John Myerscough and the report from the Policy Studies Institute, as well as commentators around the country, have tried to explain to the Minister that 650,000 people work in the arts and the cultural industries and that they have a turnover of £12,000 million per year. The arts represent the fourth largest earner of foreign exchange. Leaving aside the cultural arguments, it is sheer economic stupidity and illiteracy on the part of the Government to knock back those things that stimulate that investment.

What do the Government intend to do? Will they give the RSC the Priestley sum and honour their commitments? Will the Government tackle the deficits and recognise that the free market sponsorship approach to arts funding is self-destructive? Will the Minister help the arts to develop in this country? Even now, will the Government realise that the arts are not an addition to life which happen for a few hours after 7.30 pm but an integral part of our lives?

Mr. Dicks: No.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman may scoff. He should look at what is happening in Wakefield and Birmingham, where artists are improving the built environment. The Government should look at hospitals where artists are changing their environments through the British health care arts centre. They should look at what is, or could be, happening in transport, instead of the present London transport network. They should look at what Stockholm has done for its underground system and what could be done to improve the quality of everyday life. They should look at what could be done in education, through theatre and education teams. Sadly, the Government cannot see what should be done, but the public and artists can.

Artists know that they could, and want to, contribute to the quality of life in the 1990s. They are held back by the Government's underinvestment. The arts are one of the few sectors in which the United Kingdom is a world leader. That is reflected in our balance of payments, our reputation and the use of our language overseas. For the Government not to recognise the lead and the prestige that it gives us in the rest of the world is silly. The Labour party believes that arts and cultural policy can play a central part in the quality of life in the 1990s, but the Government do not. That is why the Government are letting the Royal Shakespeare Company go dark next year in London. I ask the House to vote for the motion tonight.

7.40 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the Government's outstanding record in supporting the Arts, which means that more people throughout the country are now enjoying the Arts at an unprecedented standard of excellence; congratulates the Government on increasing its funding of the Arts by 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and by a further 24 per cent. over the next three years; welcomes the increased support of 31 per cent. to the national museums and galleries to restore their fabric and the continuing funding of the new British Library; reaffirms the Government's commitment to maintaining support for the Arts while supporting its approach of encouraging arts organisations to become more self-sufficient; acknowledges the important role of the Royal Shakespeare Company; and endorses the principle of arm's length funding whereby decisions about the funding of individual organisations are made by the Arts Council.'.

I warmly welcome this chance to debate the arts, and to do so in Opposition time. This is the first time that I can recall—I stand to be corrected—that such a debate has been taken in Opposition time since I have been Arts Minister. Every year, we have taken a debate in Government time. I am glad that the Opposition have come to see the importance of this subject. The debate also gives us the chance to celebrate the sucess of British arts in this country and the fact that British arts are recognised throughout the world for their high standard, quality and excellence—a point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) so rightly made.

I wonder quite how I can best summarise the speech of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). I have come to the conclusion that it was somewhere between "A Comedy of Errors" and "Much

Ado About Nothing", with certainly the most enormous amount of "Alice in Wonderland". He is becoming the merchant of doom and despondency. Every time he intervenes, it is sheer doom and despondency, far from the reality of what is happening in the arts world today.

I ask the Opposition to face what is happening in the arts and to look at the subject with me. The annual attendance at subsidised performances which, in the mid-1980s, were 7 million, are 9 million this year and the forecast is that they will be 10 million in 1990. There have been the biggest audiences at professional opera than we have ever had in our history. In 1989—Museums Year—there were record attendances at museums of 100 million.

London is a great cultural centre that competes with any other in the world. It has great orchestras—the four great symphony orchestras—and two great opera houses. There is the BBC orchestra and the south bank with its royal national theatre. It is the greatest arts centre complex in the world. We can certainly be proud of what we see in London.

More generally, there are arts festivals in which the community participate, and standards of excellence are high. Those festivals have doubled in the past five years, to 600 today. In 1986, I was proud to recommend to my European colleagues, the Ministers for Culture, that Glasgow should be the European city of culture for 1990. I am proud that I was able to recommend Glasgow against other competing cities and I am glad that my colleagues in the Community agreed to it. Surely we can welcome that, and we can praise the people of Glasgow for the way in which they have made use of that decision.

The Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra is a great success, under a great Czech conductor. The Tate extension is a great success. Many millions of the public have already attended it. The new national museums and galleries on Merseyside are increasingly successful. In two weeks, in Leeds, the new West Yorkshire playhouse will open.

There are many examples of arts as the centrepiece of expansion and regeneration of inner cities. From Bradford to Newcastle, Bristol and Cardiff, things are happening, and arts are at the centre. There was a debate about the future of Northern Ballet about a year ago. Look at how it has done in the past year, under the inspired leadership of Christopher Gable. I am glad that the West Yorkshire local authorities have shown their support for Northern Ballet by offering it a home there. A new concert hall is being constructed for the Hallé orchestra.

It is the climate for the arts that matters in this country. It is important to let the arts people take the lead. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central did not mention the success story of the English Shakespeare Company and the Renaissance Company. They have had outstanding success and have received strong support. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) highlighted the Chichester theatre.

When we consider national museums and galleries in the light of what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central said, it seems as though he has not been around for the past few years. The number of museums and galleries in this country has doubled in the past 20 years, to 2,500 today. Our national institutions are extending their tentacles around the country. The national portrait gallery uses four country houses, the latest opened in north Wales, at Bodelwyddan. It is lending and housing a number of its paintings there, and the exhibition is already becoming increasingly popular.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister explain why the Government have not raised the purchase grants of the national museums for five, six, seven and, as I said, in the case of the British museum, 10 years? Why does he believe that it is not important for them to have the money to add to their collections?

Mr. Luce: Of course I will explain. I have explained it many times, and the hon. Gentleman knows the answer. I was coming to it. At the request of the chairmen and directors of our national museums, I have given priority to the fabric of our national institutions. No other Government have set a target for one decade to get the fabric of our national museums and galleries in good shape. That is my objective, and the hon. Gentleman should support me in it.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Surely the Minister knows that, in spending the money on the fabric of the museums, he is dealing with the neglect that has occurred over the past 10 years. That Government, as has been said again and again by museums and in the Public Accounts Committee report, were condemned for failing to look after the fabric of those buildings.

Mr. Luce: I realise that the right hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, has studied this matter, and the Committee produced a report on it. He knows perfectly well from that, that the poor condition of our national galleries and museums has accumulated over a long time. This is the first Government to set a target to get the fabric of those institutions in good shape by the end of the 1990s. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman might have supported that.

Sir John Soane's museum is a modest but important museum. The property company MEPC has given money, and the Government have matched it. The fabric of the museum will be in good shape within three years. The Government, with private sector support, have spent a great deal of money on major redevelopment of the imperial war museum. That is a great success and there was great public support for it. The national maritime museum is also a success. The Queen's house, an Inigo Jones house, has been refurbished with Government help and money.

I think that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was at the opening of the re-hang of the Tate—a great and outstanding success. It has 600 paintings on display in rotation at any one time. Its plans to extend its operation to St. Ives is well in hand, and it might also extend it to Norwich. There is also a Tate extension in Liverpool. There are exciting plans for the Sainsbury extension to the national gallery to be opened next year. The museum of the moving image has, with private sector support, been highly successful. By contrast, we can look at our heritage——

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the Minister also instruct us to look at some of the figures for attendances? What has happened to the attendances at the museums and galleries since they imposed charges? In some cases, the attendance figures have halved, or are down by three quarters. The Minister should add that to his litany.

Mr. Luce: Nationally, there have been record levels of attendance at all museums, including independent museums which charge. The attendance figure for 1989 was 100 million—we have never reached that figure before.

The Government established the National Heritage Memorial Fund in 1980 and have spent more than £100 million on heritage—a great deal of money. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked, quite rightly, what we were going to do about preserving important objects of art. Look at what has been done—the list is infinite. With the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and many others, we have reached an understanding on the Mappa Mundi. More recently, the British library has purchased the Wellington dispatch, another example to which people would attach importance. The Government have accepted objects of great importance in lieu of tax, such as El Greco's "Fabula" for the national gallery of Scotland and two paintings by Hogarth for the national museum of Wales.

The Opposition's motion refers to libraries. It is astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should make a speech as he did and not once mention the construction of the new British library at St. Pancras, which will be the largest cultural construction by any Government this century. We have one of the most wonderful collections, dispersed among 20 locations, which will now be housed under one roof in far better environmental conditions, with better service to the customers. The first part will be opened in 1993, and it will be completed in 1996. Yet we heard not one word about that from the hon. Gentleman. It shows that his speech was hypocritical and phoney.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister knows that I welcome the British library, but previous Governments take credit for that. The Government cannot claim sole credit, and they are not pursuing the plans to their conclusion. But how does the Minister address the fact that 200 public libraries have been closed so that people all over Britain, particularly in schools, are receiving a worse service because of the Government's underfunding of local authorities?

Mr. Luce: It is not right to suggest that people are getting a worse service. A number of small libraries, open for fewer than 10 hours, have closed, but the number of service points to the public has increased by several thousand.

The issue is how to create the right climate for the arts to succeed. That is what any Government are there to do, and that is what we are seeking to do. The rest is in the hands of those in the arts, and they need to be congratulated on their achievement in the past few years. We have rightly asked for their support to come from other sources, not just from the Government. The arts pride themselves on being self-reliant and independent. Freedom of expression and independence are at the heart of the success of the arts. The more self-reliant they are, the better it is for the arts. The arts are achieving that. The Government are there to create the right climate.

The Government are committed to maintaining taxpayers' support for the arts. There is a clear public commitment to maintaining taxpayers' support for the arts. Overall support for the arts budget has gone up by 40 per cent., including abolition money. If abolition money is excluded, it has gone up in real terms by 33 per cent. I am prepared to yield to the hon. Gentleman on that. Funding for the Arts Council has gone up in real terms by 28 per cent. If one excludes abolition money, as I am happy to do, it has gone up in real terms by 13 per cent. in the past 10 years, using the GDP deflator that all Governments accept.

We have seen the introduction of new policies under the three-year funding plan. The hon. Gentleman has been generous about that in the past, and I do not want to be churlish about his remarks on that. But the hon. Gentleman did not mention the 24 per cent. increase in the cash budget for the arts in the next three years. The hon. Gentleman was good enough just before Christmas at Question Time to congratulate me on that achievement. I wonder where he stands now. He seems to change his position every day. There has been a cash increase in the Arts Council's resources of 22 per cent., with a 12·5 per cent. increase in the coming year. That is a good record.

There has been a 27 per cent. increase over three years in funding for museums and galleries, with special emphasis, which I think is right and which has the support of the chairmen and directors, on building and maintenance and the fabric of those institutions.

Against that background, and the introduction of three-year funding, the arts will be able to plan well ahead. We decided that in 1987, not the hon. Gentleman or his party. We decided that that would be a good basis on which the arts would be able to plan in the longer term to diversify their funding.

Therefore, the Government have spent about £500 million to underpin——

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: I should like to continue, because many hon. Members want to speak. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central made a long speech, and I do not want to prolong mine. Others want to contribute, and I wish to hear their views.

The Government have spent about £500 million of taxpayers' money to underpin the private sector expansion that we have been seeing. According to the box office figures for many arts organisations, audiences are expanding and the amount of patronage from individuals is increasing. Sponsorship is increasing and, under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, has produced an extra £31 million for the arts.

Under the new incentive funding policies through the Arts Council, the Government are investing £12·5 million over three years, which it is estimated will bring another £50 million of extra resources for the arts from the private sector. Local authorities spend about £250 million on arts, excluding libraries. They identify projects which they think are worthy of support and which will be welcomed by their ratepayers.

Arts in the United Kingdom are rich in their diversity and achievement. In the light of what the Arts Council has achieved, and is achieving today under the excellent leadership of Mr. Palumbo, it can be proud of what it does. The arts cannot be static. Fashions change and quality goes up and down. Change is the key to vitality in the arts, and we cannot expect the subsidised or the non-subsidised sector to be locked into a rigid position. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman can see or understand that.

That does not mean that there are not problems. There always have been and there always will be problems in the real world, and they must be tackled on their merits, problem by problem. That is the right approach.

The hon. Gentleman dwelt to a considerable extent not just on the Royal Shakespeare Company but on our centres of excellence, and that is an important subject. A diverse range of arts is supported throughout the country. The difficult question for the Arts Council is how much goes to the centres of excellence, the flagships, and how much to other important artistic activities. The Arts Council, led by Mr. Palumbo, is mindful of the importance of centres of excellence, not just in London, although that is important as a great cultural city, but around the country as well.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). He has been an active supporter of the Royal Shakespeare Company ever since he became the Member of Parliament for Stratford. I agree that the Royal Shakespeare Company's record is outstanding. I recently saw a performance of "Coriolanus" as good as anyone might see. There have been 2,000 performances, 227 on tour at 29 United Kingdom locations, and it has about 40 productions in its repertoire. That is a major advance since earlier days. I pay tribute to the chairman, Geoffrey Cass, and his team, and I wish the new management every success.

The Royal Shakespeare Company is a national centre of excellence, and I am glad that the Arts Council has seen fit to raise its budget next year by 11 per cent. to just over £6 million. I accept completely that the Royal Insurance Company's contribution to the Royal Shakespeare Company of just over £1 million is exceptional. I acknowledged that when it was announced. I acknowledge too that its box office record has been extremely good. It now has a turnover of about £20 million a year. It is a great artistic centre. It is also a substantial business. That is important because, as with all arts organisations, it must be operated as a business.

Every arts organisation must operate within its resources and must cut its coat according to its cloth. I acknowledge that difficult decisions have to be taken by the chairman and management of the Royal Shakespeare Company, though I suggest that its three-year funding, which no arts organisation has enjoyed before, provides a sound basis on which to plan.

The hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central mentioned the Priestley report, but I believe that he unintentionally misled the House. To over-simplify matters, that report, which referred not just to the Royal Shakespeare Company but to the royal opera house, contained three recommendations. The first was to write off a deficit at a certain level; the second, to increase the core funding of the Royal Shakespeare Company to £4·9 million. The third recommendation was to adopt the policy of index linking or inflation proofing.

My predecessor, my noble Friend Lord Gowrie, agreed to writing off the deficit at an agreed level and to increasing core funding, which then became the new basis for the future. However, he did not accept, and nor do I, that that organisation or any other should be specially selected for index linking and be made inflation-proof. It is up to the Arts Council to decide whether or not, within its overall resources, the RSC should receive a certain level of support. This year, support happens to be above the anticipated rate of inflation, but the value of its grant has been eroded by inflation over the past two years.

Mr. Fisher: What about the arm's-length concept?

Mr. Luce: I shall deal with that point shortly, because I am beginning to wonder whether the Opposition are any longer committed to the arm's-length principle, or whether they want to impose central control. If the Opposition have changed their policy, the House is entitled to know —and so is the arts world.

I am confident that the Royal Shakespeare Company will overcome its problems and will continue to achieve the highest standards of excellence. Certainly I am very proud of its achievements, as I am one of the other flagship companies, including the royal opera house and the English national opera. Together, they give more than 300 performances every year. Last year the royal national theatre won nine awards and gave 1,200 performances. I am glad that it has received an 11 per cent. increase in its Arts Council subsidy, giving it an overall subsidy of just over £9 million.

The hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central, by the tone of his speech and the implication that central Government ought to intervene left, right and centre, suggests that the arm's-length policy is no longer acceptable to Labour. I challenged him on that point in our debate last June. On that occasion, the hon. Gentleman's reply was all fudge, and he gave no clear answer. We are entitled to know whether the Opposition believe in the arm's-length approach or whether they are moving to a policy of central direction of the arts.

Mr. Fisher: I said that it was the responsibility of the Government to formulate a strategic policy for arts funding but that the details of grant administration should be left to the Arts Council. Our accusation against the Government is that they do not have a strategic arts policy for supporting the national companies. I hope that the Minister does not intend to end his speech without addressing the plight of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Will he do nothing and allow it to go dark all next winter? What will be done about the company's budget for next year? The deficit that the RSC and other companies share will not go away. The Minister may try to run away from the problem, but he cannot hide from it. The problem will not be solved unless he takes a strategic view, as he ought to do.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman just about confirms that the Opposition are adopting the view that they should no longer have an arm's-length policy. That is what the hon. Gentleman's remarks imply. He is saying that the Government should intervene every time that a national company experiences difficulties. The hon. Gentleman misunderstands what an arm's-length policy is all about, and that really worries me.

The Minister's job, as I see it, is to negotiate with the Chief Secretary of the Treasury and with his other colleagues in government about how much money should be available to the arts under the three-year funding policy. The consequence of that approach is that the Arts Council will enjoy a cash increase next year of £20 million. How the Arts Council dispenses that money is for it to decide. It is not for the Government to intervene. It is not for Ministers and Whitehall officials to decide how arts

[Mr. Luce]

organisations should be managed. The hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central is saying that Labour is going for central direction of the arts and wants to eliminate the arm's-length concept altogether.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister now defining arm's length as saying, "We shall let theatres close"?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman flies in the face of reality. He represents a Glasgow constituency at a time when that city is enjoying a marvellous renaissance across a whole range of artistic activities, so I find his remark quite extraordinary.

It is easy to forget that much of what is available today grew up during the postwar years. That renaissance of the arts has been made possible by rising levels of investment by central and local government, by increasing private efforts, both corporate and individual, and by the efforts of the Arts Council. However, there is a tendency by some to hark back to the palmy days of the 60s, when the arts were at a peak.

There were many great achievements in the 60s, but it is also true that many of the great companies we are debating this evening did not exist in their present form 20 years ago. The English national opera had yet to occupy the Coliseum. The National Theatre Company was still at the Old Vic, and the Barbican did not even exist. In recent years, we have seen an explosion of arts activity and support throughout the country. That is why the Government increased funding to record levels. In real terms, our grant to the Arts Council is now worth three times what it was 20 years ago, which is a reflection of our economic and artistic successes.

The Government have shown their strong commitment to the arts and, looking to the 1990s, their positive approach to the quality of life in this country. I hope that the House will express its confidence by voting overwhelmingly against the Opposition motion.

8.6 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am pleased at the opportunity to speak so early in the debate, and I want to pick up one or two extraordinary points that the Minister made. He still has not answered the question of whether his perception of the arm's-length policy is that one is content to let theatres close. It is appalling to think of the Royal Shakespeare Company, of all companies, closing theatres.

It is true that Glasgow has fought over the years to develop as a city of culture. It is doing all that it can to attract people to the arts there. Certainly it is not closing the Citizens theatre, the Tron, the King's or the Tramway. We are keeping them all going. If that is an arm's-length policy on the part of the local council, I applaud it. Arm's length is a matter of judgment. I accept completely the definition given by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) when he says that arm's length is also a matter of strategic planning.

Are we to tell overseas visitors that we cannot even maintain the Royal Shakespeare Company? Imagine the French saying that they cannot maintain the Comédie Francaise. I wish that the Minister would shake his mind clear of dogmatic nonsense in respect of the arm's-length concept.

It was revealing that the Minister referred again today—perhaps because he knew that I was originally involved—to the Priestley report's three recommendations and to the Government's refusal to accept index linking. In other words, the Government rejected the one proposition that could have provided financial security and the facility to plan. The Minister applauds that decision, but the truth is that he has never understood the point and purpose of a three-year rolling programme. We pressed on him the necessity for such a programme from 1983-84 onwards, so that companies could enjoy a period of security. We tried to explain to the Minister that such a programme would have to be index-linked, because as inflation rose, any three-year plan would be made worthless if no provision was made for inflation.

Each year there should be planning for index linking of the subsidy three years ahead so that the company had three years' knowledge and understanding and could plan for that period of time. The next year, if the company was told that the subsidy for the third year was going to be reduced, it would understand. The Minister has never understood the position, and that is why the argument has failed.

That lies at the heart of his failure to understand the economic situation that he should be facing as a Minister. He told us about the increases in the past year—that is true. However, the applause when he announced the figures—for example, the 12·9 per cent. increase in subsidy to the Arts Council—was not applause, but sighs of relief. It was not to show joy. If one examines the figures, the picture that emerges shows the Minister's failure to understand index linking.

There is a 12·9 per cent. increase from this year's grant of £155 million to next year's grant of £175 million, but the increase from last year to this year was only 3·7 per cent. because the Minister failed to index-link the rolling programme. The combined increase for the present year and next year, despite that massive leap, is only 16 per cent., which is barely above the inflation rate—and the way that the Government are going, it will probably be below the inflation rate by the end of the year. What is worse, it means that, in the following two years of the three-year programme, in 1991 and 1992, the increases will be 4·6 per cent. and 3·8 per cent.—massively below the rate of inflation. The apparent jump this year concealed the planning for a cut in real terms.

The Minister argued that the Government were giving special support to museums and galleries, but the same argument holds true there. They are the most hard-pressed sector at present, or they were until the blow to the Royal Shakespeare Company. This year and next year, museums and galleries will get £158 million and £182 million respectively. That is a combined increase of 15 per cent. over the two years, which is just about, or perhaps a little over, the rate of inflation. We do not know yet.

For the following two years they will get 4·9 per cent. and 4·7 per cent. increases, which are well below inflation, and at best only keeping pace with it. That is at a time when our galleries and museums have never been in worse condition. They are in a crisis, and the crisis has had to be forced upon the Minister before he could see it.

What is the Government's contribution to solving the crisis? My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central had to face that problem in the Select Committee. The Government's answer was to bring in charges. They brought in charges and halved attendance. That is a bit

like saying that we shall make our schools economic. We could easily have economic schools by sacking half the pupils and teachers and sending them home. There is no merit or pride to be had when Government policy has pressurised museums and galleries into charging and halved attendance.

The Government have never understood what sort of people attend museums and galleries. The evidence given by Neil MacGregor of the national gallery was among the best that the Select Committee heard.

Mr. Flannery: In his evidence Mr. MacGregor told us that when Sir Robert Peel opened the national gallery he said that those of us who have money to buy pictures can do it, but the national gallery is for people to go into. He also told us that the gallery used to charge one day a week for people to come in to paint and copy pictures, and on that day the general public did not bother to go there.

Mr. Buchan: Mr. MacGregor's evidence was fascinating and courageous, in the circumstances. That is also true of the British museum, which was built to be free for all time. The present director says that if a penny is charged for attendance, he will resign.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): A moment ago, the hon. Gentleman was applauding the way that the French handle these matters. Does he not recognise that all the museums in Paris charge people and have done so for years? People accept that as a matter of course.

Mr. Buchan: I recognise that, and as a general principle I reject it, although there are other arguments that I wish to employ. That is an appalling situation, and I stand by that opinion. Paris is a city full of tourists in the summer and there are particular problems there, as all of us who have queued for the Pyramid will know, but the French are wrong to charge.

The best answer that I heard on this issue was at a conference some years ago, when the director of the La Plata museum in Buenos Aires said that museums and galleries are part of the emancipation of human understanding and consciousness. We must not put a barrier between people and the possibility of expanding their awareness and consciousness. That is exactly the reason for free education in this country, and free education is the parallel, not Paris and charging.

I know that many hon. Members want to speak so I shall be brief, but we must consider the argument on the pressure to achieve sponsorship in the arts. We warned that, as sponsorship increased, the Government would renege on their duties, and would not add to public subsidy, except through the sponsorship scheme. If a firm gives a quid for sponsorship—it gets good value for that sponsorship—the Government are also willing to give money, but the company has to prove that it will make a commercial gain as a result or it will not get sponsorship. That is the definition of sponsorship as opposed to patronage. The Government are willing to insert that sort of money into the private sector so that the arts become private sector-led instead of community, social and public-sector led.

The Government have been saying that sponsorship is a replacement for proper public funding and that is why so many of the sponsors are beginning to get angry. That is why sponsors are saying, "We shall not bail out the Government for failing in their duties."

The Minister explained why the Government had cut back on acquisition funds and given money for the fabric of buildings instead. The people who asked for that—the directors of our museums and galleries—are terrified at the condition of the fabric of the buildings. They said that they would have to do without another painting, piece of sculpture or objet d'art to save the roof. We have seen buckets in the British museum as the drips come in. The director himself has helped to place the buckets. That is the situation that we are facing.

Consider the prices on the international art exchange—£28 million for Van Gogh's "Irises", and £24 million for his "Sunflowers". The director of the national gallery could not afford more than 1 sq ft of the canvas of a Van Gogh at present. The national gallery would have been able to buy one eighth of the last Turner sold—"The Top Sail of the Fighting Temeraire". It would have been unable to buy the whole painting. That is appalling, and it is nothing to boast about, but the Minister said how pleased he was that curators and directors had asked for money for the fabric instead of for acquisitions. That is because they had no other recourse but to do that.

For a long time I resisted what I used to call the argument by the forces of darkness—the economic argument. I had so much battering over the head, that I changed my view, and I am now in favour of economic advantages for the arts.

Glasgow is a case in point, and I thank the Minister for coming in with support, although I think that other people prepared the memorandum that put the case for Glasgow, and I think that he recognises that too. Glasgow was in that position because the local authority had the courage to do it—Glasgow has spent enormously. A new concert hall is being built and the local authority has also given general support for the arts there. In the west of Scotland as a whole, support has also been good.

What thanks does the local authority get? A method of local government finance—the poll tax—which will make it extremely difficult to have that level of expenditure, not merely because it has been pinched but because of the nature of the pinching. The poll tax and the new gearing mechanism will lessen local government revenue and therefore additional expenditure on the arts. That is the problem that we now face.

I am not saying such things because I am a troglodyte Marxist. I was reading a very interesting article the other day, which said:

> "Those of us who were pro the Thatcher broom (and of course not everyone was) took it on because we believed if these objectives were achieved and that we laid low the attitudes of the past . . . . a reconfiguration of the arts would emerge . . .
>
> The new efficiency and the new prosperity would bring fresh initiatives from both the revived private sector and the revived public one.
>
> By the end of 1989, it became clear that one had been under a delusion . . .
>
> Alone, it seems, within Western Europe we have a Government which has no coherent philosophy on the role of culture within society beyond 'let market forces prevail'.
>
> The Prime Minister is, of course, no fool and. . . Taking her cue from the majority of the royal family, she and most of her Cabinet know perfectly well that the fact they are rarely seen at any theatre, opera, ballet or museum will not make one jot of difference when it comes to the next election. Nor will one recent speech at the Tate Gallery compensate for a decade of inertia . . .
>
> Indeed, Mrs. Thatcher may well take her place in the cultural history of this country as another queen of the Goths."

[Mr. Buchan]

The writer also described the Government's philosophy as "bourgeois philistine".

That article did not feature in *Marxism Today*, nor was it written by me—although I might have used the phrase "bourgeois philistine", and indeed might have spoken in stronger terms. It was written by Roy Strong, who quarelled with me pretty strongly about the imposition of charges for admittance to the Victoria and Albert museum. He has now changed his view, and recognises that the private sector does not necessarily mean a cultural renaissance.

I note that the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science has joined us. As his constituency is Stratford-on-Avon, I should have thought that he had a vested interest in the Royal Shakespeare theatre, but I shall not ask him to declare it. If Shakespeare had not existed, Stratford would have had to invent him; yet the Minister wants an end to all subsidies. He has heard me say this before, so he should not look puzzled. He says that farming subsidies should end, uneconomic nursing homes —or was it maternity homes?—should be closed and theatres should receive no public support. I hope that he has told his local authority that. Some bulwark he is to the Minister for the Arts!

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): The hon. Gentleman has misrepresented me grotesquely, which is always easy to do by means of partial quotation, and if he wishes to be fair to the House he will be prepared to admit it. I have indeed said that his arguments for virtually indiscriminate and unlimited subsidy are fantasies, but I have always argued for a sensible level of subsidy for the Royal Shakespeare Company to assist it to fulfil the terms of its charter.

Mr. Buchan: I hope that the House has taken note of that. I shall dig up the relevant speech as quickly as possible. It seems that the Under-Secretary is now saying that he would rather close an uneconomic nursing or maternity home than close the Royal Shakespeare theatre; I would prefer not to pose such a choice.

The present chairman of the Arts Council was responsible for one of the most philistine development proposals in the City of London. We should take pride in what little is left of the City. I should be happier if the Minister recognised the plight into which he, or rather his Government, led the arts; he could restore more confidence and vitality if he fought. In fact, he probably has fought, but with an entirely philistine Government —a Government who measure the value of everything in cash terms. In their pursuit of cash, they have turned the arts to dust.

8.23 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The whole House will have been interested in what the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) said about Glasgow being the city of culture. I am sure that hon. Members from all parties wish Glasgow every success in this highly important year for the city. It is significant that both the Government and Glasgow itself have contributed to the funding of the "city of culture". That is as it should be.

Apart from that, I could not find much in the hon. Gentleman's speech with which I could agree. He said that the Government's approach was to say, "Let market forces prevail," and that they measured everything in cash terms. I could not help recalling the speech of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) an hour before; almost all that speech was about measuring support in cash terms, and funding with cash.

Surely what matters is ensuring that funding is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. What matters is how well the arts are doing—how many people go to the opera, the ballet, concerts, museums, art galleries and cathedrals, and participate in the perception of the arts in general. That is achieved by a variety of means, of which funding is only one.

Because Parliament has a duty to deal with things in a financial way, we have a tendency to discuss everything in cash terms. Cash is an accurate way of measuring one aspect of what happens, but it is not the only thing that matters. The Opposition have talked much more about measuring results in cash terms than has my right hon. Friend the Minister, who thinks more in terms of the number of people who enjoy the arts. That is what really matters, and it is also an indication of how well the economy is flourishing.

Even if we measure results in purely financial terms, however, it is absurd for the Opposition motion to refer to the Government's "neglect of the Arts". Only three months ago they announced an increase of £66 million over three years, on top of the existing £393 million. We have heard a good deal about percentages; it is time that we looked at the figures in absolute terms, and in money terms. Total spending will be £460 million—an average, in a population of 55 million, of about £8 per head per year, or £35 per household. That is a significant amount by any standards.

The arts lobby, of course, says that it wants more. In a free country, it has the right to campaign on behalf of its beliefs and interests, but we as parliamentarians must make our judgment in the larger context of Government spending: spending on the National Health Service, education, aid for developing countries, the environment and the largest item of all—retirement pensions and social security, which take up some £50 billion per year. That has arisen not least from the improved standard of health, and the fact that there are about half a million more old-age pensioners in every decade because people are living longer. I should like us to spend more on the arts, but we must recognise that the Government's spending capacity is not a bottomless pit, and I do not think that the arts as a

The arts are flourishing as never before. They are contributing much to the quality of life, and there is an unprecedented range and depth of talent in the country. Last night, along with other hon. Members, I visited Tate gallery to see the splendid re-hangings of paintings. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) for arranging it. The public are flooding in—there are queues every day.

As for the theatre, it is difficult to obtain seats for many of the best London shows. The national theatre's standards are brilliant. It shows some superb plays, although I have reservations about the architecture of the building. I was a member of the Greater London council 20 years ago, when we were told that the architect, Denys Lasdun, was one of the finest ever known, but that the national theatre's roof had been leaking ever since the

building was erected, causing serious problems for all concerned. The standard at the national theatre is remarkably high and is a credit to the nation.

More people visit the theatre each week than go to football matches. There is a tremendous range of marvellous concerts. As the Minister for the Arts said, London is the musical capital of the world. Recently, I heard two magnificent concerts at the Barbican concert hall. They were given by the London symphony orchestra, one of the best orchestras in the world. It performs regularly at the Barbican and attracts much less flak than the Royal Shakespeare Company; the concert hall seems to be run much more easily.

At one of the concerts by the London symphony orchestra, I heard the great cellist Rostropovitch play four cello concertos. At the other—a 70th birthday concert—the distinguished clarinettist, Jack Brymer, played Mozart's clarinet concerto and Mozart's clarinet quintet. Both concerts were sponsored by Shell—a fact that should be mentioned, alongside the sponsorship by the Royal Insurance Company of the plays in the theatre at the Barbican.

Sponsorship has multiplied 20 times in the last 12 years. A large number of industrial and commercial companies sponsor concerts, theatre and opera. They have sponsored magnificent productions of opera and ballet at the royal opera house. The English national opera at the Coliseum has also benefited from sponsorship, as have art exhibitions. There has been a flowering of artistic activity of all sorts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—who, I hope, will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is opposed to any public funding of the arts. He thinks that entertainment of all kinds is of roughly equal quality. He and I must agree to differ about that. The human spirit needs more than the contentment of a cow or a cabbage. The best drama, music and paintings educate and fire the mind and uplift the spirit.

When the arts flourish, so does the country. The flourishing of the arts interacts with national confidence, as reflected by this country's success during the first Elizabethan age—and during the second Elizabethan age since 1980. In both ages the arts have burgeoned.

The arts also bring financial benefit. Visitors come to Britain not for our weather but for our history and traditions, for our royal palaces, such as Hampton Court in my constituency, for our beautiful cathedrals and churches, for our museums—which have doubled in number from just over 1,000 to 2,500 within a generation—for our theatres, concerts, opera and ballet.

Apart from the money that visitors spend on gaining entry to our theatres, concert halls and opera houses, they spend it on their hotel accommodation, and in restaurants and shops and on transport. The money that they spend generates employment and income and provides a tax yield to the Government, thus helping the balance of payments.

All these financial effects are difficult to measure with precision, but they exist. It is right, therefore, that the House, with its interest in financial and economic matters, should take that into account. It adds weight to the argument for support for the arts. My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington never seems to face up to the importance of that argument.

The other regular tenant of the Barbican, the Royal Shakespeare Company, has had its Arts Council grant increased by 11 per cent. Its standards are superb. The company started at Stratford-upon-Avon. Subsequently it gave performances in London, at the Aldwych and elsewhere, and moved to the Barbican. Subsequently it promoted musicals, some of which, such as "Les Misérables", have been roaring successes, while others, such as "Carrie", have been disastrous flops. That must have affected the Royal Shakespeare Company's financial position.

The amendment to the motion refers to the "important role of the Royal Shakespeare Company". Perhaps its role ought to be to stick mainly to productions of Shakespeare. The company seems to have overstretched itself and lost money, and now blames the Government. Furthermore, its relationship with the management at the Barbican and with the City of London, both of which have given a great deal of help to the company, has not been very polite. I hope that it will be much better in future.

I was sorry to read of the fire 10 days ago at the Savoy theatre. That theatre was the home of Gilbert and Sullivan. The burning out of the Savoy theatre is at least as serious as a three or four-month stoppage by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican. The effects of that fire will last far longer than four months. Perhaps I am biased and ought to declare an interest. The interior of the Savoy theatre was designed by my step-grandfather.

Ticket fouting is a repulsive trade. I hope that the Government will consider what can be done to stop it.

As for an arts matter that relates to my constituency, four weeks ago the National Campaign for the Arts published a table of what London boroughs spend, per head of population, on the arts. I was shocked to see that the London borough of Richmond upon Thames, which is controlled by the Liberal party, was the third bottom in the list. It spends only 65p per head each year on the arts. Its spending on the arts is exceeded by 22 other boroughs. Only 25 replied to the questionnaire that was sent out by the National Campaign for the Arts. There are 32 London boroughs. However, Richmond upon Thames was the third bottom out of the 25 boroughs that replied.

That borough covers both the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)—who, because he is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister for the Arts, cannot speak in the debate—and mine. The borough has one of the highest intelligence levels in the country, as measured by examination results, and those who live in the borough include a large number of professional, executive and intelligent people of all sorts. It is shocking that this Liberal-controlled council should come third bottom in spending, per head of population, on the arts. It is utterly uncivilised.

That is made worse by the fact that recently the council spent £12 million on a new town hall. That was a shocking waste of public money. I hope that the electors of Twickenham will have something to say about that in the May elections.

8.37 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Royal Shakespeare Company's decision to put out the lights for four months at the Barbican is truly shocking. It prompted the Opposition to hold the debate. I regret that it was so widened as to take the spotlight off the problems faced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and national theatres generally, thus risking the House not helping to resolve the problem.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) suggested that the Royal Shakespeare Company should perform only Shakespeare plays. That would be contrary to the terms of its charter, which requires it to develop the theatrical arts. It would also turn the company from a live, creative institution—the foundation of a national theatre before we had such a thing—into something quite different. It has developed ensemble acting, which has led to our theatre being admired throughout the world. That seems to be the only contribution from the Government to solving the problems of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) set the predicament in context. He is right that the predicament of the theatre is only a visible symptom of the weakened condition of theatre in Britain today. In devoting a mere four minutes of a 26-minute speech to the predicament of the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Minister showed a quite extraordinary indifference to the problem. It is the Minister's responsibility to speak on those matters, not in some knockabout by a more junior Minister at the end of the debate.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Gentleman ought to realise that the Minister will wind up. Presumably he will listen carefully to what everyone says and then talk about the Royal Shakespeare Company in detail.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman will realise that I did not appreciate that the Minister intended to answer the debate. The debate would have been better and more informed if the Minister had expressed the Government's views and policy on the subject matter which has been tabled by the official Opposition. We heard four minutes on the predicament of the Royal Shakespeare Company and I fear that that is a reflection of the Government's desire to distract attention from the plight of the theatre. It stems from the consistent underfunding of live theatre over many years. It is symptomatic of a failure not so much to value the arts as to match that valuation with an appropriate cash price.

Of all the art forms in Britain, the live theatre is perhaps the most universally admired, certainly throughout the English-speaking world. It draws visitors to Britain in great numbers not only to see classical works performed with epic splendour, but new plays admirably acted and innovative in ideas.

The Minister properly received appreciation when last autumn the Government decided to increase the budget of the Arts Council by 12·8 per cent., but he must appreciate now, if he did not then, that that was certainly not sufficient to tackle the problem of many years' standing.

The most authoritative independent inquiry into the publicly funded theatre in recent years was that of Sir Kenneth Cork commissioned by the Arts Council and concluded in September 1986. Most of the issues which give rise to the current plight of the RSC, the national theatre and other theatres throughout the country, were considered in Sir Kenneth's report. The central message of that report was that additional funding for theatre development fund with an annual ceiling of £5 million at 1986 prices should be made available and that figure should be adjusted for inflation in subsequent years. No action was taken upon that recommendation and the consequences are not apparent.

The Cork report warned:

"If no means can be found to finance the recommendations, it follows that either the proposed developments would have to be shelved or there would have to be some redistribution within the present theatre allocation."

It went on:

"The choice without extra funds is stark: either withdraw funding from a national company for the benefit of the theatre of the nation, or allow regional theatre throughout the country to wither and become unviable in order to maintain two national companies."

The dilemma appears to have been recognised by the Arts Council, but if it sought to press it upon the Government then and in subsequent years it was certainly not successful in eliciting the required additional funding.

As the secretary general of the Arts Council, Luke Rittner, reported in the 1987-88 annual report:

"We are disappointed that the gap between our funding of London and the rest of the country is still as wide as ever. No-one on the council wants to see the national companies held back, nor do we want to stifle the Arts in the Metropolis; however, unless there were a dramatic increase in overall funding it is difficult to see how we can ever really get the balance more equitable."

If it were not clear then, it is certainly clear now, but the Arts Council was hampered in making its case for what Mr. Rittner called

"a dramatic increase in overall funding"

by the preoccupation of the then chairman, no doubt reflecting Government thinking, with what Sir William Rees-Mogg called

"the Council's objective to reduce the art world's reliance on subsidy and to lower the proportion (but not of course the absolute amount) of grant to the overall turnover of art organisations."

I consider that the years of Sir William Rees-Mogg were wasted. The problem was spelt out in successive inquiries —Priestley reported, Cork reported, the companies warned what would happen, and every commentator who knew anything about these matters drew attention to the fact that merely redistributing the Arts Council budget without taking account of that gap would result either in the closure of a major national theatre or the withering away of the regional theatres. That is what this debate is all about. That view was expressed as long ago as the Priestley report and the 1986 Cork report and has been reiterated by the Minister's own appointee, Mr. Richard Wilding, as recently as October in his published report on the structure of the funding of the arts:

"The propensity to spread the butter too thin"

had

"already resulted in the grants to the four national companies being pared down to the point at which they can no longer put on programmes of the high international standard rightly expected of them."

The preoccupation of the Arts Council under Sir William Rees-Mogg and the Government with obtaining a balance between public funding and sponsorship has obscured, certainly for the past five years at least, the urgency of obtaining extra public funding to meet the objectives so well set out in Sir Kenneth Cork's report.

During the past six months there has been a partial recognition of the limits of sponsorship in the arts. It has come most notably from the sponsors themselves, who have made it abundantly plain that they do not wish to be

involved in the core funding of the national theatres, the national collections or any of the other major national artistic endeavours.

The sponsorship of the Royal Shakespeare Company has been exceptional—more than that of any other company in the country. Their sponsors have allowed some of that funding to be used for core operations but it is not preventing the closure of two of their theatres.

The limits of sponsorship were recognised to some extent in the Minister's success last autumn in obtaining a 12·8 per cent. increase but it was certainly not sufficient to save the flagship companies, all of which are in deficit at the moment and the Minister did not even mention the fact that the three other companies are also in deficit. It certainly is not sufficient to deal with that continuing problem.

It is clear that the Royal Shakespeare Company, which only six months ago was performing simultaneously 10 different productions in 10 different theatres around the country with the lowest public subsidy of all the national theatres and the highest percentage of self-generated earnings could not keep going. It has tried to do what the Government asked and it has succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations. It has brought in more than 1 million people to Royal Shakespeare Company theatres in a year and 65 per cent. of that audience is not in London. It is right that the cuts should not fall on audiences outside London although tours are being cut. But the Newcastle and Stratford bases are being left intact.

No one has seriously argued that it is not an efficient company, though a rather nasty aspersion has been cast by some hon. Members. Nobody has brought forward evidence to suggest that the Priestley findings, which were exhaustive and which were made five years ago, were wrong. It is a unique company with five base theatres. Its self-generated earnings from transferred productions—from "Les Misérables" to "Les Liaisons Dangereuses"—are the admiration of the west end and of Broadway. The company has won the Queen's award for export achievement.

The burden of the Royal Shakespeare Company's case is that the three proposals of the Priestley committee—a committee set up by the Cabinet's own efficiency unit—have not been recognised in full. In his short allusion to the predicament of the RSC, the Minister said that he had never given an undertaking to uprate the provision from the base of £4·9 million of the 1984-85 year. I wonder what language means if the then Minister's statement in 1984-85 that

"provision will also be made for subsequent years"

did not imply—it was certainly intended to imply—that that base would not be eroded by the passage of time and the growth of inflation.

Mr. Geoffrey Cass, in his subsequent report, clearly said that the Government were not fulfilling their commitment—and that was a repeated statement. I do not know whether the Minister has previously said, as he did tonight, dismayingly, that there was no intention to uprate from that base in line with the Priestley recommendations. If there was no such intention, that fact should not have come out five years after the event. It should have been discussed so that the Arts Council could have openly made the case for the fulfilment of the Priestley intentions. It came as a shock to me to hear the Minister's remarks on that issue tonight.

The financial crisis first became acute as long ago as 1986-87, when the RSC suffered from the downturn in audiences due to the falling off of American tourism that year. There is now no way out other than a substantial increase in the funding of that company. Mr. Ian Rushden, chief executive of the Royal Insurance Company—the major sponsor of the RSC, giving more than £1 million a year—said:

"If we pare to the bone every last financial commitment, leaving no reserve for the risk which goes wrong, then the world-wide reputation of the British arts will be the poorer. That is the danger of current British Government policy. The strength of plural funding depends on all parties pulling their weight, the Government maintaining their grant levels in real terms, the sponsors maintaining their commitment for the agreed period and budgeted audience figures being set at a reasonable level."

Despite high inflation, a squeeze on personal incomes and an increase in the price of seats, audience numbers at the RSC have remained high—at a level well above that which the commercial theatre would regard as necessary to achieve success. The Barbican is now the highest priced theatre in London, and since 1985 seat prices have increased by 47·5 per cent. There is no scope for further price increases without the charitable objectives of the RSC's charter being infringed.

It is accepted as a matter of fact—the Minister did not allude to it, but I assume that he accepts it—that even with the increase of 11 per cent. in the subsidy of the RSC this year, it is over £1·5 million short of what is needed for the current year, and there is a cumulative shortfall in subsidy of £5·7 million. That will be reduced by only £1·3 million as a result of the closure of the Barbican and Pit theatres.

The Minister owes it to the arts, and to the RSC in particular, to explain with precision what his predecessor meant when he said in 1984-85:

"provision will also be made for subsequent years."

I understand that the Arts Council has repeatedly drawn the Government's attention to that commitment in the annual negotiations on its budget, but no account appears to have been taken of it by the Government in settling the Arts Council's vote.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman says that no account has been taken of such matters. Has he acknowledged that in the next financial year the Arts Council will get a cash increase of £20 million and that that increase in percentage terms is 12·5 per cent.? Does he not acknowledge that, when discussions take place with the Chief Secretary, all such factors—not just the Royal Shakespeare Company but the many other problems that are faced by the Arts Council—are taken fully into account?

Mr. Maclennan: I shall not be diverted from the subject of the predicament of the RSC and other national theatre companies by the Minister's attempt to divert attention from that predicament. I have given the Minister the figures. The money that he has obtained is not adequate to meet the gap, never mind to meet the kind of developments of theatre in this country that were recommended by Sir Kenneth Cork all that time ago.

The right hon. Gentleman is the responsible Minister. He is failing the arts and it will not do for him to pray in aid the difficulties that he has with his Treasury colleagues. Beyond that, because I do not wish to take up too much time, I will not go into the economic arguments for the

[Mr. Maclennan]

right hon. Gentleman's Treasury colleagues to meet the challenge that is before the country and the opportunity of drawing in more tourists to see our great companies.

The director of drama of the Arts Council, speaking last night at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, asked:

"For how long can we in the Arts Council go on holding the bits together? Something is liable to give if additional funds are not available."

Those companies look to Parliament to offer some solution. This debate will not have achieved much if it degenerates simply into a situation in which

"Two men look out through the same bars;
One sees the mud, the other sees stars."

The reality is a much more mixed picture than the Minister painted today. There are good and extremely bad things on the arts scene. A bad thing is the fact that the fabric of our national collections is disintegrating and that more resources are not being made available. Also among the bad things is the predicament in which all the national companies aided by central Government funds find themselves.

I took some encouragement from the remarks of the Prime Minister when she reopened the Tate gallery last month. In a notable comment, she said:

"It is not enough to conserve the heritage: we have to enlarge it before we pass it on."

Will the Minister pass that message to his Treasury colleagues in coming to grips with this crisis?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members wish to speak, but time is getting short.

8.58 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) made a cross-gartered speech, which I shall not follow.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) has performed a service by bringing to our attention the plight and predicament of a great national company, but his utterances were not balanced; there was much sound and fury, but not much else. By nodding as my right hon. Friend the Minister spoke, he was giving a truer indication of his appreciation of the state of the arts today. My right hon. Friend spoke eloquently of a record of which he has no reason to be ashamed.

I was most interested when the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) quoted Sir Roy Strong—I am delighted to name Sir Roy Strong among my friends—but, like the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, he got the thing out of balance.

My right hon. Friend was right to speak of the many achievements in the arts over the past 10 years, of the burgeoning of interest and the burgeoning of success, but, as he knows, I believe that all is not well. It is right to use tonight's opportunity to focus—I shall relate my brief remarks to what we are debating—on the plight of this great national company.

The Royal Shakespeare Company is unique. It is a great national company with two full-time national bases. At the Barbican, to the delight of hundreds of thousands of people, it performs the plays of Shakespeare. In Stratford, the birthplace of our great national poet and playwright, we have, if I may paraphrase the Arts Council's recent publication, the "glory of the garden" itself.

The activities of the Royal Shakespeare Company must be conducted on a budget of £6 million a year—about £3 million less than that of the national theatre. I would not wish to decry the national theatre, of which we are all properly proud, but one must recognise that, under its charter, the Royal Shakespeare Company must concentrate on the works of Shakespeare, which, as most of us know, call for large casts. They are inevitably large productions to mount.

No one could deny that the Royal Shakespeare Company has done everything possible to maximise its resources. It has been at the forefront in obtaining sponsorship. It has never lagged behind in innovative techniques, consistent with the quality of the works that it portrays, and it has always brought much credit on this country wherever it has performed. It has performed abroad, and every year it puts on 136 weeks of drama in Stratford, London and on tour.

It is sad when such a company is faced with such problems. I hope that we can send a message from the House that we are troubled by them. I do not want the Barbican to go dark for four months this year—I do not think that any hon. Member wants that—but what can we do? It is right and proper that we send a message to the Arts Council.

Perhaps we could also send a message to Lady Porter. If she had done her thing by the English national opera, the Arts Council would have had a £2 million contingency fund that it might have felt inclined to use to help the Royal Shakespeare Company. We must never lose sight of the balance and plurality of funding—state, local authority and private—but I am very disturbed, and rather angry, about what Westminster city council has done recently.

What should we do to help the Royal Shakespeare Company? We should consider what Priestley said about underfunding—I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will reflect on this—and the specific and particular problems of the great national companies. It is no disservice to the arts or to the nation to say that, if we allow the lights to go out in London, we are diminishing the arts throughout the nation. It is also appropriate to recognise that the great national companies, which have a particular national responsibility, deserve special regard when it comes to funding.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has many times given the lie to the view that he relies—or wants to rely—solely on sponsorship. Of course he does not. He has a good record as Minister for the Arts in battles with the Treasury—a record that has been acknowledged in the past by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central.

Mr. Fisher: For this year.

Mr. Cormack: No, it is a good record overall. It was dented by an unfortunate rise in inflation. My right hon. Friend came back and obtained more. Last year's funding put the matter more or less right, although that does not mean that we do not want more. My right hon. Friend has a good record on considering the Exchequer and its responsibilities.

Mr. Fisher: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I paid tribute to the Minister when he obtained the increase last

year, although it cannot repair the damage, as I said earlier, of 10 years of underfunding. The hon. Gentleman will know of the figures that the Royal Shakespeare Company has issued. In every year of the previous five years, the figure has been below the rate of inflation. It was not just an accidental oversight that, in all but one year following Priestley, the inflation level should not even be reached. Every year since Priestley, until last year, the figures under-performed on inflation.

Mr. Cormack: I know that, and I know that the Royal Shakespeare Company has done well to try to bring money in from "Les Miserables", for example. I also know that, if the RSC had been able to take up the option to invest in the American production, we should not be having this debate today.

Mr. Fisher *rose*—

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Member has made his speech, and I hope that he will let me make mine.

The royal national theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the royal opera and English national opera stand in a special position. It is unfair to put a responsibility on the Arts Council which, if it has regard to all its other responsibilities, it cannot always adequately discharge. We should consider more earmarking and special funding for our great national institutions.

That point has been brought home in the last week by the predicament of the Royal Shakespeare Company. We considered the matter at the beginning of the 1980s in the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, of which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is an active and distinguished member. We took evidence from Mr. Priestley and from Sir Kenneth Cork. One could never say that a company over whose finances Sir Kenneth Cork has presided is profligate. That is nonsense.

We took evidence from them, and the needs became clear. It is clear that, if we want a Royal Shakespeare Company that will always be able to do honour to the greatest name in English literature, it must be paid for. That means being paid for by us, as well as by sponsors and by local authorities.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*—

Mr. Cormack: I shall not give way again, because several other hon. Members want to take part in the debate, and however brief interventions are, they distract from and prolong speeches.

I say to my right hon. Friend that we should let the message go out to the Arts Council. My right hon. Friend has nothing to be ashamed about in his record, but in the next few months, as we move towards the next annual round, let us look specifically and in great detail at the role and needs of our great national companies. Let us see whether they could not be better served and more adequately provided for if we had more earmarked funding.

Mr. Maclennan: At arm's length.

Mr. Cormack: It could be. I am not suggesting that my right hon. Friend should make the final decision on what the Royal Shakespeare Company has and what the national theatre has. Perhaps we should have a special committee of the Arts Council, and there may even be a case for a special body. If we are to sustain excellence in the capital city—and we have excellence in the capital city—and if we are to promote the flourishing glory in the garden about which the Arts Council spoke, what we already have—good as it is and creditable as my right hon. Friend's record is not enough.

Let no one say in interjection at that point that I am asking for an open-ended subsidy, because I am not. But if one weighs in the balance what is spent on the arts and recognises their contribution to the spiritual and cultural life of the nation, and to its tourist potential and economy, one sees that we get marvellous value for very little money.

That is also the lesson of the RSC. It has made a hard commercial decision in deciding to close for four months. Given the figures, it had no alternative. I hope that, during the next few months, something will happen that will enable it to stay open throughout the year. I hope that we will be able to use the debate as an opportunity to concentrate our minds on the very special position of those who honour our capital city and, in so doing, bring great credit to the nation.

9.10 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) always speaks well and eloquently for the arts. I am sure he will join me in accepting that some words of John Masefield form a suitable text for the debate:

> "Some day, in this England that has so often borne beauty,
> her genius will again move,
> in the unexpected ways of insight,
> Man will recreate the arts, or die."

Part of the genius of England is Shakespeare and part of the genius of Great Britain is the Royal Shakespeare Company. In accordance with Masefield's text, we should never let either the spirit or the drama of Shakespeare die but always seek to renew or recreate it. If we are to be true to Masefield's text we need more, not less, plays of the calibre and standard set by the productions of the Royal Shakespeare Company of "King Lear", "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet".

To be fair, I know of two Ministers who wholeheartedly believe in Masefield's text. Unfortunately for lovers of Shakespeare, however, both are French. One is President Francois Mitterrand and the other is Minister of Culture Jack Lang. Whereas Francois Mitterrand is the greatest patron of the arts since Louis XIV, our Prime Minister is a legendary philistine. She simply does not understand how Shakespeare moves the human spirit, delights the senses and excites the imagination. She cannot understand Shakespeare because she does not have a sense of humour or a proper sense of tragedy, nor can she cope with irony, which is essential to understanding Shakespeare.

Jack Lang is perhaps the most popular Minister in the French Government. With great respect, I have to say to our Minister that only his close relatives and the fawningly obsequious would put him in that category. The truth is that, unless he has something special to tell us when he replies, he has not lifted a finger to help the Royal Shakespeare Company in the current crisis. In answer to parliamentary questions put down by myself, he has hidden behind the arm's-length principle. That is what he has done in the amendment. In so doing, he seeks to put the blame on the Arts Council. The Government and the Arts Council between them are seeking to get out of the mess by playing off high art against popular culture, the

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

regions against London, and inner-city London against central London. As an inner-city London Member, let me say that we should have none of it.

It is perhaps not surprising that the Arts Council, having created the present shambolic position by underfunding the RSC since the 1984 Cabinet report, has reacted pathetically. It may be time for high Tory Peter Palumbo, chairman of the Arts Council, to follow Shakespeare's Richard II and think of giving up his empire.

". . . for a little grave,
A little little grave, an obscure grave",

as befits his little, little, obscure talents. If the real value of the subsidy recommended by the Cabinet Office in the 1984 report had been instituted, we should not be here today talking about closing down the Barbican and the Pit theatres, because the Arts Council grant to the RSC for 1990 would be £1,525,500 more than is proposed. The cumulative shortfall that we would pay to the RSC would be £5,708,479.10.

Some 40 Labour Members have condemned the conduct of the Arts Council in that Back Bench affair. No Back-Bench Tory Member has come to their aid with amendments to the motion on the Order Paper. In early-day motion 505, Members from all parts of the kingdom called on Peter Palumbo either to find more money for the RSC or to resign. No Conservative Member has come to his rescue. Peter Palumbo has shown that he is not up to the job. He is in danger of turning the RSC —a priceless national asset—into a national liability. In my view, he should seriously consider resigning, not as some dramatic gesture to the people in the Gallery but as part of the desperate need to bring home to both the public and the Government just how deep the crisis is.

Some people have asked me why the Arts Council has suddenly come forward with money for the English national opera but has not found extra money for the Royal Shakespeare Company. I should say immediately that I am pleased that English national opera has been given more money. I like opera. When I leave this lunatic asylum tonight, as on most evenings, I shall play some opera records. When I go to hear live opera in this country, I usually visit the ENO.

What the Government have done is odd, because the RSC fits the Government's model better than ENO. The RSC obtains 51 per cent. of its income from the box office, whereas only 30 per cent of ENO's income comes from the box office. The Government's subsidy to the RSC is only 32 per cent. of its total income, whereas the subsidy to ENO is 50 per cent.

What is the reason for the discrepancy in the Government's approach to those two institutions? In theory the market orientated approach of the RSC should please the Government more than the approach of ENO. The answer is simple. Despite what the Minister has said, the Government effectively abandoned the arm's-length principle when they made it clear to the Arts Council that, out of the extra funding they gave it not so long ago, they expected it to give more money to ENO.

The Government do not care about the RSC. I challenge the Minister on this. It was not me, but Roger Bramble from Westminster city council, who said that the Minister knows full well that some of the extra cash given to the Arts Council was earmarked for ENO and the English national ballet. That does not say much for the arm's length principle, which I do not consider to be important.

If I may use a little irony, I do not suppose that the extra money for ENO has anything to do with the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has provided the extra cash for the arts, lists his recreation in "Who's Who" as opera or the fact that his wife is an opera singer, an opera buff and an opera biographer. Although I have nothing against grants for the arts being distributed on the basis of the sexual politics of the Chancellor's bedroom, that way of settling matters certainly can cause problems.

If I wanted more money for the RSC, what should I do? Clearly, I would not go to the Arts Council or the Minister because they do not have the power to provide more money. I am loth to approach the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct because, in the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, I constantly accuse him of being an economic illiterate. It seems that my only hope would be to try to form a liaison dangereuse with the Chancellor's wife, persuade her to act as an agent provocateur and hope that the esprit de la chambre à coucher will triumph. I know that we have to translate our foreign language phrases in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Roughly translated, that means that the only way for me to obtain more money for the RSC is to have an illicit affair with the Chancellor's wife and hope that she will use her seductive wiles to obtain the money.

Talking more seriously about the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the report of Terry Hands, who I see in the Gallery—[HON. MEMBERS: "Order."]—the report of the person whom I do not see in the Gallery, to the council of the Royal Shakespeare company on 7 February this year, showed how the Chancellor's economic policies of high inflation and high interest rates have pushed RSC audiences down to 75 per cent. of capacity. Although that figure is still astonishingly high, it means that there is bound to be another substantial operating deficit for the RSC this year.

Terry Hands has made it clear that we are fighting an ideological battle for the hearts and minds, the intellect and the imagination of the British people. We are fighting an ideological battle between the materialists, the philistines and the fashionably vulgar in modern Conservative Britain, and the civilised, educated and cultured Britain to which the rest of us aspire.

As the Minister for the Arts goes into the Lobby tonight to vote against us, he will carry with him our contempt, our scorn and our ridicule. We must all hope that the evil that he does in the Lobby tonight will not live after him but be interred with his bones.

9.20 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I have sat in the Chamber since 7 o'clock, and I have not heard so much pompous nonsense in all my life. As always in arts debates, the great and the good come forward in their droves and talk a lot of nonsense, expecting all the ordinary people in this country to believe it.

What surprises me most is that, with all the problems that the Labour party alleges are happening nationally and internationally, Opposition Members could find nothing better to discuss this evening than the Royal Shakespeare Company. However, I think that I know the answer to

that. It is because their leading spokesman and his deputy —a couple of middle-class socialists—know much less about the working class than I do.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Upper-class, not middle-class.

Mr. Dicks: I apologise: I understand that they are upper-class, not middle-class.

Arts grants have increased by £33 million this year and now approach £500 million. That is a 12 per cent. increase. The Arts Council grant is now about £175 million. In a recent debate, the Minister said that that is because inflation has gone ahead faster than the allowance that he fed into the figures and he almost apologised for the suffering caused to the arts world as a result. But there have been no apologies elsewhere about the suffering caused to ordinary people because the money that they receive does not keep up with inflation.

At the time, the arts lobby, and especially the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) were delighted by the grant. The Minister was tremendously praised for his efforts. I should like to ask a couple of questions. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is no longer in his place——

Mr. Jessel: I am here.

Mr. Dicks: I beg my hon. Friend's pardon. My hon. Friend said that the arts contribute to the quality of life. Perhaps he could explain to me one day how the arts' contribution to the quality of life affects my pensioners and ordinary people who want to buy a pint and have a game of bingo—*[Interruption.]* Their quality of life is not enhanced by seeing some man prance about in a box or by listening to the different range of an opera singer.

Other questions that I should like to ask—which nobody answers, certainly not any of the great and the good on the Opposition Benches—is, what is art? What is culture? Who defines it? The answers to those questions are personal, but I know who the hell pays for it. The ordinary chap down the street pays for most of it, while the great and the good take advantage.

We have heard about the royal opera house. I shall show the way in which it thinks about money. I gather that it is about £3 million in debt. It spent £200,000 recently on a production. It has agreed to a 15 per cent. increase for ballet dancers who prance around, pretending they are toys, at an annual cost of £600,000. I find it strange that the arts world is up in arms about the lack of money yet ballet dancers can get a 15 per cent. increase, which is twice the rate of inflation. Nobody mentions that—certainly no Opposition Member has mentioned it. When extra money is called for, all the whingers appear on both sides of the Chamber *[Interruption.]* Every man, well and good, appears. Nobody should need to question the situation: everyone should understand what needs to be done. Why should we subsidise old pros dressed in doublets and hose? I do not understand.

In common with my right hon. Friend the Minister, I could say that it is all "Much Ado About Nothing", but I am not an expert on Shakespeare. The Royal Shakespeare Company has made its bed and it must lie on it. I see no justification for a grant increase, nor can I see any justification for any grant. No one in the working class, or the people I represent, could give a toss about the Royal Shakespeare Company staying open or closing down. There is nothing special about it.

One can compare and contrast the RSC with the commercial theatre, which must survive by putting on a programme that people are prepared to pay an economic cost to see. The same argument applies to professional football. In common, I am sure, with many colleagues I received a copy of a letter from Ken Bates, who is the chairman of Chelsea football club. He says:

"The Arts Council grant to the Opera House this year is more than £15·3 million, or £75,000 a week . . . I'd be interested to know what percentage that is of the Opera House's total income."

So would I.

"Far from offering us any subsidy or assistance, it"—

the Government—

"takes £300 million a year in betting tax out of the game, which is equal to £3 million per Football League club"

Is it not strange that the working-class pastime gets hammered by the taxman while the upper-class pastime —I notice that a member of the middle class is sitting next to the upper-class man on the Opposition Front Bench —is subsidised all the time by the rest of us.

The poor chap down the road must pay the full whack to see Brentford or Chelsea, apart from the cost that he must meet in the future towards increased safety in those football grounds. He must pay for that ticket from his own pocket, but the great and the good, in their bow ties and long frocks, get them paid for by someone else. It is strange that we adopt such an approach to the upper class in this House and we forget the ordinary people who put us here. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that the audience is so good, and that most of the audience have had a good dinner.

Child benefit has not been uprated for a couple of years and the ambulance men are being offered only 6·5 per cent. for this year——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): What has the hon. Gentleman done about that?

Mr. Dicks: I spoke against the decision not to give the ambulance men that increase, so I am on the right side. On the community charge, only 4 per cent. is allowed for inflation in the rate support grant settlement; that is why I voted against it recently. All those figures are way below inflation, but 12 per cent. funding was given to the arts this year, and I believe that 11 per cent. will be given to the arts next year. Why is that genuine need, as represented by child benefit, the ambulance men or an inflation allowance in the rate support grant are downgraded when they receive Government grant, yet the arts receive 12 per cent. funding, way above inflation?

The arts are the only areas of activity not looked at by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but every other aspect of Government spending is examined year by year to see if it is fair. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has a point, bearing in mind his views about the background of the Chancellor and of his wife. The Government emphasis on public expenditure control cannot be as firm as they claim when they give money to the arts.

I can see no case for any arts subsidy, and there is no case for helping the Royal Shakespeare Company. Economic costing is the only fair way in which to operate. If people think that something is that good, they are prepared to pay the full cost. The only reason why people

[Mr. Dicks]

go to the RSC now is that the rest of us pay 30 quid towards their seat. That cannot be right. No leisure pursuit, mine or anyone else's, should be subsidised. My football watching and old-age pensioners' bingo playing have as much right to be subsidised as the arts although, preferably, nobody should be subsidised.

The definition of what is or is not art has never been given by the arty-farty crowd opposite—*[Laughter.]* I am sorry if I used the wrong word, but I do not know the French equivalent. To subsidise or not to subsidise, that is the question. In my view, the answer should be an emphatic no.

9.30 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): That really was a two-faced contribution. I watch what the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) does in this Chamber: whenever a proposal that the Government oppose is made from the Opposition Dispatch Box in the interests of those people at the lower end of the scale, particularly the lower-paid workers, the hon. Gentleman goes into the No Lobby. He does not support us, and that is why his contribution was two-faced. He does not realise that many people in the lower income group are interested in the arts. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Rubbish."] Who said rubbish? This is wrong—we have the deputy Chief Whip saying, "Rubbish," to a contribution that was made by the Opposition. I shall have to refer him to the Chief Whip for the contribution that he has just made.

It is important to note that the two-faced contribution of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington was as bad as the Minister's speech. The Minister is not listening, but talking to the deputy Chief Whip who just said, "Rubbish." I said that the Minister's speech was as bad as the hon. Gentleman's speech because the Minister put on a lot of gloss and left out much of the substance underneath. The Minister should realise that there is a lot of suffering in the arts.

There is a crisis, and not just in the London area, where everyone wants to come to work, live and make pots of money. I live in a constituency up in the east midlands, where people struggle. We have an interest in the arts, but slowly but surely, because of the Government's attitude, we are losing it. The Minister has some responsibility for that. They tell me that he is Minister for the Arts, yet he can stand up at the Dispatch Box and say, "It's his responsibility and his responsibility, but not mine." Who is he kidding? The Prime Minister appointed him to do a job on behalf of the arts of this country. It is high time he started to do it properly.

The Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) has a smile on his face. I shall remind the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes that not long ago we had a first-class debate on the film industry. I remember talking about his beautiful mother who worked in that industry —she is gorgeous. I am not afraid to say that I have held her in my arms—*[Laughter.]* I am talking about real art.

Nottinghamshire county council and my own Ashfield district council contribute fairly strongly to the arts locally, but the Government destroy them by the cuts that they have made in grants to local authorities. That means that there have to be cuts here, there and everywhere. That is what they are like; that is what they are all about. They make cuts here, there and everywhere.

The Minister must realise that there is real quality in the arts at the lower end of the scale, and we want to lift the people who provide that into the gloss about which the Minister talked earlier. The gloss can look after itself, but what is beneath that needs looking after and the Minister is responsible for that. That is why we have had this debate today. That is why we want to tell the Minister in no uncertain terms how we feel and what should be done. We do not want to listen to stupid contributions such as the one we have just heard from the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington.

There is a crisis in the arts throughout Britain. The Minister made a little comment to me at the last Question Time on the arts. He made a marvellous contribution today, which was real acting: it was not honest; it was not true. I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, consult the powers that be with a view to providing a drama award in the House. Let the first award be made to the Minister for the Arts. I have got my own back, have I not? I was waiting for the opportunity and, by God, it came along tonight. I have had to wait since 2.30 but, by God, it was worth it.

9.35 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I have been called upon, Mr. Speaker, to do the impossible—to follow two magnificent acts. It only goes to prove the old theatrical principle that the audience will follow a star performer. To see hon. Members return to the Chamber when my hon. Friend for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) rose to his feet was a measure of the significance and great importance of his contribution to the arts and to the debate in the House.

The subject that we are debating causes sadness and regret on both sides of the House. When a great, much respected and much loved company which gives so much pleasure to so many finds it necessary to cut the number of its performances and productions, we must feel some sadness. We recognise that the theatre presents the world of fantasy upon the stage, but we must also realise that it lives in the world of reality offstage. It has to make many artistic judgments and, at the same time, many commercial judgments. The need to bring those two judgments into balance is one of the great difficulties with which all cultural and artistic endeavour has to wrestle. Today we recognise that the cultural and the commercial, the artistic and the real, produce a tension which is of value in espousing and encouraging cultural endeavour.

The threat to the Royal Shakespeare Company comes from its presentation of classical drama. It has been innovative and has encouraged wider development, but the time has come for it to consider its identity, to think about the thing that it does best, to bring into balance its commercial and cultural concerns and to look to the future in a spirit of positive optimism, not with regret that it has had to close one of its stages for a short time during the year.

The debate also raises the wider issue of what should be a Government's policy in such a situation. Conservative Members have endorsed the Government's policy that the arm's-length principle should apply—that money should be given to an intermediary, which is independent and

objective in its artistic judgment, to ensure that the money is allocated in the best possible way without any direct Government interference in the cultural or artistic input.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and other Opposition Members have paid lip service to the arm's-length principle, but I suspect that that implied a financial finger firmly in the artistic pie. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the arts should rely on state subsidies, on public money, as their main source of support. I believe that the arts have blossomed by virtue of the diversity of their funding. Money should and does come from the state, in the form of public subsidy through the Arts Council, but it should also come from sponsorship, for corporate reasons, from individual firms, whose motives may be higher in some cases than in others. A third but most important ingredient is the box office —the individual contribution and desire to pay the price of a ticket to see a production.

The benefit to the arts of receiving funding from those three sources is inestimable. The danger of any arts organisation, institution or theatre relying for its funding on a single source is that it will become wholly dependent on that source. We have known instances in the past when an entirety of public funding has brought with it implications of corruption.

The Government's policy of a plurality of funding has brought about a flourishing of the arts, the like of which has not been seen before this century. It has brought about a diversity of the arts. A diversity of funding brings about a diversity of production, and that should be applauded.

9.41 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. Friend the shadow Arts Minister, the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on being so determined to arrange this debate in what is obviously Opposition prime time. They had to face a bit of flak from their own side, because the Terry Dicks tendency is behind us as well as in front of us.

My right hon. and hon. Friends know that an economically efficient and socially just society will not only address the problems of homelessness, poverty and unemployment that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) mentioned. Such a society will support also a thriving and burgeoning arts expenditure. It is a mark of a confident and strong society that it encourages and nurtures the arts. The Victorians did it in the past in this country, and the French, Germans and Italians do it today.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington is not in his place, because listening to him opining on the arts is rather like listening to Vlad the Impaler presenting "Blue Peter". The hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly living proof that a pig's bladder on a stick can be elected as a Member of Parliament.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know—but although the hon. Gentleman's comments may not be very pleasant, they are not unparliamentary.

Mr. Banks: They were artistic, Mr. Speaker. I am just sorry that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington was not in his place to hear them. Still, I do not wish to offend you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a comment on the depressing state of Britain today, with all its economic inefficiencies and social injustices, that a great cultural institution such as the Royal Shakespeare Company faces the crisis that it does. I speak of the theatre that bears and propagates the name of the greatest English playwright. However, the crisis that afflicts the RSC is not confined to that company. The English national opera, royal opera house, south bank centre, London Festival Ballet and royal national theatre all face similar problems. Those problems extend to our museums and art galleries. We have heard complaints about the crumbling fabric of the Victoria and Albert museum and of the British museum that should shame us all. We are squandering a wonderful inheritance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central mentioned regional arts institutions, which are struggling to survive. We are not just talking about high art or middle-class art, which the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington mentioned, but all the provincial and municipal theatres in towns and cities throughout the country, which provide a lot of pleasure for working-class people and are also facing a crisis.

My own theatre, the Theatre royal, Stratford, is one——

Mr. Cormack: This is your theatre.

Mr. Banks: is a damn sight more compensated and better heeled than my own, which has seven new productions a year. We have tried to get business sponsorship for the theatre in Stratford. Perhaps hon. Members remember seeing the comment in the article in *The Stage* by the Minister—

"Private funding is the engine of arts expansion".

That is where the Minister thinks the real money for the future is coming from. However, *The Stage* shortly afterwards said:

"'We've been lumbered' say arts sponsors"—

because the businesses and companies that sponsor the arts realise that they will be left holding the baby, and that they will attract great odium if they withdraw the sponsorship, which they provided as top-up money, only to find that they are held responsible for the collapse of a particular arts institution. The future does not lie with business sponsorship, as the Minister implied in that article.

We face a depressing scenario in the arts, but one which is typical of the Prime Minister's philistinism and the unimaginative, shoddy, second-rate Government that run the country. It is typical of a Prime Minister who goes to see "The Mousetrap" and re-reads whodunits. Who has to read a whodunit, when she knew whodunit when she read it again? It is typical of a Prime Minister who is happier getting in and out of tanks than in and out of museums or theatre seats, and who seems to derive more pleasure from admiring new missiles than great works of art. What else can we expect from an ex-Spam hoarder from Grantham, presiding over the social and economic decline of our country?

Why are the Royal Shakespeare Company and the arts so important? I say to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington, who is now back in his place, that the arts are certainly not more important than homelessness, unemployment and the transport chaos that we have in this country, but the arts are as important as those areas of expenditure.

[Mr. Banks]

I have two reasons for saying that. First, an age is more likely to be judged by the standards and the excellence of its architecture, music, painting, sculpture and literature than by obsolete weapons of death and destruction. Involvement in the arts, either as a creator or a consumer, is one of the finest forms of human activity that we can encourage. I remind Conservative Members that there is very little crowd violence at the opera houses these days.

Secondly—this should appeal to the monetarists opposite—the economic significance of the arts is continually underestimated and undervalued. They have a £12 billion turnover; the industry employs some 450,000 people; it contributes £4 billion to the balance of payments. That is a record of economic achievement that should have everyone in the House applauding.

People do not come to this country to see office blocks, Third-world roads or crumbling transport infrastructure, or to learn how to control inflation or enjoy traffic jams. They come here to enjoy the enormously rich art legacy that we have inherited. The come for theatres, art galleries and museums. I remind Conservative Members that that legacy is as important as North sea oil, but unlike oil, it will not run out. However, it can be run down, and that is what is happening to the arts in this country today.

It is our responsibility to build on what we have, and to invest in the arts, because it is one of the finest forms of public expenditure investment that any Government can make.

The Minister made great play of the recent increase in subsidy for the arts. We told him that he has done better this year than before, and better than some other Ministers, and we praise him for that, but in 1990-91, arts expenditure will be one third of 1 per cent. of public expenditure, while defence expenditure will be 11·8 per cent. It is interesting that we should have one of the highest defence budgets in western Europe, and one of the smallest arts budgets.

The current events in eastern Europe provide previously undreamed-of opportunities for world peace and harmony. We must match those great events with bold, imaginative political leadership. We need the vision and confidence in Britain that will allow us to turn tanks into tractors, bullets into ballet and bombs into books. There is no such vision and confidence among the clapped-out second-raters on the Conservative Benches, but those qualities are present in abundance among Opposition Members.

The Government's time is almost finished: Labour is poised on the threshold of a golden future. The arts need a Labour victory, and they will soon get one.

9.50 pm

Mr. Luce: Without a shadow of doubt, the debate has been both colourful and entertaining. I have been recommended for one or two things in my life, but never for a drama award, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) for suggesting it.

I found myself buffeted between two extraordinary speeches—one by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), and the other by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). One condemned me for my almost evil approach to policy and to tonight's vote; the other stated that it was disgraceful of me to increase taxpayers' support for the arts. I am beginning to think that perhaps I have got the balance about right.

Although the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) focused mainly on the Royal Shakespeare company in both the motion and the opening of his speech, this was a broad-ranging motion relating to every aspect of the arts. I welcomed that, although some hon. Members clearly thought otherwise.

As always, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made a colourful and enjoyable speech; nevertheless, when I came to assess the value of what he said, I found it very difficult. One strand was clear from the beginning—his contempt for the private sector's role in supporting the arts. He said at the outset that he despised it.

The Government's role, as I see it, is to underpin arts support with taxpayers' money—and we are maintaining that commitment with public funding for the next three years—but also to provide a climate for the expansion of the arts through the private sector. Spokesmen for the arts say repeatedly that the arts thrive on independence and freedom of expression. I believe that that should be encouraged, but success is possible only if the arts are not wholly dependent on the taxpayer and the ratepayer through central Government or local authorities. That is not to reject the importance of the role of taxpayer and ratepayer, but it highlights the important role that the private sector can play in sustaining the self-reliance and independence of the arts world.

The arts deserve to be congratulated on what they have achieved over the past five years. They have diversified their sources of funding and have sought to increase audiences through sheer professional management, sponsorship, patronage and increased contributions from individuals as well as corporations. I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) for stressing the need for plurality of funding to secure that independence.

I must pick on the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch again. I always think that a person shows great weakness or paucity of argument if all that he can do is indulge in personal abuse. That is what the hon. Gentleman did. He abused my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and the chairman of the Arts Council. He made disgraceful remarks about Mr. Palumbo. The chairman of the Arts Council loves the arts. He is prepared to dedicate his time to leadership of the Arts Council. He commands the respect of those in the arts world. He has travelled all around the country. The hon. Gentleman should not have made such disgraceful remarks about the chairman of the Arts Council.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made a most reflective and interesting speech. He has a great knowledge and feeling for our heritage and the arts. He referred to the Barbican. It is interesting that the Barbican has not featured greatly in the debate. During the past eight years, however, it has made a great contribution to increasing support for the arts through the range of entertainment that it provides.

I understand that broad agreement has been reached between the Barbican and the Royal Shakespeare Company about arrangements. It is only right that we should acknowledge the Barbican's role, as well as that of the City of London, in supporting the arts in London, and

generally, directly and also indirectly. I take seriously what my hon. Friend said in his notable speech and I am grateful for what he said.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to a number of issues, but he spoke principally about the Royal Shakespeare Company. He also referred to support for the arts in London, in centres of excellence and in the regions. Having been to Inverness, I know that the Eden Court theatre, although it is not in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, provides outstanding quality and does a great service to that part of Scotland.

There is already a formula for the disbursement of funds to both Wales and Scotland. It is known as the Goschen formula. It gives a reasonable deal to Scotland. I admire very much the Scottish Arts Council's support for the highest standards of excellence in the arts. It is always difficult to achieve the right balance between the centre and the regions, but I believe that the Arts Council has got it about right. It is for the Arts Council to decide how much money should be given to the flagships, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, and how much should be given to others.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) also made an important speech. I gladly congratulate Glasgow on its enormous contribution to the arts—its art collections, art galleries and the remarkable ballet and opera companies and orchestras that are based in Glasgow. I have great faith that next year will be a tremendous year for Glasgow and for this country.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South referred also to the fabric of our national museums and galleries. This is the first Government to give a clear commitment that during the 1990s we shall ensure that sufficient money is spent—principally by Her Majesty's Government, because it is taxpayers' money which has to be spent on the fabric—on ensuring that the fabric of these institutions is in good shape. If the private sector is prepared to play a role, I shall welcome it—as, I am sure, will the hon. Member for Paisley, South.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made an excellent speech. He drew attention to the importance of quality in the arts and to the royal charter of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Its charter emphasises the important balance which has to be struck between performances not just of Shakespeare but drama of all kinds.

Much of the focus has been on the Royal Shakespeare Company. As I said in my opening speech, it is a great centre of excellence and it should be given high priority. It is therefore right that the Arts Council decided to increase funding by 11 per cent. in the coming year so that its funding is more than £6 million, but equally, it is for the Arts Council to argue the case to me on behalf of all the arts, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, and for me then to discuss with my colleagues what overall resources should be available. With that in mind, there has been a £20 million increase in cash terms for the Arts Council for next year and a 22 per cent. increase for the next three years. That is a real indication of the Government's commitment to the arts.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 272.

Division No. 86] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom

Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Battle and
Mr. John McFall.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann

Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the Government's outstanding record in supporting the Arts, which means that more people throughout the country are now enjoying the Arts at an unprecedented standard of excellence; congratulates the Government on increasing its funding of the Arts by 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and by a further 24 per cent. over the next three years; welcomes the increased support of 31 per cent. to the national museums and galleries to restore their fabric and the continuing funding of the new British Library; reaffirms the Government's commitment to maintaining support for the Arts while supporting its approach of encouraging arts organisations to become more self-sufficient; acknowledges the important role of the Royal Shakespeare Company; and endorses the principle of arm's length funding whereby decisions about the funding of individual organisations are made by the Arts Council.

Clergy (Ordination)

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper——

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, which will last for only an hour and a half. I ask hon. Members to make brief speeches so that as many as possible may be called. As this is not a party political issue but one on which hon. Members on both sides of the House hold views, the Chair may not necessarily go from one side to the other of the Chamber, but it will seek to balance the debate.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have no intention of seeking to catch your eye, but I should like one piece of advice before the debate begins. Is it not normally the case that a matter on which the House has reached a decision is rarely brought back to the House within 12 months? If, for example, the Government lose a vote, they accept it and that is that. Why is it that in this case, we have to consider again a Measure on which we have already taken a decision less than 12 months ago?

Mr. Speaker: That decision was taken in the previous Session of Parliament. This is the new Session, so the motion is in order.

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Clergy (Ordination) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament in the last Session.

I am sorry to have to trouble the House with the rather unusual re-run of a Church of England Measure that has already been debated once in the House. On that occasion, it failed to obtain approval. I feel a little like a nervous curate having to call the banns of marriage for the second time and inquiring whether anyone knows cause or just impediment why the motion of the House and the motion of the General Synod may not be joined together in harmony. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I must get on a little.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds jumped the gun even before the banns were called for the second time. An exceptional circumstance arose the last time that the Measure was considered, on 17 July 1989, in that, contrary to all expectations, we reached it only at 2.6 am and the vote was not taken until 3.35 am. That late hour was considered by many inside and outside the House not to do justice either to the great importance—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me go first, please. A great deal of private conversation is going on. This is an important measure.

Mr. Alison: I think that you will find that there is a series of mini-debates, Mr. Speaker, and I trust that they will emerge in a consensus at the end of the debate.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: No, as I must get on a little. I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a minute.

That late hour was considered by many inside and outside the House not to do justice either to the great importance attached to the measure by the Church of England General Synod or to the sensitive personal cases involving a number of our constituents whose lives were and are profoundly affected by the measure's fate. Hence the decision taken late last year by the General Synod to ask the House of Commons in this new Session to reconsider the Measure and our earlier verdict on it at a more reasonable and propitious hour. The hour is certainly more reasonable than it was last year.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*—

Mr. Alison: It remains to be seen whether the hour is more propitious.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Greenway *rose*—

Mr. Alison: I give way to my hon. Friend who caught my eye first.

Mr. Speaker: I call Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman—

[Interruption.]

Mr. Alison: It may simplify your problem, Mr. Speaker, if I cancel both offers to give way.

As a result of the substantial controversy and constituency correspondence that the Measure has generated—not least because of the hour at which it suffered defeat last July—right hon. and hon. Members of all parties are now reasonably familiar with the issues at stake, so I need not weary the House on this occasion with a long explanatory speech. I shall be brief, in the interests of allowing as many of my colleagues as possible to enter the debate. I hope, by leave of the House, to speak again for a few minutes at the end of our debate to deal with particular points or queries raised by right hon. and hon. Members, which should receive a response.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Alison: I want to get on further; I shall certainly give way later.

The issue to which the Measure addresses itself is quite narrow. It relates to the marital circumstances of men and women who decide that they wish to seek ordination as priests or deacons in the Church of England. Under the law as it stands, a previous divorce is no necessary bar to such individuals seeking ordination, but remarriage after divorce constitutes such a bar under certain circumstances. Thus, under existing canon law, there is an absolute bar against a candidate seeking ordination if he or she is married and has a previous spouse still living from an earlier marriage, or if the partner to whom he or she is currently married likewise has a previous partner from an earlier marriage still living.

That absolute bar reflects, for Christians at least, Christ's unequivocal teaching about marriage as a lifelong, permanent union, which only death can properly dissolve, and remarriage after divorce, although not after a partner's death, as adulterous if a previous partner is still living, although Christ also taught the possibility of grace and forgiveness.

I hasten to add that the Measure does not seek to question, abrogate or repudiate that fundamental Christian doctrinal position. Indeed, that fundamental position is rehearsed and reasserted as normative in the Measure, in its very first clause. Hon. Members who look at the clause will see that plainly.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend understand and accept that that very point is a bar for almost all of us? How can that bar apply to people who have been divorced, who seek to be remarried in church and who are prevented by the bar from doing so, yet, if the Measure goes through, it will not prevent a man or woman in due course from being ordained? That same individual, having been ordained, will have to enforce the very bar that the Measure seeks to remove.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend, for whom I have respect and affection, is misinformed. There is no statute law debarring divorced men and women from being married in the Church of England. Any clergyman who marries a divorced man or woman cannot be proceeded against by any Church disciplinary measure.

The much narrower point at issue in the Measure is whether provision should be made in and by the Church of England to allow occasional exceptions to the absolute bar in specially deserving cases. After long reflection, extending over several years, the General Synod decided by a substantial majority that provision should be made for such occasional exceptions, each case to be individually weighed and determined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York themselves, exclusively.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Alison: I must tell my hon. Friend that I am not giving way to her, so she had better save her breath for when she makes her speech.

It is to legislate for occasional dispensation only that the measure is brought before the House. Our own parliamentary Ecclesiastical Committee has likewise by a majority endorsed the position of the Synod, as our report to the House makes clear. It is not difficult to cite cases in which the special dispensation of the archbishops might reasonably be exercised.

The most compelling case of which I am aware is of a mature candidate who decided to seek ordination after an active secular career. It is an actual, not a hypothetical, case. He and his wife have had a long and happy marriage, and have grown-up children. His wife was once briefly married in her teens; that marriage was never consummated. No full and proper marriage took place and the marriage could have been annulled. However, the parties involved decided that divorce rather than annulment was a quicker and less unsavoury experience in ending the marriage and the girl was divorced. As a result, the husband is debarred on a technicality, so to speak, from seeking ordination, to which he has a strong vocation. If the Measure is passed, it will enable special

dispensations to be granted to people in such cases. Other cases can and probably will be cited by other hon. Members during the debate.

I hope that no one will argue that it is improper for Parliament to consider these matters. Marriage in our society is of immense consequence and interest to Church and state alike. I repeat the figures that I cited last July. In the latest year for which figures are available, 1986, 348,000 registered marriages in England and Wales—well over half—were solemnised in religious ceremonies. Of those, one third were solemnised in Church of England ceremonies.

Constituents are deeply interested in these matters and in religious matters generally as they affect public policy. Churchgoing is still the most popular voluntary communal activity in Britain, far outstripping——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It will not be, the way things are going.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that her behaviour does not improve her chances of being called?

Mr. Alison: One has only to recall the interest taken during the last Parliament in Sunday trading and in the present Parliament in religious broadcasting, to make the point. The great majority of our population who identify with the Christian religion—probably about 80 per cent. according to surveys—but who are not active churchgoers tend to write to their Members of Parliament about religious matters to express their fears rather than to members of the General Synod.

Parliament rightly established the Church of England General Synod so that more time and specialised consideration could be given to matters by that body. But Parliament rightly reserved for itself the last word. Parliament represents a reasonable cross-section of religious interests, commitment and concern in our society.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: No, I have nearly finished. I hope that my hon. Friend will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. More than one hon. Member has tried to make this into a debate instead of a series of monologues. Is it right for my right hon. Friend to ignore interruptions or is his case so weak that it cannot——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that if an hon. Member does not wish to give way——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: This is a monologue, not a debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member said that he is not giving way, so that is up to him.

Mr. Alison: That merely underlines the point that I was making—that passions run high in the House on matters of religious interest and that it is proper for Parliament to spend time on and occupy itself with such matters, which are of immense interest and concern to our constituents. To adapt an old saying, religion is too important to be left to the bishops and clergy—the professionals, so to speak, who dominate the General Synod.

The General Synod, clergy and laity alike, has given lengthy, responsible and anxious thought to this strictly limited new power of dispensation, as set out in the Measure. They have reached a clear decision by a substantial majority. Our Ecclesiastical Committee endorsed that majority view of the General Synod. It has acted as Parliament was intended to act. Therefore, I commend the Measure to the House.

10.28 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I do not wish to detain the House for long, because many hon. Members wish to contribute to this important debate. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect the views of many Anglicans, who are mystified at what the Church is seeking to achieve at present. Their voice is not reflected sufficiently in the Synod, and they look to the Church to provide them with a lead in moral and other matters, but so often they are sadly disappointed.

The measure emanates from the 1978 Lichfield report entitled "Marriage and the Church's Task", the main recommendations of which failed to be accepted, as the House will recall. It has been suggested that the Commons should not thwart the wishes of the Synod, a view that I find extraordinary bearing in mind the writ that has been served questioning the legality of the General Synod's vote. In some people's minds, this may not be the right moment for Parliament to take on the established Church and to give it a boot up the backside, but I genuinely believe that it is the right moment to make a stand against the liberal trends on matters of morality, and to conclude that to allow the ordination of men who have been divorced and have then remarried makes a mockery of the Church's teaching.

The Lichfield report stated:

"it seems clear that Jesus made an uncompromising statement about divorce: a man or a woman who remarries after divorce commits adultery."

Of course we understand the pressures of modern day life on families and on marriage. Of course we understand the dilemma faced by individuals who feel that they have been called by God to serve in this very particular way. However, such people could find many other ways in which they could serve God and their fellow man, and they should seek out those alternative ways.

The House must realise that tonight we are being asked to bend the rules to enable a few—240 at present——

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood) *rose*——

Mrs. Winterton: The hon. Gentleman will have his say in a few moments.

We are being asked to bend the rules to allow 240 people to become priests. These are not necessarily hard cases—there are very few hard cases—and we in the House know only too well that good legislation is never introduced for hard cases. We must take the broader view and decide what is in the best interests of the Church as a whole and of the people of this country as a whole, and not of those hard cases.

Mr. Hayward: Does not the church also teach us to forgive, as well as moral certainty?

Mrs. Winterton: I have never suggested that this should not be about forgiveness. One can forgive, but one must remember that, when someone has married, he has stood before an altar, in his right mind, has decided to take the other person on and has said that the marriage should last "until death us do part". If that is meaningless, I suggest that those who seek to go into the priesthood are forgetting one of the basic tenets of their faith, which would be a great mistake. This is not about forgiveness —of course people forgive—but about something more fundamental. As I have asked, we are being asked to bend those rules.

I do so hope that we shall reject the Measure because we must not dilute even further the influence and the example of the Church at a time when the country is longing for a strong moral lead. I beg the House to overthrow the Measure once again.

10.33 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I invite the House to support the Measure, for three reasons. The first is that the Church wants it. Secondly, the Church of England, being a state-controlled Church, can at present achieve what it wants only if the House votes for it. Thirdly, in so far as any individual can assess it, the Measure removes the anomaly whereby one can be a priest, be divorced, remarry and continue to be a priest. I also support the Measure because it affects certain people who have a vocation which it is not for the House to deny.

I am totally unimpressed by the arguments used against the Measure, including the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). The House is made up of many faiths and there is no requirement, as once there was, to be an Anglican in order to be elected to the House. The house has no moral authority or mandate to set its judgment above that of the Synod. I challenge any hon. Members to claim that they gave a pledge, whether in a party manifesto or in an election address, that on Church Measures they would vote against those which they did not like. If any hon. Members could assure me that they had notified their constituents that they had such a mandate, they might be in a special position, but I do not believe that to be the case.

The argument about constitutional rights is not a valid one. The Crown has the constitutional right to reject all our legislation but does not exercise it. The Crown has the right to dismiss the Prime Minister at any time without question, but it does not exercise it. Similarly, the Crown has the right to dissolve Parliament at any time, but it does not exercise that right. The argument about constitutional rights should not carry any weight in the House.

The arguments used against the Measure rest on double standards, for who liberalised the divorce laws but Parliament? Parliament has liberalised those laws regularly. Hon. Members can be divorced. Sir Anthony Eden was divorced when he became Prime Minister yet under our State Church, as a divorced man he had the power to appoint bishops. It is nonsense that the House should set its judgment on this matter above that of the Synod.

The debate brings into sharp focus the question of Church-state relations. I believe that one of the motives of those who wish to overthrow the Measure is that Church pronouncements on peace, poverty and social justice have greatly angered some Conservative Members. They do not like it, but without being offensive, I will not take lectures on moral standards from those who have enacted legislation which has caused so much social injustice.

I was brought up on the Old Testament, on the conflict between the kings who exercised the power and the prophets who preached righteousness. The story in the Old Testament would have been different if the kings had appointed the prophets. But I do not have much time for churchmen who protect the establishment.

I attended the coronation service and I have brought the order of service with me. I remember the occasion well—2 June 1953. One of the few pledges that the Queen gave to the Archbishop of Canterbury was the following:

"Archbishop: Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?

Queen: All this I promise to do."

The bishops are part of a privileged group in our society. They sit in the House of Lords and they have a special status. They insist on maintaining the blasphemy laws, which has an element of contemporary importance. For one reason why the Muslims are angry is that they are not protected by those laws, which the bishops insist should protect the Church of England.

This is a time for a fresh look, though I know that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who moved the Measure, does not agree with my reasons for supporting it. A few weeks ago the Soviet Parliament repealed article 6 of its constitution. Article 6 established Marxism-Leninism as the only political faith in Russia. The Russians have disestablished Marxism-Leninism. In this country, there are Protestants, Nonconformists, Catholics, Hindus and Muslims, yet we are told, on the advice of the Second Church Estates Commissioner, that we must preserve Parliament's power to control one church.

Tonight's vote will be a watershed. It is a crowded House. The early moments of the debate did not give me the idea that the House was an appropriate body to deal with such a matter. I did not think that the behaviour of some hon. Members confirmed our right to exercise the powers which, by statute, we have. If we accept the Measure, we are accepting the Church's right to be free. If we reject the Measure, the Church will demand its freedom.

There is no doubt that if Parliament rejects the Measure for a second time, the pressure in the Church of England for disestablishment will grow. I happen to share that wish, but I do not want to see it brought about by denying justice to people whom the Church, in its wisdom, considers eligible for ordination. Therefore, whichever way the vote goes will be a step towards disestablishment—de facto if we accept the Measure, de jure if we reject it.

I shall conclude because I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. State control of religion is a feudal survival. The sooner we end it, and end the farce of debates such as this, the better it will be for the Church of England and for the House.

10.42 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I do not think that we help our case on either side by besmirching the motives of those who argue against us. This is an issue about which people feel strongly. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has shown how strongly he feels about it. He is entitled to his view and has been honest about it. He is not an Anglican, but he has every right to speak in this assembly on these issues, because that is the nature of an established Church.

The problem with this issue is that it is not as simple as it has been made out to be. The Church of England sought to reform all its divorce laws. It brought forward a major motion. In order to pass it, it needed a two-thirds majority. It could not get that majority because many people believed that, in a world where divorce was becoming a major problem and in a nation with the highest divorce rate in the European Community, the Church should continue to uphold the sanctity of marriage and the notion of the lifelong union.

The bishops sought to find an answer, and discovered that they could not. Therefore, they withdrew from the Synod the general proposition and left us with this small rump bit. Had they said to the Synod, "Because this is so essential a matter and one that people feel so strongly about, we are not prepared to take the whole issue through; nevertheless on this issue, we will have the two-thirds majority which is necessary for so major a change," many of us would have been much happier.

However, instead of doing that, the bishops said that there would be no two-thirds majority. We understand why, because in the House of Laity—this House has a particular concern for that House—they have never managed to get a two-thirds majority. They have had a substantial majority, but not the majority which, under the generally understood nature of the Church of England, they needed to make so substantial a change.

It is a substantial change, because it means that we shall ordain men who, from the beginning of their ministry, will be unable to turn to young couples coming for advice on marriage and say to them, "The Church stands by our Lord's direct command to uphold marriage as a lifelong union. Therefore, under the rules that most bishops insist upon, you cannot be remarried in church, because you cannot remake the vows that you originally made."

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Gummer: No, I want to be brief. I think that my hon. Friend will find that I answer him in due course.

That is what the Church said——

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: This is a matter of considerable pain and importance to many, and it would be helpful if all hon. Members were allowed to develop their arguments to see what the answer is.

Mr. Stott: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: The priest who has to advise people——

Mr. Stott: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way to someone who has been remarried in church?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The right hon. Gentleman said that he is not giving way.

Mr. Gummer: The priest will have to say that he has not been able to carry that out, and in that sense he is not the person who stands for the highest that the Church can ask for.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall not give way. Many people wish to speak and I have been asked to keep my remarks short.

The issue is surely whether the Church has the right to say of those who stand at the altar in the place of Jesus that they should set an example of a kind that may not be asked of other people. I think that it has. In those circumstances, other Churches say that a man may not marry at all. They ask for celibacy generally. The Orthodox Church says that one may marry but not divorce or remarry after divorce. The Church of England is merely saying, as it has always said, that priests may divorce but may not remarry, because that is to take the vow a second time.

If the Church had sought to recast the whole of its marriage arrangements and deal with the issue of annulment to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) refers, not just for priests but for all the other people who, because the Church of England has no annulment procedure, are also forced into a divorce, many of us would have gone along with the change that was necessary. But we are not faced with such a proposal. We are faced with a special proposal about the very people of whom one should ask a higher standard than one asks of others.

What kind of signal does that give to the rest of the community? What will it mean if, for the first time, the Church of England decides to ordain not one or two difficult cases, but—as we know from the figures that have been thrashed out after a great deal of trouble, considerable pressure and several months of discussion, the Ecclesiastical Committee, having been given the figure of two or three a year—240 in the first year? There is a lot behind that, and I agree that would not be a typical year, but there is no doubt that many will be concerned, so that is a different situation from that which was presented to the Synod.

The issue is surely also that the Church of England needs to look at its marriage and divorce legislation, for we have a much tougher rule than in any other Church in Christendom if it is kept. But, as has been pointed out by my right hon. Friend, it is often not kept. The Church must face that issue.

Our problem tonight is that the Church has been denied the opportunity to face that issue. It has been given a bit of a measure. That bit has been got through without a two-thirds majority, and the House is now supposed to support what has been an unfortunate chapter in the history of the Church.

It is no good saying that this is a matter for the Church, and we must leave it to the Church. If we have an established Church—I am not one of those who believe it to be essential—it is the duty the House to stand up for those who have been disfranchised by the mechanisms of the Church.

I find it surprising that the motion should be brought before the House at a time when there is a court case outstanding against the principle of the way in which the Measure was put through. I know that it is in technical terms possible for the House to approve it, but I thought that the Church would have stayed its hand and waited a little, until that case had been heard. I hope that there is no truth in the report that, if the case is lost, the Church will seek costs from the very ordinary Anglican lay people who took the matter to court. If that is true, the Church ought to think again, because it was right to take that case to court.

There may be another Session for us, but there is not another session for the Synod. There are synodical elections towards the end of this year. Why was the Church not prepared to leave the matter to be voted upon again by a new Synod? Even those of us who may not be entirely convinced by the argument that an example ought to be set, and that the Church should stand for something at a time when marriage is undergoing so much pressure, may we ask why the Church did not, in Christian charity, hold back the Measure to be voted upon again after the synodical election, when the case could have been put to its electorate? Why did not the Church allow the High Court case to be heard before bringing the matter before this House?

My last point—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Opposition Members ought to accept that many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House feel strongly about this matter, and have been consistent in their views.

It is often said that the argument is one of forgiveness. One of the problems in Britain is how we should support the two out of three families who do stay together and who regard marriage as a lifelong commitment. How do we help them in those difficult circumstances? We can do so only by upholding the highest standards and by setting before them what Jesus demanded and what the Gospel demands. Once the Church of England moves from the Gospel demands, many of us will ask in whose name the Church speaks at all.

10.52 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): No right hon. or hon. Member who has met or who has been written to by a number of the people whom the motion most closely concerns can fail to approach the matter partly through those individuals. That raises for any Christian the fundamental question of whether we really believe that the power of the Holy Spirit is limited. Sometimes, I wonder whether that doubt is the sin against the Holy Spirit that none of us has ever had explained.

Grace is infinite, and the history of the Christian Church is the history of ordinary sinners redeemed by grace and securing successes beyond that which anyone could normally have expected of them. It is worth reminding ourselves that St. Peter built the Church having denied Our Lord on oath no fewer than three times. As we all know, St. Paul was instrumental in causing the death of a number of Christians before he played his part in building the Church.

If someone, whether or not he is a Christian, fails in a marriage, are we to say that at no stage in his subsequent life is the Holy Spirit able to redeem him sufficiently to allow him to become a priest or a deacon? We know that the efficacy of the sacrament is not affected by the purity of its administrator. We know also that it is more likely that a couple will seek to be married by a priest who has been divorced while an incumbent than by one of the tiny handful of people who may get through an elaborate process, having been divorced goodness knows how many years ago.

Yet there is, as we can see, an impressive balance of right hon. and hon. Members lined up against the Measure. One has to ask why. Is it because they want to send the message to the Church of England that they do not trust the archbishops? If so, this is a wholly inappropriate vehicle to carry that message. Why pick on

a tiny handful of committed Christians, who want the chance to test their vocation only at the humblest level of the priesthood, to attack the pinnacle of the hierarchy? Is it because they want to send out a message about the inviolable sanctity, of marriage? This is a grossly inadequate vehicle to carry that huge burden. To use a group of Christians who will, by definition, be more sharply tested in their vocation and more centred on the vital importance of chaste and holy marriage than anyone else I can imagine, as a candle to light the fire of a national revival of enduring marriage, is as cruel as it is inappropriate.

I believe that if hon. Members turn down the Measure we shall send to the Church and to the country beyond the message that we doubt the redemptive power of the Holy Spirit. We shall send the message that we distrust the judgment of the archbishops whom the secular authority has placed at the helm of the Church of England and that we are happy to ride roughshod over the vocation of a handful of Christians to gratify our prejudices or to feed our human fears. Such instrumentality—the subordination of individuals to the larger purpose—is precisely the opposite of the Gospel and the sort of thinking that our [illegible]d came to overturn.

10.56 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) referred to our previous debate, when there were fewer hon. Members present. That debate resulted in a very close vote, which gave no satisfaction to the winners or the losers. I think that it was recognised immediately that we should have to re-run the whole event. On that occasion, 14·7 per cent of hon. Members voted in the middle of the night, and the Measure was defeated by a mere six votes.

I make no criticism—why should I?—of the hon. Members who did not stay for the debate. Doubtless, many of them thought that sleep was more important, and perhaps their families thought that it was more important that they should be at home with them. We often have debates at what some hon. Members consider to be unreasonable hours. I sometimes think that we should consider that aspect of our debates, and decide whether our procedures should be changed so that we all have the opportunity to come to a sensible conclusion, without being too tired and mugged by the procedure. Some absentees might have been motivated by the fact that they felt that the issue was not one upon which parliamentarians should vote at all. I voted for the Measure. I am one of those hon. Members who takes the view that it is not a matter upon which Parliament should make a decision, but I shall come to that point in a moment.

I am glad, having excused in my mind the absentees, that so many hon. Members have turned up tonight and decided to stay, even at this slightly earlier hour, to listen and to vote. I have been sitting here trying to calculate who will vote on which side, and it is not easy to judge from hon. Members' faces.

I was privileged to take part in the debate in July. I guess that I was one of the few contributors on that occasion, and probably one of the few on this occasion who is not a member of the Church of England.

I come from a pretty religious background, although hon. Members might not think it: my father was a Methodist preacher, my mother a Congregationalist, and I turned out to be an agnostic. Despite my feelings, I take an interest in what is happening, and I strongly believe that matters such as this should be left to the parliament of the Church of England. A lot of what has been said tonight has been said in language that may not be comprehensible to people outside, some of whom may be in the Public Gallery tonight. The Measure belongs to the General Synod, and I do not think that we should make a decision contrary to the decision that it has already made; indeed, I do not think that we should make a decision of any kind.

Despite what the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) said earlier, I believe that the Synod has agonised over the Measure. It has come to a conclusion—albeit not by a two-thirds majority—and I think that we have a duty to pass the Measure too, although on another occasion we may be able to discuss the possibility of separating Church and State.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend said at first that we should not make a decision; now she says that we should. I agree with her that it should not be the business of the House of Commons to make that decision, but now that it is our business I feel that we have a responsibility. I think that we should support the majority on the Synod, although it was not a two-thirds majority. I say that as an Anglo-Catholic who has been married since 15 December 1945, and who believes strongly in the marriage concept, but recognises on a Christian basis that some people may not be as happily married as I am.

Ms. Richardson: I agree with my hon. Friend that we should make a decision tonight, but I do not think that we should have to: I think that we should think about the matter again on another occasion.

The people who considered this Measure for so many months reached their decision on the basis of deep religious feeling, and it is our job tonight to underwrite and support their decision. I know that many hon. Members believe that marriages are made in heaven, and that everyone who is married should remain married to his or her partner until death do them part. That is fine, but—I hate to say this, and I hope that I do not sound patronising—that suggests that they do not live in the real world. In the real world divorces take place, and for very good reasons. Some of the remarks that have been made suggest that people who divorce do so for not very serious reasons, but if people have decided to divorce we must respect that, and I do not think that they should be penalised as they would be if we voted against the Measure.

After all, there are only 240 candidates who would qualify for consideration if the Measure were passed, and not all are likely to get through. The Church of England has said that if we pass the Measure, the candidates will be scrutinised by means of the most difficult and obstacle-ridden procedure to ensure that they are fit to be ordained. We are considering only 240 people out of 10,000.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Many hon. Members are very perplexed. The Church of England now says that we can break one of God's tenets—that a marriage should be indissoluble. However, whenever Sunday trading is advocated, every vicar in creation writes to us stating that Sunday must remain a holy day. What matters are holy? Is

[Mr. Beaumont-Dark]

marriage holy? Are Sundays holy? Is Easter holy? What is holy? If we break one tenet, why should not we break them all?

Ms. Richardson: Perhaps some people break them all. However, I do not intend to follow that line of argument.

Many hon. Members and people throughout the country believe that marriage should be indissoluble. I understand their point of view. However, that is not possible in the real world for every couple, and we have to make provision for those people. I am not referring to the much-publicised cases that appear in the tabloid press—married people jumping into bed with other partners. I do not think that they, or the press that exploits their stories, are typical—*[Interruption.]* We are fed on a constant diet—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Richardson: Most couples divorce because life together has become intolerable. I defy any hon. Member to deny that he or she has been touched to the heart by such cases. Hon. Members must therefore be aware of what happens to a number of people.

Hon. Members may know of my deep concern for victims of domestic violence. Wife beaters—those who verbally, physically or sexually abuse their partner—are rife in our society, and always have been. A ten-minute Bill on rape within marriage is to be introduced tomorrow by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), which I hope the House will approve. Even the Home Office is now taking that seriously. If the victim of domestic violence finally manages to divorce her violent husband and subsequently remarries, why should the second husband be penalised for his understanding, care and love for someone who has been so cruelly treated?

In the previous debate on the subject my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) asked me how we could ensure—*[Interruption.]*—that the wife beater was not ordained. I said then that the procedure for ordination would be very strict. I cannot imagine that such a person would be ordained. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). I am sure that she is nearing the end of her speech.

Ms. Richardson: It would be lovely if we lived in an ideal world in which marriages were real partnerships, where the husband accepted his responsibilities to his wife and family, with the wife—who usually has to undertake most of the family responsibilities—having a life of her own, with financial independence to exercise her rights within the marriage.

In the 1990s, more women will be required in the work force. More women today are mature students who are seeking to educate themselves and expand their mind. That is a good thing and some Conservative Members should take note of it. However, that may well cause women to re-evaluate their marriages, their families and their relationships. Some of their earlier mistakes may throw them into deeper and more abiding relationships. Why should the aspirations of those women or the men whom they have married be less important to a partnership than those who feel that marriage is indissoluble? I do not think that that is what the meeting together of two people is all about and I hope that the House will listen closely to the debate and vote in favour of the Measure.

11.10 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), who presented important arguments in her usual graceful manner. If I disagree with her, I do so for the same reasons as last time, which have nothing to do with the power of the arguments that she put forward. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) also spoke with great feeling. There is considerable feeling on all sides of the House running just below the surface of the debate.

Before making one substantive point to ask Members not to approve the Measure before the House tonight, I wish to comment on one issue which has not emerged in the debate. Many people outside consider tonight's debate a trial run for the Measure which will allow the Church to ordain women and which will be supported by substantial majorities in all parts of the House. No one must think that tonight's vote is any guide to that Measure.

This limited Measure has, however, turned into a partial debate on disestablishment. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) feels passionately about that issue, although I find it strange that he should advocate privatisation of this country's first nationalised industry and handing over rights possessed by the state to a sect.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnyd Nant Conwy): I am a member of the Church in Wales, which is disestablished but not privatised.

Mr. Field: I hope for the hon. Gentleman's sake that he will depend on more than that argument when he faces the electorate.

The second argument that has been advanced is that tonight we have a chance to iron out inconsistencies in everyday life.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman explain whether our Lord said that the Church had to be part of a national state? Where and when was that written in the scriptures?

Mr. Field: Our Lord did not directly publish "Faith in the City", but despite that it was a jolly good report, which was attacked by Conservative Members, and so tradition develops.

I am anxious to move on because the argument about inconsistencies has been presented. At present, if a practising priest decides to divorce he can continue to be a priest and his freehold rights will not be touched, but a person who decides to get divorced before being ordained will face a bar. We have to decide whether life is about ironing out inconsistencies or whether the important things in life cannot easily be fitted into neat categories.

As I listened to that, I thought of the argument that Aneurin Bevan made as he faced Neville Chamberlain. Having listened to the then Prime Minister, he said, in effect, "Listening to the Prime Minister is like a trip round Woolworth's—everything in its place and nothing over sixpence." Many things in life do not fit into neat little boxes. Sometimes they spill over. In this case we have to make a judgment as to whether it is a matter of neat categorisation or something more.

Mr. Nelson: I wish to raise with the hon. Gentleman a matter of personal perplexity to me. It may indeed be ignorance which leads me to intervene. The hon. Gentleman spoke of circumstances in which a person sought ordination, having previously been divorced. Will he confirm that there are circumstances, under the law passed by this House, in which a man can be divorced through no wish of his own? After a five-year period of separation, divorce may be imposed on him, even though it may be the last thing that he desires. Yet as a result of that, that law and this House, paradoxically, imposes a law on him saying that he is barred from ordination. Where is the equity?

Mr. Field: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The bar comes if he remarries after that divorce, not by the divorce itself.

Mr. Nelson: No.

Mr. Field: The hon. Gentleman may say no, but he asked a specific question and I answered it.

I am anxious to get to the substantive point of my speech, which is that we must balance the argument, for it is on that balance—not on the high theological points that have been adduced by some hon. Members who oppose the Measure and who will later be in the Lobby with me—that we must make a decision.

The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) asked whether the debate was about forgiveness. As a collection of individuals, we should thank God that forgiveness is not dependent on any Act of Parliament. Whatever we decide tonight will make no difference to that fundamental issue, but it will make a difference to the conduct of the established Church.

As those themes have occurred in the debate, I wish to explain why, on balance, I shall vote against the Measure and ask my hon. Friends to support me. I do so not for theological reasons but for arguments about citizenship. We are being asked by the Church today to create two categories of citizenship. In an intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said that some individuals could be divorced and remarried in Church.

Mr. Stott: As I was.

Mr. Field: As my hon. Friend was. Some people know how to move around and how to work the system——

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Stott: I rest my case.

Mr. Field: My hon. Friend may rest his case, but there are people who go to their local priest, who has a strict policy on the matter and refuses, and those people will accept the position. There will be others who know that they can move around and find a priest to perform the sacrament for them. That was the distinction that I was making. Under the existing law, some people will be divorced and remarried.

Today, however, we are being asked to approve a Measure which says that there shall be a privileged group of people who will be divorced and remarried, or who may have married a divorcee, and they can be ordained. But the vast majority of English men and women will be denied that right—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] That is the line that most parish priests take. It stems from the point made by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), that that is not the main issue that we are considering tonight. We are considering a substantive amendment. The main Measure that the Synod considered was the right of ordinary English men and women who are divorced to remarry in the Church. It refused to pass that measure, but says that it will ordain a category of people—a privileged group—who have divorced and remarried.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asked why we are involved. We are involved because we are deciding that rights of citizenship should not be extended to ordinary people and that rules should apply to a special group—priests—but not to ordinary people. So long as such legislation is put forward in this place, I hope that the House will reject it, but not for some of the reasons that we have heard about it being a move one way or another to disestablishment.

Whether we think that the Measure is only about ironing out inconsistencies, or whether we think that it is a test of the welcome which I hope that the House will give the Measure for the ordination of women in the Church of England, it is about the fundamental rights of English men and women to be remarried in church. The Synod refused to extend that right to the many, but today we are being asked to extend it to the privileged few. For those reasons, I hope that we shall reject the Measure.

11.2 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I have two short points to offer the House on what I consider to be a difficult issue. The first is based on the concept of fairness and proportionality in law, and the second I venture, rather rashly, to base on theology.

My first point is a plea for the principle that the consequences of any infringement should be influenced by the circumstances in which it occurs. We have been reminded by my right hon. Friend the Second Church Estates Commissioner and by other hon. Members that a priest is not compelled to give up his benefits, let alone his orders, if he remarries within the lifetime of his former wife. I draw attention to that fact not to make the plea suggested by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who made a most impressive speech, but to get rid of any inconsistency. My plea is that we should allow the law of the Church to take account of the circumstances in which an undoubted infringement of the Church's code has taken place.

It is true that a clergyman does not have to give up his benefits or orders because he remarried after divorce, but the disciplinary legislation and machinery of the Church may remove him if the circumstances of his conduct justify it. The circumstances are taken into account when the Church decides what shall happen to a clergyman, whereas they are not when someone who has divorced and remarried, regardless of how long ago or of the fact that at the time he may not have been a Christian, wishes to be ordained. That absolute bar on his ordination leads me to support the Measure—one of the advantages of speaking later in the debate is that one can cut one's remarks—but that contrast has already been made.

I should like to establish my credentials with those such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), next to whom I am delighted to be sitting, and against whose views I speak. I stand by the doctrine that, for a Christian, remarriage when his former wife is

[The Attorney-General]

alive is adulterous and therefore a sin, but I hope to see that doctrine tempered by recognition of the need for a careful examination of the circumstances of each case.

Equally, I very much understand those who stand against what they see as a steady slide in moral conduct, in theology, in the production standards of a factory or in anything else. Some, with justice, perceive a slide. I stand with them against that, but that does not justify turning down the Measure tonight.

We should address ourselves to whether this absolute and unqualified bar is an unfair and disproportionate sanction to impose on somebody who may fall into the category—I agree that it is extreme, but one can visualise many gradations—that he may, perhaps a long time ago, have divorced and remarried and now wishes to be ordained. It is an unfair and disproportionate sanction, which is inherently wrong. It does not allow the consequences of an undoubted infringement to be varied and tempered by the circumstances.

I understand those who take their stand on the sanctity of marriage and on the concept that it is for life. I share those views. I do no doubt that those who oppose the Measure believe that it is necessary to do so by reason of their loyalty to that concept. However, I hope that I shall not offend any of them if I suggest that they may, in their opposition, be giving rather less force than they should to two essential concepts, as I understand them, of the Christian faith. The first is forgiveness, and the second is the supernatural power of God.

It is rash to suppose that it is so serious a sin to remarry after divorce in the circumstances with which we are concerned that it cannot be conceived that God might wish subsequently to call such a man to serve him as a priest. [HON. MEMBERS: "Or woman."] Perhaps a woman in future, but let us not enlarge the debate.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

The Attorney-General: No, as I am anxious to finish quickly.

Miss Nicholson: It affects women deacons.

The Attorney-General: I understand that.

If one is to oppose the Measure, it is necessary to argue that it is inconceivable that God should wish to call a man to become a priest in those circumstances. I do not believe that it is inconceivable. It is argued that to pass the Measure will send out a thoroughly bad signal, and the implication of that argument is that that must be to infringe, and to go against, the will of God. I do not believe that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has already reminded us of the influence of St. Paul. It hardly need to be said that St. Paul persecuted and murdered Christians on a grand scale, yet he was subsequently employed as an apostle. It is then said, "It is inconceivable that anybody could teach persuasively the lifelong purpose and nature of marriage if he himself had remarried in those circumstances." How come? St. Paul had little difficulty in preaching with great sincerity the wrongness of the offences that he, so memorably, had committed himself.

My conclusion is that we should approach the debate not with a view to ironing out inconsistencies or deciding whether we shall be standing up for marriage, but with a view to ensuring that the law of the Church of England is fair and proportionate, and remembering that the Measure will take account of circumstances and that it will be only the most exceptional circumstances that one archbishop or the other will consider sufficient to warrant a departure from what will remain the general rule and principle. That is central to the Measure and justifies it for me. That is why I shall vote for it.

11.29 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): When the Attorney-General was speaking as a Back-Bench Member, I went through a great temptation to follow him on the matter of sinning through adultery. In this country, there is an enormous amount of saying one thing and doing another.

I was reminded that when I first did interviews with an armed detective sitting alongside me, a chap walked in at Holbeck in Leeds, and said to me, "Do you believe in the sanctity of marriage?" I said, "Yes," and he went straight out. The policemen said, "Do you believe that, sir?" I said, "Yes, for myself." He said, "Thank God for that."

There is a great deal in the debate that should not concern us as Members of Parliament. When I hear theology being talked, it is not for me and it is not for Members in general. I shall vote for the Measure, although as a Nonconformist I have no reason in faith to participate. That is why I was not here last time.

The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) reinforced my feelings when he raised ecclesiastical points. I simply tell him—and I do not say it with nastiness—that when he goes round the country talking as a Member of Parliament about ecclesiastical points, I feel irritated. The same applies to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who talked about citizenship. That is a matter for him. It is not a matter for me as a Nonconformist.

The debate is far wider than the Measure before us. Lose or win, however we all feel, it is one more little movement along the road to disestablishment. When I was Home Secretary, I had to go on an occasional Thursday to see Her Majesty when she created bishops. I read out the oath. I did that as a Nonconformist, but I went along with it. Given the decline in churchgoing, it is no longer relevant. The information on social trends published a few days ago shows what is happening. In those statistics we see that many young people live together but are not married; they are mainly middle class, but I make no point about that. Why are we talking in this lay Chamber about morality, and ecclesiastical morality, in the face of that information?

It is time we disestablished the Church of England. The Church in Wales is much better for being disestablished. The former Church of England in Northern Ireland, now the Church of Ireland, is much the better for being free of political control. If it means that we have to alter the composition of the House of Lords and that the spiritual bishops are no longer there, so be it. If it means that the cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and others are there instead, so much the better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will return to the Measure that we are discussing.

Mr. Rees: The Measure is pushing us along that road. We will vote one way or the other, but it is not our business. That is why I was not here last time. I wish I were not here now. If the House is talking about saving marriages, the quicker I get home, the better.

11.33 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): We have the right to debate the matter; we also have the right to represent our constituents' fears and concerns. There is a feeling of despair among many lay people. I listened with tremendous sympathy to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), but the Church of England has gone wrong. It no longer provides the guidance that ordinary people expect. I give, as one example, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. What is the Church's view on that Bill? I do not know whether it knows what its view is, but it has not told me. I have had many letters from various institutions on the Bill but I have not heard a squeak from the Church of England.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Summerson: I shall not give way.

If the Church trod the path laid down for it nearly 2,000 years ago and preached the timeless gospel of Christ, I should support the Measure that it has introduced today, because I would have trust and confidence that what the Church was doing was right. But I do not. The Church's values today are those of contemporaneous, secular society. I have lost my trust in the Church. I do not believe that its motives are correct, and I believe that the Measure should be rejected.

11.35 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): When the Ecclesiastical Committee first set out on its deliberations two years ago, I presumed—as, I admit, did some of my colleagues on the Committee—that when the Measure came to be voted on, I should vote against it. However, I did not vote against it the last time that it was debated and I shall not vote against it tonight.

The reasons why I shall not vote against the Measure, although various, can be summarised relatively briefly. The Church's teaching on marriage is clear. The Church has specific teaching that the leaders of the Church should set a good example and according to Timothy, should take only one wife. There is clear teaching. However, as the Attorney-General and others have clearly said, the Church has equally preached that, for every individual without exception, there is available forgiveness. If we defeat the Measure, one of the effects would be to deny the sacrament of forgiveness to people who are ordained, while the Church offers, and the holy spirit gives, forgiveness to lay members of the Church.

The Ecclesiastical Committee took a year, spent six sessions, considered evidence and had a joint meeting with the legislative committee of the General Synod before coming to the decision that the measure was expedient. I respect the views of those who have expressed an alternative view this evening. It is clear that, theologically, the matter is difficult, but we should take heed of the advice that we have been given by the people who guide us on matters of theology in the Church. They have deliberated and decided by a substantial majority that the matter does not offend against the theology of the Christian Church or against the teachings of Christ.

In all three Houses there was a majority. It does not matter what our views are on disestablishment. As an Anglican who is in favour of disestablishment, I too wish that we did not have to do this job. However, we must do our job tonight with the best advice available.

The House could reject the Measure, as it did before, but uniquely, the Church is entitled to send it back when it will. When the Church reconsidered the decision of the House last July, it resolved, by a majority of more than two thirds, that the Measure should come back to the House and should be supported by the Church.

As the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) said, the measure applies not only to men but to women. If the Measure is accepted, many women who are waiting to be ordained deacons will be allowed to be ordained, just as the men affected will be allowed to be ordained priests. It would be anomalous if the measure were not accepted. By definition, some people would be prevented from being ordained by faults that were not of their commission and sins not of their making. Some would be prevented by technicalities. Others might be eligible despite the fact that they might have lived with one, two or more partners—just because they had never got married—and some would be prevented because they married somebody who, many years past, had once been divorced. That person would be debarred although he may never have been divorced himself.

By the present law, we can allow people to be ordained who have been convicted of murder. Are we to deny that to those whose marriage has failed? Perhaps most importantly, is the Church to say that people who have been married and divorced, who were remarried when they were not Christians but who became Christians later, like Paul and many other cases in the history of the Church, should then be prevented from starting again, as the Church teaches is available?

I advise the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that the rule of the Church that allows priests to refuse requests for marriage is not a parallel, and it is therefore not a good precedent. The Church allows that. It will continue to have that provision, and it is up to the individual priest. The fact that someone may find a priest who is willing to remarry that person in church—as the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) made clear has happened to him—is not an argument for rejecting the Measure.

Above all, the debate is about whether forgiveness can override the strict interpretation of the law, but it is also about whether this House will leave to the pastors and spiritual leaders of the Church the right to decide that, in an individual case, after close examination, somebody should be allowed to be ordained in spite of what had gone before. If it is a choice between this House barring everybody in all circumstances from being ordained or of leaving it to the Church, I think that we should leave it to the Church.

11.41 pm

Mr. Alison: With the leave of the House, I should like to make two concluding points—one a very narrow point and the other rather broader. On the narrow point, in his impressive speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) referred to the fact that he thought that the General Synod should have had a two-thirds majority vote on the critical point. He drew attention to the fact that a law suit is now in process outside the House to try to decide whether a two-thirds majority should have been applied.

My right hon. Friend complained about costs in the law suit. I should look at that point carefully and, without commitment, shall do everything that I can to help his side. The Church of England has said that, if the law suit is won by the plaintiffs—his side—it will unequivocally take the canon which will implement the Measure back to the Synod and submit it to the two-thirds majority procedure. There is therefore still a chance for my right hon. Friend's wish to be fulfilled.

My right hon. Friend was eloquent in urging the vital necessity of upholding the Christian view of marriage. Very few, if any, hon. Members would differ from my right hon. Friend on that fact. Indeed, I doubt whether anybody in the country—certainly nobody in the Church—would differ from him about the need to uphold the highest possible Christian view of marriage. It is precisely because of the overwhelming support for that view—almost monolithic as a feeling in the House, the General Synod, the Church and the country at large—that we can run the risk of allowing this very modest limited degree of exceptional dispensation without shaking the fabric of rigorous popular orthodoxy.

I pray in aid the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in his eloquent speech—that the debate is about balance. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Sir P. Mayhew) hit the nail on the head when he said that the absolute debarring of remarried, divorced clergy is a disproportionate sanction. We should run the risk of modestly lifting that sanction by endorsing the Measure tonight.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 106.

Division No. 87] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Nellist, Dave
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger Sims and
Mr. Michael Latham.

NOES

Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Buckley, George J.
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Duffy, A. E. P.
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Tredinnick, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alistair Burt and
Mr. William Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Clergy (Ordination) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament in the last Session.

Mrs. Batool Bibi Shah

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.56 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the case of a constitutent of mine, Mrs. Batool Bibi Shah. I fully recognise that other Members of Parliament have to deal with immigration cases and that it is not possible to raise every individual case in the House as I am doing today. Nevertheless, this case is an exception. I am not seeking privilege for my constituent, but I am pursuing a right to which she is entitled.

Mrs. Shah has lived continuously in the United Kingdom since 1975 where, other than during a brief period of maternity leave, she has worked for the past 14 years as a machinist for an employer in Manchester. She also holds a British passport.

As is quite common in her culture, Mrs. Shah took part in an arranged marriage to Mr. Munreed Hussain Shah in Pakistan in March 1985. Since that time, as her Member of Parliament, I have been involved in making representations to different Departments for Mr. Shah to be permitted to reside with his family in the United Kingdom.

I have in my possession numerous exchanges of correspondence with the Home Office and the Foreign Office dating as far back as July 1985 on this case. Some of the Departments have not always been over-efficient. At times, they came back to me for information which I had already given them. That surprises me, given that nowadays most information is held on computer. No doubt the Minister will have all the answers when he comes to reply, so presumably the computer was working efficiently for the purposes of this debate.

Mrs. Shah was born in March 1955 and her husband in May 1960. I mention that now just in case the Minister intended to make that point himself. I make the point also that in this country there must be hundreds of thousands of wives who are older than their husbands—and few people would consider that factor as of any importance.

After returning home from the wedding, in December 1985, Mrs. Shah gave birth to a daughter, Nuissa. She visited her husband in Pakistan in 1986, and subsequently a second daughter, Mariam, was born in the United Kingdom in February 1987.

No one should attempt to make the case that the relationship is casual. Nor could the marriage be claimed to be bogus. Each time Mrs. Shah wishes to visit her husband in Pakistan, it costs £600 in travel and a further £400 in expenses. On her last visit, in April 1987, she took her youngest daughter, at additional cost. Unfortunately for the family, the father has never seen his second child.

Mrs. Shah occupies a large, three-bedroomed house which is kept impeccably and has been completely refurbished structurally with the assistance of a housing grant which had strong Government support. Mrs. Shah's aged mother, who lives with Mrs. Shah, is a diabetic and unfortunately suffers declining health.

I cannot allow this occasion to pass without referring to statements made by the Prime Minister claiming that the Conservative party is the party of the family. Those sentiments were echoed by the chairman of the Conservative party in an article in *The Daily Telegraph* as recently as 31 January 1990:

"Family values were the key political issue of the 1990s, Mr. Baker, Conservative party chairman, said last night in a fresh assault on the legacy of the permissive society.

He warned that the erosion of the pre-eminence of the natural family unit of the past 30 years had created serious consequences for the social and moral fabric of the nation."

The article went on to note that Mr. Baker had said:

"Not only is it just that fathers should contribute to the upkeep of their children; it is also crucial that we begin to break the culture which views it as acceptable for a man to walk away from the consequences of his own actions in this way."

The article continued:

"underlining the Prime Minister's concern at the growth in the number of single-parent families, which had doubled to more than a million since 1971 and now represents one in seven families, Mr. Baker insisted that nature had intended raising children to be the work of two people"

That is precisely what this debate is about—it is about a whole family.

Article 8 of the European convention on human rights states:

"Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life; his home and his correspondence."

In article 12 the convention states:

"Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right."

That obviously means nothing if the husband, wife and two children cannot live together.

We hear so much nowadays about womens' rights and about equal opportunities, but very often that does not seem to work when we make representations on behalf of women against the interests of men. Equal opportunities do not seem to exist when it comes to women's rates of pay and promotion, and I believe that the same is true when the Home Office deals with cases such as the one that I am presenting to the Minister tonight.

The Shah family are not a drain on state funds. I have in my possession a letter from Mrs. Shah's employer, firmly offering her husband a job when he is given permission to join her. They are a law-abiding family, with no history of any offences whatever, and one could claim that Mrs. Shah has exercised great patience throughout the whole affair, which has lasted five years.

Therefore, I want to know whether the family has any rights, and I also want to know whether their two young children will be condemned to live their lives fatherless. Those children have lived in the United Kingdom all their lives, growing up with our ways and knowing only our style of living. I find it deeply embarassing when I meet the mother month after month at my surgeries and have to give her the same reply, which causes her great depression, as one would expect.

The family are entitled to better treatment than they have been receiving, and I call on the Minister to reconsider the case of Mrs. Batool Bibi Shah and her family, who have been making representations for five years. My submission to the House is that they are entitled to much better treatment than they have received from the Government so far.

12.8 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I listened most carefully to what was said by the hon. Member for

Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), and I appreciate the reasons for his determination to draw the House's attention to his constituent's case.

The case concerns a decision to refuse entry clearance to the spouse of a person settled in the United Kingdom—the husband of the hon. Gentleman's constituent, Mrs. Batool Bibi Shah. The application was refused because the Secretary of State was not satisfied, as he must be, that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain admission to the United Kingdom. Parliament has provided a right of appeal to the independent appellate authorities against such decisions. Mr. Shah exercised that right, but his appeal was dismissed first by a single adjudicator and later by the immigration appeals tribunal. He has therefore exhausted the normal processes for contesting an adverse decision.

I have taken note of what the hon. Gentleman said about the distressing situation in which Mrs. Batool Bibi Shah finds herself. While it is impossible not to sympathise with her, the burden of proof as regards satisfying the requirements of the immigration rule in question rests squarely on the applicant—in other words, her husband. As the hon. Gentleman is, I am sure, aware, the independent appellate authorities, after carefully weighing all the evidence, concluded on two occasions that Mr. Shah had not discharged that burden.

The hon. Gentleman has presented his case very thoroughly, but I am sure that he will not mind if I go over some of the facts that had a special bearing on the refusal of Mr. Shah's application. The application was made barely 12 months after the death of another woman settled in the United Kingdom, whom he had applied to join for marriage and settlement. His engagement to Batool Bibi Shah was arranged little more than six months after his previous fiancee's death, and the marriage took place about three months later.

Mr. Shah's sister was involved in arranging the engagement. It is, I believe, rather unusual for a sister, herself resident in the United Kingdom, to be charged with arranging her brother's marriage—a social duty normally performed by parents, both of whom were alive in this case. The immigration appeals tribunal also remarked that point, and drew its own conclusions. Another factor that was taken into account at all stages of the case was the wife's professed reluctance to join her husband in Pakistan, and the lack of mutual support and communication. Those and other considerations weighed heavily against Mr. Shah.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the marriage rules, and I am glad of the opportunity to put the operation of the primary purpose rule into context. We are not the first Government to act to prevent the use of marriage as a means of settling in the United Kingdom. The Labour Government, in 1977, introduced the first tests to stop marriages of convenience, which had by then become a real problem. Since 1983, the onus has been on the applicant to satisfy the entry clearance officer that the primary purpose of the marriage, or intended marriage, is not to obtain his or her admission to the United Kingdom.

It has been suggested elsewhere that that test is too difficult to pass, because it requires the proof of a negative. Practical experience shows, however, that that is not so. In 1988, some 7,300 spouses were accepted for settlement from the Indian sub-continent on the basis of marriage, representing about 15 per cent. of the acceptances for settlement that year.

Nor do I accept that the test itself is unworkable: it should not be difficult for someone whose marriage was not entered into for the purpose of immigration to explain to the entry clearance officer how he or she met the partner involved, how the marriage was arranged and why the couple propose to live here rather than overseas.

The test is not intended as an attack on the Asian custom of the arranged marriage; rather, it seeks to expose those who exploit it for immigration purposes. In many such cases, admission to this country is an important factor, as the independent appellate authorities have themselves stated, but there is often objective evidence indicating that the applicant's admission was the primary purpose. That may include—as in the present case—a previous attempt by the applicant to come to this country.

It is entirely reasonable, surely, that someone claiming an important benefit, such as admission to this country with a view to settlement, should have to demonstrate his eligibility. Under other provisions in the rules—and, indeed, with respect to many other functions of Government—people must show that they are entitled to the benefits they are claiming. We believe that there is a need to guard against the abuse of the marriage rules by those who do not qualify for admission to this country, and who enter into marriages as a device to obtain settlement.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to what is known in legal jargon as "intervening devotion". The primary purpose rule relates to intentions at the time of marriage, but the actions of the couple after the marriage may suggest whether the requirement has been met. For example, a couple who have shown devotion and have what seems to be a genuine and soundly based marriage will probably satisfy the entry clearance officer that the primary purpose of the marriage was not to obtain admission to the United Kingdom. Among the factors taken into account will be the duration of the marriage and any time spent together outside the United Kingdom.

In this case, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recollect, the question of intervening devotion was fully explored by the independent appellate authorities, but they did not consider that it was sufficiently demonstrated in this case and merited a recommendation to the Home Secretary.

Let us, however, consider again the question of intervening devotion in this case. Mrs. Shah came to this country from Pakistan in 1975 when she was 20 years old. The way of life in Pakistan is therefore not unfamiliar to her. However, when she was interviewed in January 1987, she said that she was not prepared to join her husband there, even for a holiday. So far as we are aware, she has visited her husband in Pakistan only once since returning to the United Kingdom after their marriage in 1985.

The hon. Gentleman has referred several times to Mr. and Mrs. Shah's two children. I agree that that is an extremely important aspect that needed to be very thoroughly considered by the appellate authorities. I believe that it was. Despite the children, however, the couple do not appear to have made any attempt to live, even for a short time, as a family unit outside the United Kingdom, apart from the visit in 1987 to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Eastham: I referred earlier to the fact that Mrs. Shah's aged mother still lives in my constituency. She is a diabetic and needs care. Mrs. Shah has also incurred

[Mr. Eastham]

certain financial responsibilities. She obtained a Government grant to modernise her home. Is the Minister suggesting that she should walk away from her responsibilities and debts, just to comply with the recommendations?

Mr. Lloyd: I am not suggesting what Mrs. Shah should or should not do. I am suggesting that she failed, because of what she did or did not do, to convince the appellate authorities. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that she remained in Pakistan for a considerable time when she married and that she made another visit later. Arrangements must have been made then for her mother. Presumably, therefore, it would be possible, in some way or another, to make similar arrangements now.

I cannot simply ignore a point that appeared to be in the mind of the appellate authorities. When Mrs. Shah was interviewed in 1987, there was little evidence of any communication between her and her husband; neither was providing the other with support. All these factors, taken together, do nothing to strengthen the case.

I have to repeat that it is impossible not to feel sympathy for Mrs. Shah. I cannot believe, however, that either she or her husband were entirely ignorant of the immigration rules requirements when they entered into the marriage. It is my responsibility to maintain firm and fair immigration control. The majority of spouses who apply for entry clearance to join persons settled in the United Kingdom are able to satisfy those requirements. Mr. Shah has, I am afraid, failed to discharge that burden before the appellate authorities. I regret that nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said persuades me that there are new of exceptional circumstances that would justify my intervention. I am sorry to have to give such a disappointing reply to him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

1. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the extra funds announced recently to tackled homelessness will be made available directly to housing associations.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): This programme will amount to £250 million over the next two years. Of this, £73 million will be made available to housing associations. Local authorities may choose to channel some of the remainder to housing associations.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Minister gives us good information, because homelessness concerns all hon. Members. Will he go further and say what initiatives the Government might take to assist the homeless in general, particularly bearing it in mind that one of the major causes of homelessness is the break-up of marriages and family life?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: the break-up of family life is one of the most significant reasons for homelessness. Therefore, part of the answer to the homelessness problem is to ensure that as many young people as possible stay close to the family home until they are sure of adequate alternative accommodation and have the financial means to support it. With the help of Shelter, SHAC—the sheltered housing advice centre—and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, I am today launching a homeless advice service at a cost of about £1 million. It will give advice about the dangers of leaving home and about the help available to those who become homeless. As a matter of urgency, we are considering what further comprehensive action we need to take to relieve the problem, especially for those sleeping rough on the streets.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that more hostels are required and that if voluntary organisations were given more cash, the problem would be somewhat relieved? At present, giving cash to housing associations does not house the young homeless, with whom we are concerned. Obviously, the associations house people and are doing a good job, but, certainly, they will not be housing the people in real need.

Mr. Spicer: Yes, one of the things that we are looking at is hostel accommodation. We shall make recommendations in the light of our considerations.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend's announcement is welcome. Does he agree that the problem would be much alleviated if five principal London Labour authorities were to collect the £58 million of outstanding rent owed and did not have 10,000 empty properties?

Mr. Spicer: Sadly, my hon. Friend is right. It is largely the way in which Labour councils manage those estates that has caused some properties to be vacant. That is a national scandal.

Mr. Soley: I am sure that the teenage children in their cardboard boxes will be fascinated by the Government's latest gimmick. Does not the Minister understand that £125 million over one year, followed by £125 million the next year, will not even cover the cost of the homelessness that has been brought about by the latest hike in mortgage interest rates? In addition, it will not cover the cost of giving homes to people who are evicted because they cannot pay the £15 a week rent rises in Conservative Redbridge or Tory Bournemouth. Those are the sort of problems that the Minister should address. One thing that he could do today that would have some weight—perhaps he will tell the House that he will do it—is to allow local authorities to start spending their capital receipts on housing the homeless.

Mr. Spicer: One of the things that Labour spokesmen do not do when they shout their mouths off about this subject is actually to look at the causes. The Government are looking at one of the causes. This is an international problem. I have seen how serious it is in Copenhagen. One of the causes is the break-up of family life, so one of the good steps that we can take is to warn children against leaving their families prematurely. Of course, it then becomes a matter of responsibility for the Government to ensure that there is adequate accommodation for those who become homeless.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that thousands of jobs are available in London and that employers find great difficulty filling those jobs, even when accommodation is offered? Does not that suggest that a number of the so-called homeless are, in fact, malingerers?

Mr. Spicer: Not only is my hon. Friend right that there is high employment throughout the country, but it is often ignored by the Opposition that we have the most generous housing benefits for people who cannot afford accommodation of any country in the western world. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out some of the absurdities of some of the Labour party's propaganda on this matter.

Nature Conservancy Council

2. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the proposed break-up of the Nature Conservancy Council.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): My Department has received a number of representations recently about the proposals to strengthen the conservation and countryside agencies.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Secretary of State agree that, following reorganisation, certain aspects of the NCC's work will need to be determined and handled on a United Kingdom basis—for example, the criteria for designating sites of special scientific interest? Will he tell us, first, what aspects will need to be handled in future on a United Kingdom basis, and secondly, which will be the body responsible for determining those aspects? Will it be the new bodies, or the joint co-ordinating committee, or will it be the responsibility of the Secretary of State himself?

Mr. Patten: It will be primarily the responsibility of the joint statutory committee. I know that Professor Holliday, who will chair the committee, is considering these matters, and he will want to discuss the issue with the territorial organisations. I am sure that he will be able to produce a formula that will satisfy them and all concerned in nature conservancy. I know of the hon. Gentleman's concern about, interest in and knowledge of the subject.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sites of special scientific interest in the Western Isles and the rest of Scotland will be much better served by a strong science-based establishment in Scotland looking after Scottish interests? Does he further agree with the strong opinion in the NCC that England, Scotland and Wales would be much better served by independent councils?

Mr. Patten: I wholly accept what my hon. Friend says. As he will know, we have had letters of support from the territorial committees of the NCC. I am sure that my hon. Friend's point about the SSSIs is one that Magnus Magnusson and other members of the Scottish committee will want to take into full account in due course.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Secretary of State agree that tinkering with the structure may not, in itself, be enought to ensure real environmental protection? Will he therefore match the changes with ensuring that adequate funding and adequate powers are given to the appointed personnel? I welcome the appointment of Sir Magnus Magnusson to what the right hon. Gentleman calls the local territorial organisation in Scotland. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that Sir Magnus and his colleagues have a statutory right to be involved in planning issues, which are especially important in this matter?

Mr. Patten: I should not want to cut across the responsibilities of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. But the hon. Lady is perfectly correct to say that we must ensure that all aspects of nature conservancy in Scotland, Wales and England have adequate resources. Unlike our predecessors, we shall increase those resources, not cut them.

Local Government Finance

3. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received opposing the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): We continue to receive a good many representations on the community charge, covering a wide range of views.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that the difference between the rates on our house in Coventry, at £619, and the poll tax for two people in Coventry, is £189, and that that is my family's fortnight's summer holiday? If the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister think that they are taking my bairns' two weeks' holiday off them to pay for his bloody poll tax, he does not understand the determination of 1 million people in Scotland who have not paid and of 10 million in England and Wales who will be joining them in five weeks' time.

Mr. Chope: Despite the hon. Gentleman's customary rant on the issue of the community charge, the House should congratulate him because his second home is in the London borough of Wandsworth. Contrary to his earlier protestations, he has registered there for the standard community charge thereby ensuring that his community charge will be about the lowest in the country.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to hear the rest of the Minister's answer, but, on a point of order, you should reflect on how the Minister knows where I live and where I have registered.

Mr. Chope: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so coy about his second home and where it is located. It would be particularly mean-minded of him to withhold payment of the community charge and encourage others to do so. Coventry has the third highest revenue support grant per adult in the west midlands, which is considerably above the national average.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gould: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's reply calls for an immediate explanation, because the House needs to know how the Minister knows who has registered on the poll tax register when that information is required to be kept confidential by the registrar.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. It is a matter about the contents of an answer.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chope: Treating that as a question, it was open to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) to apply to have his name withheld. He did not do so and I can confirm that his name appears on the public extract of the register.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that hon. Members are taking up a great deal of time. What is the point of order?

Mr. Madden: You, Mr. Speaker, are in the Chair to protect the interests of all hon. Members and, with due respect, the Minister has revealed that he is aware of the home address of a Member of the House. That seems to be a clear breach of assurances given by Ministers that such information would not be revealed to third parties. Therefore—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman could make his point much more briefly than that. Whether a Minister knows where an hon. Member lives is not a material matter for me. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is secret".] Order. It may not be a secret matter. It is a matter for the contents of the answer and not a matter for order in the Chamber. There are many more questions on the community charge.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that in his supplementary question the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) used unparliamentary language. I should be grateful if you would require him to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Member used a word which is in current use today, but which I prefer not to hear in the Chamber.

Mr. George Howarth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are many more questions to come on the community charge.

Mr. Howarth *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Air Pollution

5. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to control air pollution.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): Current systems of air pollution control are being strengthened and extended by the Environmental Protection Bill. Additional processes will come under a robust new prior authorisation regime. The Bill enables the Clean Air Acts to be extended to control gaseous emissions from boilers or furnaces. It also streamlines the procedures for controlling air pollution that is a statutory nuisance.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. I regret that at the moment the internal combustion engine is excluded from the Environmental Protection Bill. Does my hon. Friend agree that it was never the Government's intention that steam locomotives should be included within the confines of the Bill? Will he confirm that amendment No. 608 to the Bill, tabled in his name and mine, will lift that dire threat from the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend's interest in and support for steam locomotives is extremely well known and there are thousands upon thousands of people like him in the country, who share that interest. There is no question of preventing or curtailing the use of steam locomotives, and we have no intention of changing the law relating to them. We hope to carry forward in part III of the Environmental Protection Bill, the exemption contained in section 72 of the Public Health Act 1961, which excludes steam ejected by railway locomotives from the definition of statutory nuisance.

Mr. John Garrett: What does the Minister think of the Department of Energy's decision to cut flue gas desulphurisation from power stations? Can he comment on reports of a disagreement between his Department and the Department of Energy? Unless that process goes ahead, we shall be unable to meet the European Community directive on clear air.

Mr. Trippier: To talk about disagreements between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy is stretching credulity to breaking point. It is clear to me that the hon. Gentleman has not read the debate that took place in the House yesterday, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy made it perfectly clear that the United Kingdom is fully committed to implementing the large combustion plants directive. We signed it in 1988, and it commits us to a 60 per cent. cut in 1980 SO_2 emissions from existing large plants by 2003. My right hon. Friend is not moving away from that position, and any talk or chatter in the press is purely speculative.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend confirm that for the first time there will be an individual plant limit placed on Fiddler's Ferry power station for its emissions of sulphur dioxide? Does my hon. Friend accept that that will be very welcome news to the region?

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. Yes, I confirm that that is part and parcel of the proposals introduced in the legislation that I referred to, and I am glad that he has welcomed it.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister recognise that diesel smoke is a major pollutant, especially in urban areas? It makes buildings dirty, fouls the atmosphere and is considered by some people to be potentially carcinogenic. Has the Minister discussed steps to control that form of air pollution with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport? Is this one of those areas where the Secretary of State's good intentions are being frustrated by his Cabinet colleagues, or does the Minister not have good intentions on this problem? Is there any Cabinet agreement on this or is this another area where we shall see no action from the Government to protect the environment?

Mr. Trippier: I have never seen my right hon. Friend frustrated; he is not the type, nor indeed is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I am delighted to tell the hon. Lady and the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment pressed the Commission to come forward with those proposals for heavy duty diesel vehicles at the last two Environment Councils. We took that initiative and we are now awaiting the Commission's proposals.

Genetically Engineered Organisms

6. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the environmental implications of the release of genetically engineered organisms.

Mr. Trippier: The environmental implications of such releases were considered in the consultation paper issued by the Department in June last year, and in the 13th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution published in July last year. Provisions to ensure the safety

of releases, and to control the conditions under which they occur are included in part VI of the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister acknowledge that there is a real danger that there will be a dramatic expansion of genetically modified organisms as a perceived means of solving some of our environmental problems? Does he accept that the idea of producing genetically modified animals and patenting them, as has been done with a mouse in the United States, is an absurd, unethical and abhorrent practice? There is an implication from the Minister's colleagues in the Home Office that the British Government would allow genetically created animals to be patented in this country. Does he agree that that should not happen, and that his Department should take responsibility for that, not the Home Office?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman suggests that such work may expand dramatically and get out of hand; in fact it is already expanding dramatically, which is why we have been pleased to take the advice of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. Most of the measures that it has proposed are incorporated in the Environmental Protection Bill. Part VI of the Bill sets up a flexible control regime, which will operate according to the degree of the risk to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The Secretary of State will have the power to exercise control through consents, by notifications or by separate risk assessment. We shall address any wider issues at the appropriate time in the Standing Committee—as, no doubt, will the hon. Gentleman, who is a member of it.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the Department's assessment of the risk?

Mr. Trippier: Obviously the Department accepts that there is a degree of risk, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced the setting up of a specialist committee to which consents will be referred. If there were any accidents, for instance, we should prefer to be given the committee's expert opinion on how they should be dealt with. As I have said, the controls incorporated in part VI of the Bill are a result of advice given to us by the Royal Commission.

Local Government Finance

7. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many county councils he proposes to poll tax cap in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: It would be quite wrong to speculate how many or which authorities would be charge-capped if we had to use our capping powers next year. If authorities insist on budgeting excessively, they will be capped; if they budget sensibly they have nothing to fear.

Mr. Boyes: Before going further down that road, will the Secretary of State take into account the unanimous decision of the policy committee of the royal county of Berkshire to condemn the fairy-tale figures involved in the Government's estimates of the cost of running and maintaining its existing services? The county is taking legal advice about the possibility of a judicial review to seek redress. Does not that show that the Secretary of State has got the figures wrong for every local authority in Britain? Is it not time that he did some recalculation and got them right?

Mr. Patten: The spending increases that some councils are discussing would mean, on average, a 35 per cent. increase in domestic rates if the domestic rating system were still in operation next year. Even if we believed everything that every local authority said, there would be no conceivable argument for increases of that size.

As for what the hon. Gentleman said about the royal county of Berkshire, I am wholly satisfied with the arguments that we have advanced in the past. I hope that charge payers will find that the county council sets a sensible budget, and does not ask for percentage income increases in the high teens or low 20s.

Mr. Squire: While taking account of the Opposition's criticism of the community charge, has my right hon. Friend yet received formal notification from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that he is engaged in a modern version of the dance of the seven veils, and that the first veil has now dropped? Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the dropping of the last veil will be a mutually rewarding experience?

Mr. Patten: I always want to be entirely fair to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Undoubtedly he would like an opportunity to come down to the House of Commons and explain the many alleged benefits of the roof tax, but the Leader of the Opposition stops him from doing so.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State explain why a Labour-controlled authority such as mine in Salford—which, despite experiencing all the usual inner-city problems, has made very prudent assessments—is having to charge £100 above the limit set by the Secretary of State because of the conditions that have been laid down? How can such an authority face up to the arguments that the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward?

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman's authority, like others—including some that are Labour-controlled—could allow for an increase in income next year below the rate of inflation. It would also be perfectly possible for his authority to set a charge, as have others—some of them Labour—lower than that implied by the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Neale: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is growing hope and expectation in Cornwall that he will cap the outrageous increase proposed by Cornwall county council, but that doubt about whether and when that may happen is causing considerable anxiety? The quicker my right hon. Friend can reach a decision, the sooner local and district authorities can plan for change, and the sooner local people will know what the new community charge will be.

Mr. Patten: I recognise my responsibilities towards charge payers, some of whom face outrageous bills. I cannot make a final decision until all local authorities have proposed budgets. We shall then present to the House any proposals that may be necessary. I assure my hon. Friend that we have the interests of community charge payers very much in mind.

Mr. Gould: Does the Secretary of State concede the overwhelming evidence, not least from Tory-controlled authorities and from many Conservative Members, that his projections of poll tax bills are complete and utter fiction? Does he agree that it would be better to make a clean breast of it and withdraw his figures than make vague threats about charge capping that can only confuse already hard-pressed local authority treasurers? If the Secretary of State must continue on his present course, will he at least publish the criteria on which he proposes to act, so that local authorities which have no confidence in the figures that he has presented so far may at least have some guidance on how they are expected to make their judgments?

Mr. Patten: We shall certainly be publishing criteria on charge capping, if we need to do so, before the hon. Gentleman publishes any statistics or figures about the roof tax. The hon. Gentleman may wish to discuss this point with the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. If some of the rumoured figures for community charge turn out to be true, it will imply a £3 billion increase in spending over the sum that we regard as reasonable. Is it the Opposition's view that we should provide £3 billion additional grant to local authorities in the coming year? That is the question that the Opposition must answer—£3 billion or not?

Tower of London

8. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people visited the Tower of London on Sunday mornings during 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The only part of the Tower of London currently open to the public on Sunday mornings is Tower wharf, for which admission is free. No statistics are compiled on visitors to the wharf, but it is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 visit the area on an average Sunday morning in summer, and a few hundred in winter. Many summer visitors go on to enter the main Tower precincts as paying visitors when it opens to the public at 2 pm.

Mr. Gregory: Is not it a national scandal that the Tower of London—a national treasure trove—is effectively closed on Sundays in winter, and is open only on Sunday afternoons in summer? Is my hon. Friend aware that many British citizens and overseas visitors want to see the Crown jewels and other artefacts in the Tower of London? When will he unlock the Tower, or are its treasures to be seen on Sundays only by the ravens and beefeaters, while the Tower remains closed to citizens and visitors alike?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that the practicalities and economics of earlier or all-day Sunday opening are currently under review. Sunday mornings have been regarded as providing, particularly in the summer, a much-needed break in the Tower's working routine—certainly for the warders and perhaps for the ravens, too. I confirm that the new chief executive of the royal agency is carefully examining the case for opening the Tower earlier on Sundays.

Mr. Tony Banks: As the Tower of London is still a very secure place, and given the Prime Minister's interest in security—judging from the preposterous Nicolae Ceausescu memorial gates that she has had erected at the end of Downing street—would not it be appropriate, if we are all concerned about the right hon. Lady's safety, to bang her up in the Tower and throw the key in the Thames?

Mr. Trippier: I have a better idea. I recommend that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) be locked in the Tower. That would increase the number of visitors. It would not deny those hon. Members the right to speak in debates because, when they spoke in the Tower, we could hear them down here.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a pity to waste a question on that sort of thing.

Local Government Finance

9. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimated cost for collecting the community charge and the uniform business rate.

Mr. Chope: The estimates for these costs remain at approximately £400 million and £40 million a year respectively.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister accept that the cost of collecting the community charge is even more in excess of the original figure put forward by the Government than the poll tax is in excess of the Government's estimate? Is the collection cost more than double the cost of collecting the rates in 1988-89? In my local authority the implication of that massive burden for poll tax payers is that £1 in £5 of expenditure will go on collecting this unfair tax. Might not the Government remove at least that unnecessary burden for which poll tax payers never voted?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The cost of collecting the community charge is 4p in the £1. Depending upon which local authority area people live in, the cost might be lower. The Government made available a generous amount of grant to help local authorities with the cost of collecting the community charge.

Mr. Dunn: Is not it true that all significant political parties in the House are now committed to the abolition of the rating system? Should not the cost of collecting any alternative, especially the roof tax, be taken into account when debating the matter? Would not the roof tax be a very expensive burden on home owners, especially in the south-east, given the high capital values of properties there?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The roof tax would be an administrative nightmare and it would be incredibly unpopular. It would be a most unfair tax on home improvements.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Minister take this opportunity to correct the figures given a few moments ago by the Secretary of State, who said that the poll tax would amount to £3 billion more than the assumed level of spending? Does the Minister accept the professional advice that the Government underestimated actual spending by

£2·5 billion and that, had they taken into account the true level of inflation, their figures might have been more sensible?

Will the Minister confirm that in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), he showed that he disagreed with the Secretary of State in relation to poll tax capping by saying:

"Local authorities decide the level of their charges, and are accountable directly to their residents for their decisions at the ballot box."—*[Official Report,* 16 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. *433.]*

Will he confirm that any plans for poll tax capping have been scrapped, or was his reply last Friday incorrect?

Mr. Chope: I agree with everything that my right hon. Friend has said on the subject. When the legislation was discussed in the House it was clear that we were taking a reserve power to cap high-spending authorities, particularly during the transitional period. In view of the spending plans of some local authorities, most hon. Members will agree that it is just as well that we included a capping power in the legislation. Nevertheless, it is for each local authority to decide in the first instance what its budgeted expenditure should be. The best local authorities, where there is a will to keep expenditure under control, are coming forward with low community charges and low increases in expenditure.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend believe that the cost of collecting the community charge would be any different if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment amended sections 100 and 101 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 so that district councils that intended to increase their expenditure excessively and tried to blame the Government for their profligacy could be capped if their expenditure was under £15 million a year?

Mr. Chope: I understand my hon. Friend's point. There is frustration because a number of district councils whose expenditure threshold is less than £15 million have proposed substantial increases in expenditure. I hope that my hon. Friend will not be slow to condemn them.

City Grants

10. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of city grants that have been made during the past two years for projects in West Yorkshire for each authority for *(a)* housing, *(b)* industrial and *(c)* commercial; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): Since May 1988, grants totalling more than £1·5 million have been approved for three housing, one industrial and two commercial projects in West Yorkshire. I am placing details of each project in the Library.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister talk to the chairman of Leeds development corporation about the way in which the corporation spends city grants, and in particular about his authoritarian and arrogant attitude which has put at risk an important development in Leeds—the opening of a hotel on a crucial site in terms of the city's overall development? Will the Minister hold such a meeting and ask the chairman of Leeds development corporation to talk yet again to Holiday Inn hotels about grants and allow that important development for the city to go ahead?

Mr. Moynihan: I can do more than that. Apart from ensuring that the chairman of Leeds development corporation knows exactly what the hon. Gentleman said this afternoon, I can inform the hon. Gentleman that this morning we were in touch with the chairman's office. The chairman will be happy to have a meeting in person with the hon. Gentleman and any other colleagues who have an interest in the project.

Mr. Batiste: Although I welcome my hon. Friend's statement, which demonstrates the Government's support for West Yorkshire, may I ask him to monitor carefully over the next two years the evidence for the take-up of grants across the region, particularly those that are designed to improve the housing stock? Is there evidence of home owners becoming reluctant to improve their homes as the horrendous implications of the Labour party's roof tax become more widely known?

Mr. Moynihan: On my hon. Friend's latter point, I am confident that that will be the case. We shall continue to monitor closely the impact of city grants on the development of jobs and the number of new homes coming on to the market, both of which are key criteria when assessing any application for grant.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) about housing was abysmal. There is a dramatic shortage of rented accommodation in West Yorkshire in particular but throughout the country in general. That has been caused by high mortgage interest rates. If there have to be city grants, will the Minister ensure that more of the money is targeted on new housing for rent, at rents which people in West Yorkshire in particular but throughout the country in general can afford to pay? There is a great need for such housing. I hope that the Minister will address that serious problem.

Mr. Moynihan: The record of city grants for housing is excellent, with 11,000 homes being built nationwide. I regret the hon. Gentleman's introductory remarks. If he had concentrated on my answer, he would have heard that, of the six projects in West Yorkshire, two are commercial, one is industrial and three concentrate on housing.

Pollution Inspectorate

11. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for how many works each Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspector is responsible.

Mr. Trippier: There are some 10,750 works subject to control by HMIP and 76 field inspectors. Work programmes for field inspectors are set annually according to management's assessment of regulation requirements and priorites.

Mr. Wardell: As the Minister will know, many of those registered works are highly dangerous in terms of potential emissions to air. He will know of the two Rechem plants at Pontypool and Southampton and the Cleanaway plant at Ellesmere Port. Will he make sure that HMIP is no longer under-resourced and that there is independent

monitoring at HMIP laboratories so that the public, industry and local authorities have confidence that materials such as polychlorinated biphenyls are incinerated by the correct temperature and that no dioxins are formed?

Mr. Trippier: First, I have absolute confidence in HMIP. I am very proud that the Government set up that inspectorate and I find it deplorable that the Opposition lose no opportunity to talk it down and sell it short because of the work that it is trying to do. The integrated pollution control proposals in the Environmental Protection Bill will meet the concerns of the hon. Gentleman. They give additional responsibilities and duties to HMIP, and I know that the inspectorate is up to the task. It is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that a business such as Rechem, which is fully licensed and approved and regularly visited by HMIP inspectors, is not doing its job properly.

Mr. Wardell: I did not say that.

Mr. Trippier: No, but the hon. Gentleman gave that impression. As the company has been properly licensed and approved and regularly inspected, I can give that confidence to the hon. Gentleman and to the House.

Mr. Churchill: Following the environmental catastrophe involving the conflagration of millions of car tyres in Canada, will my hon. Friend issue instructions to Her Majesty's inspectors immediately to reassess critically any similar environmental disasters waiting to happen?

Mr. Trippier: I shall certainly draw that to the attention of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution which I am sure has looked carefully at the appalling incident in Canada. My hon. Friend is right to draw the House's attention to that. The very tough measures in the Environmental Protection Bill will cover that contingency, but I am happy to draw my hon. Friend's specific point to the attention of the inspectorate.

Pharmaceutical Waste

12. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received with regard to the disposal of pharmaceutical waste.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): My right hon. Friend has received many representations about the disposal of clinical waste.

Mr. Livsey: Why have the Government applied for a licence to dump pharmaceutical waste in the North sea in contravention of the 1987 agreement that dumping in the North sea would be phased out by December 1989? What does he think of the ad-hoc committee on dumping in the North sea voting by 13 to one against the British decision to dump in the North sea?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food grants some licences for the disposal of liquid industrial waste in the North sea. That includes some waste arising from the production of pharmaceuticals. The waste is carefully monitored and is not toxic in the sea. We are pursuing land-based alternatives as an option in line with our obligations under the North sea conference.

Local Government Finance

13. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to maximise the take-up of community charge rebates.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government have recently mounted an effective public information campaign using television, radio, newspapers and magazines. This has been designed to ensure that all those entitled to benefit or transitional relief who need to apply for those reductions are aware of the action they need to take.

Mr. Hayward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best rebate that the residents of Bristol could have is a decision by Bristol and Avon councils not to impose a community charge 71 per cent. above the Government's estimated figure, producing probably the highest poll tax of any authority in the country? Should not it be rate-capped immediately?

Mr. Patten: I very much sympathise with the first part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question. It is intolerable for some Labour councils and councillors who purport to be concerned about their community charge payers to propose indefensible increases in spending and in community charges which will clobber those about whom they pretend to care.

Mr. Pike: Is the Minister aware that however successful his campaign may be in spreading the word about the availability of rebates, many thousands of people will not get the rebates to which they are entitled, many thousands of those who get them will, in any event, be far worse off than they are now and many millions of people who are not entitled to rebates will suffer poverty and deprivation as a result of the poll tax? Will the Government give the poll tax the chop before they get the chop for introducing it?

Mr. Patten: The community charge benefits are more generous than those that were available under domestic rates. That is a major reason why the initial research on the community charge in Scotland suggests that low-income households are paying a smaller proportion of their total incomes by way of community charge than they paid in domestic rates. The rebates now available are more generous than those available under domestic rates.

Mr. Ralph Howell: As it is a main plank of our policy that as many people as possible should stand on their own two feet, how does the Minister square the fact that in 1939, 3 million people were in receipt of rates rebates, that today over 5 million people receive it and that when the community charge comes into operation, 11 million people will be deemed to be unable to pay the full charge?

Mr. Patten: The main reason for those changes is that, thank heaven, we are more generous today than we were in 1939 at providing greater assistance to those in lower-income households. Another reason for the increase in the past three years is that the community charge will be paid by everybody. Everybody will make a contribution. That is fair.

Mr. Cartwright: How does the right hon. Gentleman justify the fact that the level of personal savings at which

entitlement to poll tax benefit is lost is exactly the same for a married couple as for a single person? How can that be fair?

Mr. Patten: For the same reasons as apply to other benefits. The issue has been taken up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer from time to time.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that although we are widely publicising community charge benefit eligibility, many people find difficulty in discovering whether they are eligible to be assessed? As they are also having trouble understanding the bureaucratic forms, will my right hon. Friend ensure that we deal with such matters early so that people's anxieties are reduced and they learn at an early stage whether they are eligible?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It was with those objectives in mind that we launched the advertising campaign, which was criticised by some Opposition Members, although I think that even they now concede that it was effective. I hope that it results in take-up being increased and ensures that people understand the benefits system more clearly.

Home Valuations

17. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the valuation assessments of homes which form part of, or house, commercial undertakings, both part time and full time.

Mr. Chope: The basis of valuation of composite hereditaments under the new non-domestic rating system is set out in schedule 6 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The rateable value is derived from the open market rent obtainable for that part of the property used for non-domestic purposes. The domestic accommodation is not valued.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that hotel and boarding house proprietors are concerned about their assessment because they will be paying not only the poll tax but the business tax? Is he aware that that is bound to affect tourism, especially in the north-west of England and particularly in my home town of Southport?

Mr. Chope: I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's logic. In his part of the world, in Sefton, business rates on average will fall by about 20 per cent. as a result of the new system. In his constituency, each individual adult will have to pay a community charge. What is unfair about that? It is reasonable that every adult—guest house proprietors and others—should pay some contribution towards the cost of running local government services.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is not it strange for a Liberal Member to complain about valuation when it has long been Liberal policy to have capital valuation and a local income tax? Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) would have the worst of both worlds if we adopted Liberal policy?

Mr. Chope: I understand my hon. Friend's point, although I think that it is Liberal party policy to have just a local income tax. If there were just that tax in Southport, the bill for a single adult on average earnings would probably be about £600.

Opencast Mining

18. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many proposals for opencast mining have been referred to his Department on appeal; and how many appeals have been upheld.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since April 1987, the first date from which comprehensive data are available, 57 opencast mining appeals have been under consideration with the Secretary of State. During that time 21 appeals have been upheld and 19 dismissed. Seventeen appeals have yet to be decided.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister aware that the British Coal Opencast Executive has submitted an application to mine 350 acres on a site in my constituency which is surrounded by housing and is a few hundred yards from the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent, the 13th largest city in the United Kingdom? Will the hon. Gentleman review the guidelines by which he judges appeals to take into account the green environment and the human environment as well as the impact of such proposals on constituents' lives?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot comment on a specific application. As one of those responsible for negotiating the present mineral guidelines when I was Minister with responsibility for coal, I am content with the fact that a balance is struck between environmental factors and the needs of coal mining. I should have thought that an environmental impact assessment would be bound to be requested as part of this and any similar application.

Waste Incinerator Plants

20. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on proposals for new waste incinerator plants under consideration.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from hon. Members, local planning authorities and members of the public concerning proposals for waste incinerators in north-east England.

Mr. Steinberg: Incineration of waste is a useful means of disposal, especially in terms of combined heat and power, but environmental regulations must be carefully considered. Does the hon. Gentleman agree on the need for a national and regional strategy on the incineration of waste?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can go part way to help the hon. Gentleman. We have agreed to set up a linked public inquiry system to consider at least two outstanding applications for the construction of incinerators in the north-east. That will help the inspector and the public to gain a regional dimension. The inquiry will also be able to consider safety and technical competence.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend accept that we do not want regional indicators? This matter is far too important for that. We should have a national debate and national policy. Does my hon. Friend agree that to hive off this matter for adjudication by an inspector, rather than for the Government to come forward with proper proposals, is to shirk one's responsibility?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend will agree that, as this country produces 2 million tonnes of hazardous waste a year, we must find ways of disposing of it or treating it safely. I think that my hon. Friend's question strayed outside planning matters. I repeat that, for the part of the world that he represents, we shall take a regional view through a linked public inquiry.

Housing Association (Rents)

21. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average rent increase for housing association properties in 1988-89.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available in the form required. Increases for housing association tenancies re-registered with rent officers during the first half of 1989 were equivalent to an annual rate of 8 per cent.

Mr. Howarth: Does the Secretary of State accept that, far from achieving the stated objectives of the Housing Act 1988, it costs the Government more to produce housing that is less affordable?

Mr. Patten: No, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's proposition. We are able to produce more houses with the same amount of money because we have attracted private investment, too. I am delighted that one consequence is that the Housing Corporation programme is increasing substantially.

River Pollution

23. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the National Rivers Authority is making in regulating the use of rivers and controlling pollution.

Mr. Trippier: The National Rivers Authority has been active in all areas since it fully assumed its responsibilities on 1 September 1989. As part of its day-to-day work on pollution control, the authority has successfully prosecuted a number of offenders. The authority has embarked on a number of reviews of policy areas, including the discharge consent system, and it will carry out a national survey of river quality in 1990.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that that is an encouraging beginning for the National Rivers Authority? Is he aware, for example, that before the creation of the NRA, the Thames water authority authorised discharge from its sewage stations and polluted the River Gade in my constituency? Is not the NRA a good sign that at long last some action will be taken on those problems?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Yes, it is encouraging. The most important measure introduced in the Water Act 1989 was the separation of the poacher and gamekeeper functions. We now have what I consider to be the strongest enforcement agency in Europe.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the private notice question.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order arising from questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am taking the private notice question. Points of order come after Question Time.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the private notice question.

Mr. Gould: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) want to ask the private notice question?

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *rose*——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking it. Back-Bench Members know perfectly well that I have allowed a private notice question, which is an extension of Question Time. We have not finished Question Time. I have called the private notice question, and if it is not dealt with now it will be cancelled.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking points of order. I call Mr. George Robertson. He should put his question now or not do it at all.

Mr. Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Gould: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. George Howarth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I order the five hon. Members who are standing to sit down.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order arising from Question Time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking it. I call Mr. George Robertson.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Bryan Gould.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. George Robertson. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It was a mistake. I call the hon. Member for Hamilton. Does the hon. Member wish to ask his private notice question or not?

Foreign Affairs Council

3.33 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Dublin yesterday.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary represented us at yesterday's meeting. Discussion focused mainly on Germany, the CSCE and South Africa.

On Germany, Minister Genscher gave a very detailed account of the prospects for German unification and gave assurances, which were widely welcomed, that the Federal Government were ready to consult their partners and allies on external aspects of the process.

Against the background of the dramatic changes in eastern Europe, the Ministers discussed the important role of the CSCE process, and in particular the summit meeting to be held later this year, in fostering co-operation throughout Europe. The Ministers issued a statement on this.

On South Africa, my right hon. Friend proposed that the Community should respond to the important steps taken by Mr. de Klerk by lifting the ban on new investment, which is implemented voluntarily in our case. As there was no agreement to take such a step collectively, the United Kingdom reserved its right to act nationally.

Statements on the following subjects were also issued: the code of conduct for Community companies operating in South Africa; Namibian independence; the worrying situation in the horn of Africa; the extension of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories; and progress towards a settlement of the Cambodia problem.

Copies of all statements issued are being placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Robertson: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for this chance to cross-examine the Minister on this vitally important meeting. Whatever gloss the right hon. Gentleman may put on the other subjects at the Council meeting, does not the outcome represent a further miserable humiliation for Britain, leaving us yet again isolated and derided as the last friend of apartheid? At a time when united economic pressures have just begun to produce some movement towards reform in South Africa, what conceivable reason is there for Britain, alone among all our allies and partners, to relax those pressures before the real reform takes place?

Does the Prime Minister and those who are forced, against their own judgment, to speak for her not recognise the perversity of her position? She is reneging on her own commitments, freely entered into, to keep sanctions in place at least until the state of emergency is lifted, until all political prisoners are set free and, as the Commonwealth communiqué said, until "change is irreversibly secured".

If he can, will the Minister of State explain how, when the Prime Minister told the House yesterday that our investment sanctions would be lifted come what may, at the selfsame time in Dublin the Foreign Secretary was offering to delay the decision? Who actually speaks for Britain, or is it again the case of the messenger not getting the message?

Finally, yesterday the Prime Minister sought to bolster her feeble case on investment sanctions by quoting BMW South Africa. Will the Minister now confirm that that investment did not come from Germany?

Mr. Waldegrave: The last point is the most easily disposed of because the Prime Minister herself made it clear yesterday that internal profits were being reinvested. However, that makes the point that it is childish to talk about an investment ban when some companies are massively expanding their operations in South Africa.

Our argument seems extremely strong. I am not sure that the Opposition yet understand that the measures taken by the Community on 15 September 1986 were explicit. They reaffirmed the urgent need for national dialogue across the line of colour, politics and religion in South Africa. They urged that, since the South African Government were then taking no steps in that direction, certain measures should be undertaken until the dialogue was launched. The dialogue is now launched, as all sides in South Africa have made perfectly clear, and will begin soon. Therefore, the reason for those sanctions—not all sanctions, but those sanctions—has fallen. In the hon. Gentleman's terms, they have been successful. We are talking about the 1986 measures, which were under discussion yesterday.

With respect to the hon. Gentleman, who seldom makes silly points, he made a silly point about the alleged difference between the Prime Minister's position and that of the Foreign Secretary. There is no difference. The Foreign Secretary made the point yesterday to colleagues that if there was a will to consensus, we would be happy to find consensus around the strict letter of the law of what was agreed in 1986. However, there was clearly no will for that, except for Portugal, which has supported us throughout. Therefore, there was no purpose in pursuing that argument.

The argument remains the same. If the hon. Gentleman's party, which is committed to mandatory comprehensive sanctions now—that is its position in its policy document—believes that that is the way to respond to the steps that de Klerk has taken, it is totally out of touch with reality.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Can my right hon. Friend explain or account for the sanctions nostalgia that seems to infect the Opposition Benches? Is it not now plain common sense to accept that South Africa has entered into a period of transition, and, we hope, negotiations leading to a proper democracy in that country and the rejection of the hated apartheid system? Does it not follow obviously from that that not less but more investment is needed—in particular, to help the black communities, which have had a very poor deal so far, to develop? Can my right hon. Friend explain why Opposition Members and others are so determined to do down efforts for reform and to do down the black community?

Mr. Waldegrave: I genuinely find it difficult to understand the Labour party's policy, which has nothing to do with trying to produce a particular outcome in South Africa. It has something to do with the internal politics of the Labour party. It is not an example of a sensible policy but a matter of declaratory emotional statement. Those of us who are committed to trying to produce change in South Africa should be providing incentives for that change. We are not saying, "Sweep away all sanctions."

We are saying, "Remove some sanctions to give an incentive for further progress." I agree with my right hon. Friend about the necessity to develop the economy of South Africa—the best way of dissolving the apartheid system which, among other things, rests on a great deal of state control of industry.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Minister explain how it serves British interests for this country to be identified with the interests of the South African regime of the past rather than the South African regime of the future and to divide the European Community in the process?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are identified with the steps taken on both sides, first by Mr. de Klerk, which have been welcomed by a wide grouping of opinion in South Africa, and we welcome the steps that many African leaders, including Mr. Mandela and Mr. Sisulu, have taken to respond. We do not think that our policy should be dictated by one group in South Africa, any more than their policy should be dictated by us. We do, however, believe that it is rational to seek a response to the event.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Did my right hon. Friend discuss in Dublin with his European fellow Foreign Ministers whether they intended to invite Nelson Mandela to visit them? In particular, did he consider asking Nelson Mandela to visit England after his visit to Stockholm and his discussions with Mr. Tambo so that we can be certain that our policy is co-ordinated with his in dismantling apartheid?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is well known that Mr. Mandela has said in public that he has received an invitation and is considering it; he has said that an invitation from the British Prime Minister is a very serious matter. It is no news to Mr. Mandela and no news to us that we disagree on this point.

The House has yet to get an answer on the Labour party's policy, although I asked for it last week. We still do not know whether Labour Members believe that mandatory comprehensive sanctions are what is now required. If Labour Members believe that that is what is now required, as against a response to what Mr. de Klerk is doing, they are totally out of touch.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Minister realise that the unilateral decision by Britain on lifting sanctions will undoubtedly mean that the Prime Minister of Britain will again be seen as giving aid and comfort to the leaders of the South African regime at a time when the other European countries simply refuse to take the same step? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why we should disagree with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who said that yesterday's decision will mean that Britain is once again isolated over sanctions? Was not the former Conservative Prime Minister speaking the truth? Perhaps the Minister would be saying the same if he was not the Foreign Office apologist for the occupant of No. 10.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are plenty of examples of countries in the European Community taking what they believe to be their national position over matters. It will be within the memory of the House that during the Falklands war the Republic of Ireland chose to end unilaterally its sanctions against Argentina. There are plenty of precedents.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that mandatory sanctions remain in place and that voluntary sanctions are entirely a matter for companies—that it is for companies to decide whether they wish to trade in South Africa? If that is so, why do we need to say anything at all?

Mr. Waldegrave: The reason why we need to say something is that we issued guidance. Thankfully, we have no legal capacity to direct the investment of British companies, although I expect that the Labour party regrets that. We agreed to draw to the attention of companies our wish that they should not invest, and it seems a suitable step to take to revise that guidance, and, after my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has reported yesterday's discussions to the Cabinet, that is what we are likely to do.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Minister is misleading the House. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister cannot mislead the House.

Dr. Owen: Surely the Minister accepts that the decision taken in the Council on 27 October 1986 is binding on Her Majesty's Government. It is voluntary in respect of companies because, under British law, they cannot be bound by a decision—and that was always made clear. However, the British Government are bound and cannot unilaterally disavow a decision taken by the Council of Ministers. It is equally unusual for the British Government to do so when the Prime Minister, on 22 October last year, made it clear in Kuala Lumpur that she accepted that the first steps required the unbanning of all political parties —which has been done—but also the lifting of the state of emergency and the freeing of political prisoners. She made it quite clear that only when those necessary steps had been taken would it be right to lift some of the measures imposed by the international community. Surely the Government are acting unlawfully.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are two separate matters involved here. The right hon. Gentleman should be careful in his use of language. He has failed to understand the position, which is a little surprising for a former Foreign Secretary. There is no question but that we are within the law of the Community in choosing, after consultation with our colleagues—that is our obligation—to follow our national interests. I can ask my officials to help to educate the right hon. Gentleman in this matter. The issue of the Commonwealth measures is not at present under question. We are talking about the 1986 measures that were specifically aimed at producing national dialogue. We believe, and Opposition Members do not deny it, that national dialogue is about to begin. That means that those measures fall.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we in this country do not need to take any lessons from the European Community on economic sanctions? Is it not a fact that since 1986, when the agreement was reached, France has doubled its imports from South Africa and its exports have gone up by 20 per cent., Germany has trebled its imports from South Africa

[Mr. John Carlisle]

and its exports have doubled? Do not those countries agree with us that if we are to defeat apartheid it will be by economic growth, not by economic sanctions?

Mr. Waldegrave: What my hon. Friend says is correct. All South Africa's principal trading partners have increased their trade to South Africa in recent years. In the words of the *Times* leader of today, there is a great deal of humbug about this subject.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Even when he tries to respond today, the Minister is in an uncomfortable position. He knows that, rather than greeting the release of Mandela with some sort of humility, because she played very little part in it, the Prime Minister over-reacted and immediately sought to reward the people who had imprisoned that man for 27 years. It is rather perverse that we are again isolated from not only our European partners, but the rest of the world.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman, who has such a fine record in trying to bring the parties in the middle east to the table, would surely not want to argue against us now when we seek to reward not the people who imprisoned Mandela, but those who let him out and are producing new policies in South Africa. They have said that they will put the building blocks and pillars of apartheid into the negotiations and are willing to enter into constitutional talks to bring about fundamental change in South Africa. If we are not to reward those steps by taking a step-by-step approach, the hon. Gentleman's approach in the middle east is completely forgotten.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does my right hon. Friend agree that sanctions are no more likely to help Mr. de Klerk in his quest than they would help Mr. Gorbachev in his?

Mr. Waldegrave: The parallel with Mr. Gorbachev two or three years ago is fair, I think. Little had changed constitutionally by then; indeed, little has changed even now, but we were right to respond to what he was trying to do. As well as welcoming the statesmanlike and sensible remarks that Mr. Mandela and other leaders are making in South Africa, we should try to add power to those on the white side who are leading the way towards dialogue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. I shall allow two more questions from either side, and then move on. We are to have a Standing Order No. 20 application and an important debate.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that yesterday the Prime Minister sought to justify her position by saying that new investment was going into South Africa to BMW? Is he aware that her economic advisers have seriously misled her, that that investment was internally generated and that, in any event, it began in 1983? Since the right hon. Lady is getting such bad economic advice—and it is clear that she is getting bad political advice—would she not do better to take the advice of Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison and had many hours of discussion with Mr. de Klerk before being released, instead of listening to the wild men on the Conservative Back Benches?

Mr. Waldegrave: The disagreement with the ANC over sanctions has been long-standing. I suspect that Mr. Mandela would be as astonished if we reversed our position on these matters overnight as we would be if he reversed his. The disagreement is not crucial; we are discussing tactics. I think that I can persuade any open-minded person—there seem to be few such people among the Opposition—of the need to make a symbolic but practical response to the brave steps that Mr. de Klerk has taken.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the Government's reversal of their policy on new investment in South Africa is a welcome and positive response to the positive moves in South Africa to bring about the reforms that we all want? When the state of emergency has gone, and when the Group Areas Act and the Population Registrations Act —the twin pillars of apartheid—have been repealed, will my right hon. Friend speculate on whether the rest of the sanctions now imposed by Britain on South Africa will also be removed?

Mr. Waldegrave: When the day for which we are all working—that of the total destruction of apartheid—comes, we hope that there will be unanimous agreement to do away with all sanctions. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right—as long, that is, as the Labour party is not still stuck in some 1968 position paper.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Does the Minister agree that the reason why there has been change in South Africa is that sanctions have worked?

Mr. Waldegrave: The underlying pressures for change in South Africa are far more formidable than the largely symbolic sanctions that are now in place—as witness the Labour party, which has argued again and again that they are minor. I notice that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is an honest man, agrees. So it cannot be argued that those sanctions brought about fundamental change, which is presumably why the Labour party still wants comprehensive and mandatory sanctions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Did the Foreign Secretary tell his European counterparts that it was pure hypocrisy on their part to refuse to pull out from sanctions, given that sanctions are being widely ignored in at least five other EEC member states? Will he invite M. Jacques Delors to initiate a special inquiry to find out exactly why West Germany has emerged as the largest trading partner of South Africa, despite the German Foreign Minister's appeal to us to boycott trade with South Africa? Is not that a typical example of Ministers agreeing to a policy that they are blatently ignoring in their own selfish interests?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that there is a big difference between those in the Community and elsewhere whose main policy on this matter seems declaratory—they pass motions, but that is about all—and those who are trying to engage in practical action to help to bring about change in South Africa. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is a diplomatic and tactful man and did not use the language that my hon. Friend mentioned, but I am sure that the facts were made clear.

Social Fund (High Court Judgment)

3.54 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications of the High Court judgment this morning regarding the budget limit of the social fund."

This is an important matter, because the court has ruled that the Government's budget limit on the relief of poverty is unlawful. The court has thus invalidated the centrepiece of the Fowler reviews of 1988. That is very important, because it is clear that tens of thousands of some of the poorest and most vulnerable families in the country have now been illegally denied their essential entitlements because of the unreasonable rigidity and inflexibility of the Government's approach.

It is a specific matter, because the court's judgment concerns specific cases. A family with seven children who moved from a three-bedroomed to a five-bedroomed council house when the parents were reconciled after separation were illegally refused a grant which forced their daughter aged 15 to share a single bed with their five-year-old girl. A 19-year-old who was forced to leave home by his father's violence was illegally refused a grant to buy furniture for a council flat.

The matter demands urgent consideration for two reasons. First, the High Court made it clear that the Government's power to withhold payments because the budget is exhausted is illegal. The Government must now immediately remove the budget cap that they have wrongly placed on the essential needs payments for families in poverty. Those payments were running at £400 million a year in 1987. They were cut under the social fund to only £140 million last year, and there has been only a paltry £3 million increase this year. That is why the social fund refusal rates are now running at an iniquitous 50 to 60 per cent. and why the court found that a restrictive budget is incompatible with the proper exercise of discretion.

Secondly, the Government must now undertake to recompense retrospectively all those families whom the judgment shows have been illegally cheated out of their entitlements in the past.

For these precise and fair reasons, I beg leave to move the Adjournment of the House so that what is now shown to be a fundamental flaw in the Government's social security policy can be fully debated and an injustice put right.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications of the High Court judgment this morning regarding the budget limit of the social fund."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with concern to what the hon. Member has said, but, as he knows, I have to decide whether his application should be given precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirement of the Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.58 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, during Environment Question Time, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), revealed in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) that he knew that my hon. Friend had registered a second home in Wandsworth on the poll tax register. That raises two important questions: how did the Minister come by that information; and, in the light of possible security implications, was the Minister wise or justified in divulging that information to the House?

On the first question, it is worth bearing in mind that my hon. Friend's Wandsworth address is not published in any public directory; it is simply not on the public record. The only way in which the Minister could have known that the address on the poll tax register was a second home was by having access to information that is specifically excluded from the public register. Practice note No. 6 specifically makes it clear that the register will use the name and initial and the address, but no courtesy titles or Christian or other names and will not indicate the type or amount of community charge or show any other information.

We need to ask the Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, first to explain how he came by that information. Did he scour the poll tax register, and on what basis did he believe that my hon. Friend had an address in that borough? If that is not the case, was the information drawn to his attention, and, if so, by whom? Were civil servants involved in looking for the information and in drawing it to his attention? How did he know information which was specifically excluded from the public register? How did he know that my hon. Friend has registered a second home when he has not registered a first?

On the second matter——

Mr. Speaker: I urge the hon. Member to be brief—*[Interruption.]* Order. This is a point of order to me, but it does not seem to have anything to do with me.

Mr. Gould: I shall proceed to the second matter and I shall deal with it briefly, Mr. Speaker.

We need to know from the Minister what concern he showed for security when he decided to divulge that information to the House. I think that we are all aware that we are under constant instruction from the Serjeant at Arms to be very careful about the way in which we reveal information about our private addresses and movements. I think that the House has been left with the uneasy suspicion that the Minister paid no heed to those considerations, and that he wanted to use the information simply to make a cheap party-political point.

We need to know whether this was an instance of irresponsible free enterprise on the part of a junior Minister, or whether it was part of the responsible consideration of a Minister, taking into account all the factors that I have mentioned. I ask you to rule on the question, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps to persuade the Minister to enlighten the House and to explain his actions.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot rule on such matters. I do not think that any of those questions was directed at me.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can respond, albeit more briefly. As the House will know—and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was entirely right to make this point—there is no public access to the full register. There is, on the other hand, public access to extracts from the register, which give addresses, names and initials of those who have registered, street by street. That information is available for Wandsworth—a borough in which, as the hon. Gentleman will know, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is well known and widely celebrated.

Secondly, it is open to every hon. Member to apply for confidentiality, just as every citizen may apply. There is a box on the form in which we can place a tick and so apply for it. I understand that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) did not do that—*[Interruption.]* In that case, the hon. Gentleman's argument is with the community charge registration officer in Wandsworth. He —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Patten: Thirdly, my hon. Friend did not give the hon. Gentleman's address. He said that he lived in Wandsworth.

Fourthly, although it is true that my hon. Friend referred to the hon. Gentleman having a second home in Wandsworth, that was not a difficult thing to deduce because the hon. Gentleman said, in his question, that he was subject to the community charge in Coventry, where I understand that his name appears, whether or not with security advice, in the telephone directory. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a very heavy day ahead of us, and I hope that this will not go on too long.

Mr. Patten: I think that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East is lucky to live in Wandsworth and to be registered there; and instead of being cross about it he should have expressed his gratitude.

Finally, the hon. Member for Dagenham expressed concern about security. Next time that newspapers print details of the community charges paid by Ministers, including the Secretary of State for the Environment, in comparison with the rates, as they have already done, I look forward to the hon. Gentleman making a fuss about security.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to reflect on whether there is any possibility of a point of order on which I can rule. The matter that has been raised is not one for me to consider; the House could deal with it properly by means of a motion. I will hear points of order on any other subject.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to reconsider—and this is a matter for you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that it is not a matter for me. It relates to the content of an answer to a question about which an explanation has been given. I will hear points of order on a different matter.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you will not make a ruling now, may I ask you to consider the matter later today? The central issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) does not concern me; it is reasonably well known that my name is in the Coventry telephone book, and that I live in the area that I represent. The central issue is the fact that the former leader of Wandsworth borough council—now a junior Minister at the Department of the Environment—can come to the Chamber and announce the details of where any hon. Member lives.

You are responsible for order in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think that you should give serious consideration to where the information has come from. Has it come from the Fees Office? Has it come from civil servants at the Department of the Environment? Is it the result of a leak from Wandsworth borough council, in which the Minister still has some associates? Hon. Members should not worry about me: I shall manage. They should think about the principle that is at stake.

Mr. Speaker: I do not deny that this is a matter of concern, but it is not a point of order for me. I frequently may not agree personally with what is said at Question Time.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I trust that it is on a different matter.

Mr. MacKay: It is on a different matter, Mr. Speaker—one on which I believe that you can guide us, and with which you can deal directly. Can you confirm that points of order arising from Question Time should not be taken then but should be raised immediately after Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: We have been over this ground many times. Let me repeat, in case the hon. Gentleman was not here on those occasions, that if a matter requiring the attention of the Chair is raised at any time, it is dealt with at that time. That may happen during a debate, at Question Time or at any other time. I always take points of order if they require urgent attention, but most do not.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid that it relates to what was said by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). Are you able to give any guidance about his proper course of action? It strikes me as unfair that he should be picked out by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. Should not my hon. Friend disclose the names of all Opposition Members who are living in Wandsworth? Personally, I thought that they were a bunch of dumbos who did not care what the local authority——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is clearly trying to continue discussion on the same subject. I will take points of order only on different matters.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I find it extraordinary that the Secretary of State should speak on behalf of the Under-Secretary of State. Surely it would be simplest for the Under-Secretary to go to the Dispatch Box, say that he has made an error, withdraw what he has said about my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)—and whatever he may have said about anyone else in this regard—and apologise to the House. The Under-Secretary could clear up the matter in two minutes: I appeal to him to make a statement.

Mr. Speaker: Clearly that is not a point of order for me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I make it clear that I shall not take any more points of order on that matter. I will take a point of order on a different matter.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know of my great concern about the Register of Members' Interests and Labour Members. When a Labour Member chooses to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said that I would take no further points of order on the earlier matter. I thought that the hon. Gentleman had a point of order on a different subject to draw to my attention.

Mr. Ashby: My point of order concerns the Register of Members' Interests, Mr. Speaker. I have been most concerned for some time about Labour Members and the Register of Members' Interests. When an hon. Member chooses to live in the lowest-rated borough in London——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is cheating. He must not do that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall only take a point of order on a different matter.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order concerns a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If it concerns a matter of privilege, the hon. Gentleman must write to me.

Mr. Ewing: But I want to raise the matter on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on a different matter?

Mr. Ewing No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Then I will not take it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members who are on their feet please to sit down. I will not take any further points of order on the earlier matter.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that it concerns an entirely different matter. You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that a cowardly bomb attack was made on two members of the armed forces in Leicester yesterday afternoon. I am sure that you share with me an immense sense of relief that neither of those individuals, nor any others in the city of Leicester was injured. The incident highlights the continuing bombing campaign by the IRA on the mainland of Britain and the need for continuing vigilance on the part of all members of the public to ensure that such incidents do not occur again.

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

I am concerned, as is my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), that the Secretary of State for Defence did not think it necessary to come to the House today to make a statement. Have any inquiries been made of you, Mr. Speaker, with a view to facilitating such a statement being made to the House this afternoon?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House regrets such incidents, but the question of a statement is not a matter for me.

Mr. Ashby: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. Earlier the hon. Gentleman—inadvertently, I am sure—misled me. I would rather move on to the next business.

BILL PRESENTED

CHANNEL TUNNEL ACT 1987 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Robert Adley, supported by Mr. Robert Hicks, Dr. John Marek, Sir Gerard Vaughan, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr Peter Rost, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Mr. Mark Wolfson, presented a Bill to repeal section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 77.]

Mr. Speaker: Ten-minute rule motion.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the point of order that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wants to raise on a totally different matter?

Mr. Simon Hughes: Yes. As a result of events earlier this afternoon, it now appears that there is no protection for right hon. and hon. Members—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not do that. He must not rise to his feet and, when asked whether he is raising a different matter, say yes but then proceed with the matter that he wanted to raise before. That is not honourable conduct.

Mr. Hughes *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will not hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order, unless it is on a different matter.

Mr. Hughes: My point of order goes far wider, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not mind; I am not taking it. The hon. Gentleman has not given me any confidence that he will stick to his word. I am sorry.

Mr. Hughes *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I ask hon. Gentlemen to resume their seats.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member to resume his seat.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I order the hon. Member to resume his seat.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: One more chance. I order the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat, otherwise I shall be forced to take action which I shall regret.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member must sit down.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I order the hon. Member—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *resumed his seat.*

Rape in Marriage (Offence)

4.14 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make rape in marriage a criminal offence in England and Wales.

Rape within marriage is already a crime within case law in Scotland, as was recently confirmed by a judge there. My Bill seeks to extend that to England and Wales. There is an anomaly in the law in England and Wales dating back to the 1650s. The law is outdated. It does not reflect the present reality of marriage where a wife is not a husband's chattel; nor does it reflect society's attitude to rape, which is viewed as a crime to be punished without exception because it is a brutal sexual assault.

I want to give the House a couple of examples. This week I received a letter from a woman who wrote:

"This is the man whose wife knows everything there is to know about him, including how hard he can punch."

The other letter was published in a national newspaper earlier this week:

"accusations thrown at me nightly . . . This did not hinder my husband from forcing me to have sex which I did not want. It isn't long before love turns to fear."

John Tilley, a former Member for Lambeth, Central, raised the issue in the House in 1983 when he said:

"The circumstances in which rape is legal occur when the victim is the wife of her assailant. However unwilling the woman is, however fierce her resistance,"—

I might add, however brutal the advances—

"her assailant has only to produce a marriage certificate to escape all legal blame or punishment."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1983; Vol. 40, c. 185.]

That cannot be right. A wife is not her husband's property. She has rights over her own body. Just because at one time she says, "I do," that should not deny her the legal protection later to say, "I do not wish to."

The legal anomaly applies particularly to women who are separated but not yet divorced. Their husbands, soon to be ex-husbands, can rape them without legal penalty. A survey of 1,000 women by Middlesex polytechnic showed that one in eight women were forced to have sex with their husbands despite clearly refusing. Another survey by Women Against Rape in London showed that one in seven were raped within marriage. A "World in Action" survey produced similar results.

Other countries, as well as Scotland, have abolished a husband's immunity from penalty. Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France, Israel, 18 states of the United States and three territories in Australia have decided that immunity is no longer appropriate.

The Government are stalling on the issue. Following the announcement that I was to present a Bill on the subject, they responded by saying that they were referring the matter to the Law Commission. In the Home Office Minister's statement of 12 February, he said that the Law Commission would produce

"a working paper for consultation early next year. The Government will consider the conclusions most carefully."

"Consider most carefully" is parliamentary jargon for saying that it will be two or three years before they legislate. That means that many women will be unprotected by the law in the meantime.

The Government have three reasons for not acting immediately. The Minister said in the statement:

"The question raises issues about the nature of marriage, and about violence in the domestic context, beyond the scope of the criminal law."

I cannot believe that violence in the domestic context is beyond the scope of the criminal law. Is the Minister saying that violence is acceptable in marriage? Surely not. I think that he is saying that the criminal law should not intervene in family cases. But it already does. To quote just two examples, it intervenes in cases of incest and wife battering. Why, therefore, should not the criminal law intervene in rape cases?

The Government are also trying to put off dealing with the matter because of the attendant cost. More women would probably live in hostels for battered women while their cases were being dealt with. The Government should not be mean; they should provide more money for the hostels. The fact that more money would be involved ought not to affect the principle that rape should be a crime.

The Government also say that rape would be difficult to prove in court. I acknowledge that, but that applies to all rape cases. It would be difficult to obtain corroborative evidence, but it would be for the courts to decide. The fact that a crime is difficult to prove is no reason for saying that it is not a crime.

A simple moral decision has to be made. I and many others believe that rape is unacceptable, regardless of where, when and against whom it is committed. Other people do not believe that, so they equivocate, as the Government seem to be doing.

There is immense popular support for this proposed change in the law. According to the Middlesex polytechnic survey, 96 per cent. of the women who replied supported a change in the law of this kind. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) is one of the sponsors of my Bill. She is the Front-Bench spokesperson for the Labour party on this issue. The Labour party is therefore committed to changing the law if the Government insist on pussyfooting around. The Government ought to welcome the Bill. There should be no further delay.

4.22 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I oppose the measure with some trepidation. The time of day has probably passed when much publicity will be given to the proceedings of the House. If it has not, I dare say that hatpins and needles will be sharpened against me and the views that I propose to put forward.

No one doubts that many men behave violently towards their wives. No one doubts, either, that many women behave badly towards their husbands. However, remedies exist—those of separation, injunctions against molestation and other court procedures—to protect women. Assault of husband on wife, or assault of wife on husband, is a crime and can already be dealt with by the courts.

I have great respect for the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). I understand his reasons for introducing the measure. However, I believe that it is absurd. It is an example of hard cases seeking to make bad law. It is motivated by a combination of some distressed and unfortunate women, who need our help and support and whose problems probably need to be addressed further, and those whom *Private Eye* calls "wimmin"—the ghastly feminist lobby who seem to think that all men are evil and

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

that some are more evil than others, that men are made of slugs, snails and puppy dogs' tails and that women are made of sugar, spice and all things nice.

Whatever may be the hon. Gentleman's motive, I believe that his measure would lead to a gross abuse of the institution of marriage, for two reasons. The far lesser reason is that it would create two tiers of marriage. There would be the church wedding, where the wife would promise "to love, honour and obey until death us do part." Under those circumstances, lawyers would advise that rape was legally impossible until the courts had intervened. There would also be the register office wedding, after which rape would be possible, if the law were changed. We should avoid the creation of two different tiers of marriage.

The far greater reason is that the hon. Gentleman's proposals would be unenforceable. The Criminal Law Revision Committee considered the matter. For a while, it thought that it was worth pursuing for parties who are not cohabiting. However, the committee could not define "cohabiting". Therefore it threw up its hands in horror.

Rape is sexual intercourse without consent, the man knowing that consent has been withheld. How on earth can it be proved beyond reasonable doubt that rape has occurred between a cohabiting husband and wife? Where on earth would one get the corroborating evidence?

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): In the same way as in other cases.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Lady says that it could be proved in the same way as other cases. It is notoriously difficult to prove rape when people have a relationship. The law would become unenforceable. The law would become an ass. Put flippantly, if the good lady has "a headache" it would be inconsiderate for the husband to proceed. If she had a bad headache, would it be rape? Where do we draw the line and how could it be proved?

Undoubtedly there are evil men: equally there are a number of evil women. What impact would the changed law have on a manipulative wife seeking to humiliate her husband? Rape has to be reported to the police who are obliged to investigate. What would be the impact of such a police investigation on a relationship that would otherwise survive? What would be the effect on the children of a marriage of a police investigation on a charge that had been levelled in the heat of the moment and which on cooler reflection would be withdrawn?

What would happen, for example, if the wife succumbed and then regretted it and her husband in the hiatus of emotional confusion persisted when his wife said no? Would that be rape? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Would we define that as rape? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Opposition Members should address the position of the arranged bride who says no on her wedding night but whose husband is deaf to her pleas. Would that be rape? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] What would the burners of "The Satanic Verses" say about such a law?

It is well known that some women accuse their husbands of child sex abuse when they are seeking custody of their children. How much easier it would be to cry rape.

The hon. Gentleman called on other jurisdictions in support of his Bill. We believe that the laws of England are superior to those of other parliaments. If he wishes to call the laws of other countries in support of his argument, does he favour the death penalty and would he support it because it exists in other countries?

The law provides most of the necessary protection for wives who are subjected to violence. The law quite rightly allows women and men to nullify unsatisfactory marriages. More law would not help marriage; it would damage it.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman have leave to bring in his Bill?

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: To the contrary?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) must pursue his objection at least to the point of saying no. I shall put the Question again. Does the hon. Gentleman have leave to bring in his Bill? [HON. MEMBERS: "Aye."] To the contrary? *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman knows the rules. It is not in order to oppose the Bill, to make what is effectively a free speech, and then not to pursue the matter.

Mr. Marlow: No.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The Ayes have it.

RAPE IN MARRIAGE (OFFENCE)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Ms. Jo Richardson, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Ms. Clare Short, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Paul Boateng and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn presented a Bill to make rape in marriage a criminal offence in England and Wales. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 78.]

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am taking a certain interest in the matter because next Wednesday I have a ten-minue Bill to extend the powers of the Security Commission to cases such as that of Colin Wallace. Is it possible for a Conservative Member to oppose the extension of the Security Commission and then not to pursue that by vote? Is that a new possibility?

Mr. Speaker: The rules are well defined on this matter. Any hon. Member who seeks to oppose a Bill must carry his objection to the point of saying no. It is not absolutely essential to call a Division on the matter or to put in Tellers, although that is generally done. But it certainly is not in order in effect to steal a speech and then get away with it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you agree that what we have just witnessed was as close to a flagrant abuse of the procedures of the House as one could get? Indeed, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) had to be induced to say no. He then said no in a quiet tone, and he did not afterwards pursue the matter. I suggest, with respect, Mr. Speaker, that what he did deserves at least a reprimand from you.

Mr. Speaker: I took the charitable view—that it was ignorance.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not appreciate that it was required of me afterwards to say no. When you made the position plain to me, I was more than happy to do so.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You made it clear that you wanted the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to carry through his opposition. It was not clear to many of my hon. Friends seated towards the back of the Opposition Back Benches that he had said anything, your having requested him to say no. I should have thought that he deserved some reprimand for his behaviour.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House just heard the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) say that he did not appreciate what the rules were.

Business of the House

Mr. Speaker: I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

4.31 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motions in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe relating to Private Members' Motions, Public Petitions and New Writs may be proceeded with until Seven o'clock; and at that hour, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall put successively the Question already proposed from the Chair and the Questions on such of the remaining Motions as may then be made, including the Questions on any Amendments thereto which he may have selected.

As the House will realise, the effect of the motion is to allow us to debate together the three procedural motions standing in my name before allowing the House to reach a decision on them. Before tabling the motion I had carefully considered the matter. I am anxious for the House to have full opportunity to consider the motions, to which some time has already been devoted. I therefore proceeded on the basis that it makes sense for all three to be taken together, because they arose from the same report of the Procedure Committee, which regarded and, indeed, designed the various proposals as a package which, taken together, would protect private Members' time for proper use. That is the essential purpose of the package.

You will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that this position arises from your suggestion, recorded in paragraph 4 of the second report of the Procedure Committee for the 1988-89 Session:

> "On Friday 20 January 1989, the date of the most recent such occurrence, Mr. Speaker observed during points of order at the end of the day's business: 'I . . . hope that we shall not go through this kind of thing again. It is for the Leader of the House . . . to put his proposals to the Procedure Committee. I am sure that it will consider them and I hope that it will'."

As a result of that suggestion, the Procedure Committee has put this package of measures before the House. They have already been debated, as I say, for some time. So it is reasonable, and for the convenience of the House as a whole, that we should seek to reach a decision on all three motions by the time proposed this evening.

This is far from being a move sponsored or inspired by the Executive. It is sponsored as the result of the most wise authority—your intervention, Mr. Speaker, and the Procedure Committee. The arrangements for the debate are reasonable because if we can dispose of the motion in the next few minutes, we shall have another two and a half hours' further debate on the substance.

We shall then have had some four hours' debate on the motions, and I think that that will have been more than sufficient to deal properly and fully with them. Indeed, some hon. Members have expressed the view that we should have proceeded to dispose of them at the end of the one and a half hours we had last time. I have provided this additional time. I propose that we proceed on the basis that we dispose of the business motion with all speed and then proceed with the main debate, as I am sure the House would wish.

4.34 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I support the comments of the Leader of the House. I hope that we can use most of the time available to the House to debate, albeit for the second time, the substance of the procedural changes in the motions. We debated them for about one and a half hours a couple of weeks ago. With luck, we could have more than two hours' futher debate on them today. If we did, we would be approaching the time that is often set aside for the House to debate Second Readings of controversial Bills, when dozens, if not hundreds, of Members want to speak. Set in that context, it is not unreasonable for the House to be asked to come to a conclusion on this matter by 7 o'clock. I certainly have no objection to the proposal that we proceed in that way.

4.35 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move, at the end of the Question to add:

'provided that, if Mr. Speaker shall be of the opinion that the time for debate has not been adequate, he shall, instead of putting the Questions as aforesaid, interrupt the business and the debate shall stand adjourned.'.

The motion and my amendment give us the opportunity to invite the Leader of the House once again to consider whether he wants to proceed with the other motions on the Order Paper, which would be subject to them.

I formed the impression earlier that many hon. Members wished to debate other matters this afternoon rather than these motions. An application was made under Standing Order No. 20 and, without giving reasons for not accepting it, Mr. Speaker, you said that there were many important matters before the House.

If the Leader of the House took the opportunity of this debate on whether the timing should be as set out and on whether the motion should be amended, he could get this nonsense off the Order Paper quickly and allow us to proceed with other matters. Even second Adjournments could be taken later on some of the issues that have arisen during the day. I know how much Ministers would dislike the idea of having second Adjournments about the arrangements in the Department of the Environment for vetting where hon. Members live and about the poverty fund issues that were raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). That possibility would be open to us if the Leader of the House did not proceed with the second motion.

There are other reasons why it would be wise for the Leader of the House not to proceed with the series of motions relating to private Members' business and with voting at 7 o'clock. There is no doubt that the Government found the motions very acceptable. Seven o'clock is laid down because it is a convenient time at which a great many Ministers—Members on the payroll—will be in the building and able to vote. It is the Government's intention, as shown by the choice of the time designated in the motion, that all those Ministers shall be encouraged to vote in favour of the line taken by the Leader of the House.

It is no use the Leader of the House saying with an air of wide-eyed innocence, as he did a few moments ago, that this is nothing to do with the Government and that he is just doing the House a service by tabling these motions and having a timing motion to ensure that the matter is dispensed with at 7 o'clock. That is absolute nonsense.

We all know that the Procedure Committee has had many reports, some of which have not been debated and others of which have been debated, and rejected, at the instance of the Government and sometimes of the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) knows that major, radical, far-reaching reforms proposed by the Procedure Committee, which could have given us some control over the timetabling of Bills and not left it all in the hands of the Executive, were not proceeded with. He knows that recommendations enacted as a result of the Procedure Committee's proposals on Special Standing Committees have not been pursued by the Government.

The Government pick and choose the reports that they like and put their weight behind them, and sometimes they get a little help from other quarters. That is what the Government have done on this occasion. They have put these motions before the House twice and have sought in this instance to protect them by the business motion.

If hon. Members doubt that the business motion illustrates the Government's desire to get these motions passed, let them recall the earlier debate to which the Leader of the House referred. In it, we did not merely debate these motions; we debated a proposal that it should no longer be possible for a ten-minute Bill to be moved on Budget day. I ask hon. Members to look at the Division list for that debate. They will see that the apparently innocuous, innocent, far-sighted, detached proposal of the Procedure Committee had the support of many members of the Government. It had the payroll vote and the loyalist vote to help it along. That is the intention again tonight.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is it not true that on that occasion the proposal was approved in order to remove the inconvenience to which the Tory Whips were subject because they had to sit upstairs for up to a fortnight before the Budget day ten-minute Bill was due to be chosen to make sure that a Tory Member got it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has been disposed of.

Mr. Cryer: I am just making the point that the hon. Gentleman made, which is that the arrangement is not for the convenience of Back-Bench Members but entirely for the convenience of the Government machine.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I shall not stray into the areas which you, Mr. Speaker, say go beyond the debate. It is clear that, whatever the original intentions of the Procedure Committee about any of the motions, one can measure the Government's enthusiasm for them by the way in which they take them up, put them on the Order Paper and surround them with the necessary motions to make sure that they are passed.

I reiterated what happened to remind hon. Members that Back-Bench Members were in effect frozen out by the use of the payroll vote. Clearly, that is the intention tonight. Time and again, hon. Members will find that their rights are being chipped away by the Government who have the means to do so.

On some occasions hon. Members may feel that an individual right does not matter very much. But they will find when they add up the sum total that the practice has brought about a huge shift in the balance between the Executive and Parliament, between Government and Back Benchers and, indeed, sometimes between Front Benchers and Back Benchers.

We must think about the balance between Front Benchers and Back Benchers sometimes. I am just trying to remember when I last heard a private notice question asked by a Back-Bench Member from any party. In all sorts of ways, the House is becoming dominated by Front-Bench Members. Back Benchers in all parties must reflect on the importance of that.

There is a second reason why we must consider the business motion——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) If there is a conspiracy against Back-Bench Members—I am all for defending the rights of Back-Bench Members—can the hon. Gentleman explain why the Liberal Member on the Procedure Committee, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), did not vote against any of the proposals, to the best of my knowledge? The Chairman of the Committee will be aware that the proposals were carried unanimously. If there is a conspiracy, if not against all Back-Bench Members but perhaps against the hon. Gentleman's party—if that is his argument—why did his hon. Friend not vote against the proposals in the Committee?

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend was much attracted to and voted for the proposals put forward—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) must be quiet if he wants me to answer his intervention.

Mr. Winnick: I was not talking to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend voted for the addition to the package proposed by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) who is a member of the party of the hon. Member for Walsall, North. The proposal was a compromise that would have given private Members the opportunity, not on a Friday but on a Monday, in limited circumstances, to propose additional time for a private Member's Bill. The hon. Members could be defeated or outwitted by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) or others in their party, but at least they would have had the right to additional time for the Bill. My hon. Friend voted for that proposal in the belief that, with the addition, it would be a reasonable package. His vote is on record in the proceedings of the Committee.

I was about to adduce a second reason why the business motion is important. It shows that the Government proceed day by day with motions that vary the effects of Standing Orders. What is this motion? It is a motion to vary the effect of Standing Orders to determine that a debate will end at a particular time and that questions will be put in a particular way.

Why do the Government insist that they alone should have access to that mechanism, while no other hon. Member has access to it in any circumstances? It is like an addict preaching abstinence. It is like a 20-a-day or 60-a-day man saying, "Don't smoke." Every day the Order Paper contains Government motions to vary the effect of Standing Orders. Often they are resisted, but frequently they are allowed through because they have become part of the fabric of the place.

If the motions are important and necessary to the Government, why are there no circumstances in which a private Member is entitled to seek the approval of the House to vary the effect of a Standing Order or to change Standing Orders? I remind hon. Members that the motion that we shall discuss later does not merely stop private Members extending the amount of time available for a Bill. It prevents them from effecting on any occasion a change in Standing Orders by placing a motion before the House and having it carried. That relates not only to Standing Orders about private Members' Bills but to any Standing Order.

I do not know who drafted the motion. It may have been the Leader of the House. If so, I do not know where he obtained his advice. If he has any dealings with the Foreign Office know-how fund to explain to Parliaments in eastern Europe how to conduct their proceedings democratically, I hope that he does not draw attention to this device. It effectively puts the entire control of Standing Orders in the hands of the Government. That is how many Government business managers like it. They want the Government to have complete control.

The history of the House over the centuries has been one of the steadily advancing power of Governments over the House. The motion is just another stage in that process. Hon. Members may say, "Well, we do not mind this time because it involves something that some of us do not like, and do not want to happen, so we will allow it to go through." But one must assess every time the effect on the balance between the Executive and Parliament.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): As the hon. Gentleman is making such play of that point, will he tell the House how many times or on what occasion a private Member's motion altered the Standing Orders of the House in recent times, in connection with private Members' legislation?

Mr. Beith: So what are we doing? Here is a crime that no one has committed. We are looking for a penalty for it and a way to proscribe it. A more compelling argument for not embarking on this nonsense in the first place would be hard to find. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure cannot find any instance of the crime having been committed, not to the disadvantage of the House but at all. Yet he feels it necessary to proscribe it entirely, out of the blue. I simply do not understand the reasoning.

Sir Peter Emery: Therefore, is it not obvious to the hon. Gentleman that on the two occasions when it was attempted, people found other ways of stopping the matter and wasting an entire two days of private Members' time? That is what the Committee is trying to stop. We do not wish to alter the great factors which the hon. Member for Leith suggests that we wish to change.

Mr. Beith: I wish the hon. Gentleman would stop confusing me with the hon. Member for Leith. It is a confusion that I should not wish to encourage. Perhaps it was a slight slip of the tongue. I am the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

I was addressing the fact that the motion that we shall go on to debate does not merely proscribe what happened on the two occasions to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It proscribes hon. Members from making any change in Standing Orders whatever. If hon. Members wanted to change the rule whereby hon. Members must wear a hat to be seated and covered to raise a point of order during a Division, they could not do so even if they invited the House to make the change, had the time available to do so and carried the proposal. Not only would the change never be made, the motion would never be discussed, because the Table Office would be instructed not to receive such a motion.

[Mr. Beith]

In a democratic assembly, we tell our Clerks that notices of motions shall not be received. That is an extraordinary thing in any democratic assembly. It is a rule under which hon. Members cannot even put a motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. His arguments will be more appropriate when we come to the motions. At present we are simply discussing the business of the House motion, which is a narrow motion.

Mr. Beith: I shall have more to say later. I was drawn onto that ground by an intervention. Just imagine if there had been a Standing Order that said that motions such as the one that we are debating shall not be received. I sometimes think that it would be useful if certain motions that the Government favoured tabling were subject to just such an instruction.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Perhaps it would help the hon. Gentleman to bear in mind that he will find it difficult to try to produce an argument about the time limits without explaining—at some length, in my view—why the three motions have all been lumped together, and why they should be dealt with by, say, 7 o'clock. I have no doubt that it could well be argued by Clerks and others that in order for him to explain it to the House more fully, he would have to tell me and other hon. Members why the three motions are important and why the limited number of hours is not enough time in which to debate the matter. To put it in Derbyshire pit language, the hon. Gentleman is in a good seam of coal.

Mr. Beith: I should not want to hew too heavily at the seam that the hon. Gentleman may himself wish to hew a little later in our proceedings. However, he is right to point out that the lumping of the motions together, the time made available, and all the rest of it, are relevant considerations.

I have not yet come to that point in my speech, because I wanted the House, and you, Mr. Speaker, to consider how illustrative this motion is of the Government's addiction to what they tell others that they must never do. That is what that is all about.

We have a Government who cannot let a day go by without changing the effects of the Standing Orders. It is unhealthy for the House to find that every day the Government are tabling motions such as this. They table 10 o'clock motions and other motions which are described as "Business of the House" motions. That is the category that I am talking about. Such motions are scattered so frequently like confetti on the Order Paper that they suggest that the Government cannot manage their voluminous business without occasionally varying the effect of the Standing Orders.

That may mean that there is something wrong with our Standing Orders and that we should revise them. Private Members should address these issues. The corollary is that private Members must at least have their case for having access to such mechanisms considered. Several different aspects of this arise in the various motions.

It is timely and poignant that the Government should have tabled a motion to start the debate which shows exactly how prone they are to do what they are inviting private Members not to do. The Government increasingly show a lack of concern for the powers that you, Mr. Speaker, enjoy—perhaps "enjoy" is the wrong word because the powers are sometimes uncomfortable to use—to protect the rights and interests of Members. That is why I have tabled an amendment to the motion.

I remind the House that the motion would be a precedent for many more like it and that it follows various precedents. As it stands, the motion would mean that, if we had had a series of statements this afternoon, with private notice questions, and many more points of order than you had to address this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, the debate might not have begun until half-past 6. You would then have had absolutely no option but to put the Question on all those matters even though they had not been reasonably debated. That is why it seemed right to table the amendment and I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting it so that we can establish the precedent that the Government should not casually take away our powers in their motion.

There is a significant lack of respect for any coherent protection for the rights of Members. If just one result of this short debate was that we could ensure that the Government cannot table future motions without including words such as those in the amendment, we would have taken a step forward. It might happen that, through no fault of the Government, you, Mr. Speaker, might be placed in the position that I have described, and that a matter might be debated far too briefly to allow any serious consideration of its implications.

In such a case, Mr. Speaker, you should have the power that you would have if the Government were asking you for a closure, when you would have the discretion to refuse it. However, in this instance, you would have no such discretion unless the motion were to give you that discretion. The words in which I have framed the amendment come from the Standing Orders. They are used in another context in motions after 10 o'clock when, if the debate starts late, you have the opportunity to decide whether the debate should stand adjourned.

Mr. Cryer: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the amendment would prevent Mr. Speaker from being, in effect, a pawn of the Government? Is not it therefore important that the amendment is passed, to maintain the strict neutrality and separation from the Government which successive Speakers have enjoyed?

Mr. Beith: That is immensely desirable. Indeed, that was my reason for tabling the amendment. I have thought about Mr. Speaker Lenthall this afternoon. Into my mind flooded what Mr. Speaker Lenthall said:

> "I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House shall direct me."

He might have been being asked to identify where hon. Members had gone or perhaps even where they lived, but he refused to do so. There are many occasions on which it is important that Mr. Speaker's position should be protected, and this is one of them. Therefore, I hope that the Government will heed my pleas, accept the amendment, and leave the power to protect hon. Members in the hands of the Chair.

Governments are prone to the temptation to grab any lever of power and to pull on it as hard as possible. If they are given the opportunity to push things through, they are but human and fallible, and they will do so. Even genial characters such as the Leader of the House——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will respond to my geniality for a second and acknowledge that the entire foundation of the debate and of the proceedings on which we have already spent a lot of time is a report that was devoted to private Members' time, and was prepared by Back Benchers. This is a debate about Back Benchers' rights, promoted by Back Benchers, for Back Benchers. The measures that are set out had the support of hon. Members of all parties, including the hon. Gentleman's party, and are designed to present the right balance, as they recommend it. The Government have brought them forward with that objective in mind. The hon. Gentleman cannot caricature the Government in this context for doing other than promoting the rights of Back Benchers.

Mr. Beith: I most certainly can, but I shall refrain from doing so because I thought that that was the subject of the subsequent debate.

One must conclude something from the way in which the Government have picked up the ball and run with it. That is perhaps an odd thing to say to a Welshman after last Saturday, but that is what happened. In this instance, when the proposals came forward from the Select Committee on Procedure, the Government said, with a glint in their eyes, "This is good. This is helpful to us. We shall ensure that we get it through because it stops the inconvenience of private Members' time which causes members of the Government to have to be in the House when they do not want to be and extending the time"—*[Interruption.]* No, I have taken some trouble to look at this issue and I am making the judgment that I believe that the motions will reduce—not add to—the rights of private Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Again, this is the substance of the subsequent debate. The business of the House motion is narrow. The hon. Gentleman is moving his amendment and he must stick to that.

Mr. Beith: I am trying to do so, Mr. Speaker, but I keep being sidetracked by the Leader of the House and others into discussing the merits of the main motion. I am asking the House to consider that the package has been sewn up in a way that happens to suit the Leader of the House. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not drawn and attracted to it, I think that he would have concluded that the proposals should go back for further discussion and consideration, rather than being sewn up in a package of votes at 7 o'clock on a Wednesday night when he hopes that he can get the maximum number of payroll votes into the Lobby to support it. I shall seek to argue that the package that has been stitched together should be unstitched.

The lumping together of this series of motions, including private Members' motions, public petitions and new writs, conceals the damaging nature of the wide restriction on the rights of private Members to alter the Standing Orders of the House. I cannot think of a council chamber in the country in which such a procedure would be regarded as acceptable or desirable. I cannot think of any debating body in which so enormous a restriction would be placed on the ability of its members to raise matters in the time that is supposed to be available to them.

We are talking about private Members' time. Why should not private Members decide what to do with it? We are now debating this matter in Government time, and it is to the Government's attitude and their tying up of the measures in one set of votes to which I am now directing my attention.

I plead with hon. Members to recognise that, whatever their views on the issues in question, to allow the Government to secure this neat, payroll-supported vote on all the motions, will yet again greatly shift the balance away from private Members. The day will come when those private Members want to table a motion that affects some matter of Standing Orders, and they will find that, unlike the Government when they tabled this motion, somebody in the Table Office will say to them. "I am sorry, sir, but as a result of the motion that the House has passed, I cannot receive this motion." That was not the case with this business of the House motion. Nobody in the Table Office said to the Government's representative, "I cannot receive this motion," but that will be said to private Members if we proceed along these lines. It will be said about motions that hon. Members table in the future, in their time, on the day for which they have won the ballot.

I stress that such motions are balloted for and that an hon. Member is lucky to have the opportunity of a private Member's motion. Instead of being in the Government's happy position of being able to put anything that they like on the Order Paper whenever and however they want, hon. Members will not even be able to get past the door of the Table Office. That is why I believe that we should not take all these motions together in one vote at 7 o'clock.

4.59 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be brief, because I wish to speak only to the motion and not about matters concerning the recommendations of the Procedure Committee.

I remind the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that when he was a member of the Procedure Committee he often pressed the Government to provide time for the recommendations and reports of the Committee to be brought to the Floor of the House, and to give the House the opportunity to vote on those matters. That is exactly what is happening today.

We have had nearly two hours of debate on this matter, yet the hon. Gentleman suggested that the Leader of the House has been dictatorial. In response to an appeal from the hon. Gentleman and other Back Bench Members, my right hon. and learned Friend did not move the motions, to ensure that we could have a fuller debate. The Government and the Leader of the House have now provided that fuller debate, and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would have been delighted, given the desire that he has expressed to ensure that these matters are fully debated and that we can proceed to vote on them.

All too often, the Government have been accused of arranging matters so that such recommendations have been debated on a take-note or similar motion that has not allowed the House to reach a formal decision. In this case, the Government are giving the House the opportunity to make such a decision and no one should complain if that decision is taken after nearly five hours of debate. That seems a perfectly reasonable proposition, and one should praise the Government rather than damn them for it.

I must point out to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed that the Government have no real interest in this matter; it is entirely a question of private

[Sir Peter Emery]

Members' time and has nothing to do with Government or Opposition time. We are talking about time allocated to private Members, and many Leaders of the House and Governments have not given a tinker's cuss what has happened in private Members' time. They have allowed Members to do what they wanted: if private Members' time was wasted, that was a matter for Members.

The Government are now trying to ensure that that does not happen. They are giving the House the opportunity to decide on this matter, and to try to suggest that this is a package stitched for the benefit of the Government and to assist them is to mislead the House considerably.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman says that the Government are providing time, and I do not deny that. But would it not be a good idea if the House made up its mind that we should allocate the time ourselves? It is Members of the House who should determine the allocation of time; the matter should not be left in the hands of Government or Opposition Front-Bench Members.

Sir Peter Emery: I like the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, but he has been a Minister and he will know that there is never enough time for the Government to get their business through the House or for the Opposition to criticise the Government. Although it is an immensely attractive suggestion that the allocation of time should be decided openly by Back-Bench Members, the chances of that happening are about as slim as the chances of a steel mill being built on the north or south pole.

I return to the motion. We need to decide on the motion so that we can move immediately to the debate. We should move to a proper and full debate on the three motions and reach a proper decision after four and a half or five hours debate. The Government are being most sensible, and those who oppose this motion are trying to waste time to stop us reaching the procedural motions, which they may or may not support. It would be much more sensible for them to speak on the procedural motions than to speak on whether we should or should not vote.

5.4 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This is a curious set of circumstances. A number of hon. Members are disclaiming responsibility and denying any sort of Government intervention in this affair. As I recall, the business motion and the amendment were down for debate last Monday. A relatively small data protection order was also down for debate, and it was expected to go through quickly; only two hon. Members were present. I had checked before 10 o'clock that the business motion was a debatable motion. It was not debatable after 10 o'clock, but there was plenty of time available.

As it happens, I was not here for the main debate, which lasted about two hours, because I was attending a lengthy sitting of a Select Committee dealing with a lot of evidence that had just been produced about an hon. Member. I shall not go further down that road, except to say that it took a long time and that was what kept me from the Chamber.

Mr. Skinner: You mean Browne.

Mr. Cryer: I do indeed.

I wanted to debate this issue but I was prevented from doing so by the Government's Deputy Chief Whip. He and his colleagues went out and found some Conservative Back-Bench Members to speak at length on the data protection order so that we reached 10 o'clock and were effectively denied the time to debate the motion. Why should the Government do that if they are not——

Mr. Skinner: Up to summat.

Mr. Cryer: As my hon. Friend says, if they are not up to something—if they are not concerned to exclude the possibility of our debating the motion.

It struck me as curious and interesting, to say the least, that the Government should get up to such tricks when there was no pressure on them and nothing crucial about the affair. They simply wanted to stop the business motion being debated, and possibly voted on because with the few hon. Members about at the time, they might have lost the vote. So far from being disinterested, on Monday the Government planned to prolong a debate so that the motion could not be discussed at a time when they may not have had sufficient numbers present. The Government were involved in supporting the business of the House motion. There is no doubt about it.

The Whips then told me that the motion would be on the Order Paper today. Why today, and why at this time? Because they know that they have the troops here and that they can get the motions through in a neat and businesslike manner, so that by 7 o'clock the whole thing is polished and finished. That is their aim and purpose and it makes me very suspicious.

I am not too keen on consensus business motions or consensus motions affecting the Standing Orders of the House. I remember the last time this happened. At one time, the House had genuine Consolidated Fund motions. I say this, Mr. Speaker, by way of explanation of my attitude to the business motion and of my support for the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). We used to have a proper Consolidated Fund debate, and the House disciplined itself well. If a group of Back Bench Members wanted to speak on a topic, they could. Up to 20 Members might have a good debate on a subject that was important to them. The debate went all through the night.

But there was an inconvenience—the Government had to have 100 Members present for the closure motion the following morning. It was getting difficult to phone round and get people here at 9 o'clock, so the Government thought, "Tut, tut, let's get rid of that inconvenience and get a series of timed Adjournment debates that finish at 9 o'clock—or 8 o'clock if a suitable business motion is tabled—then we will have no difficulties." In 1981, the Opposition were foolish enough to go along with that. They said, "When we are in government it will be terribly inconvenient for us, so we shall make sure that we do not have to telephone round."

The Opposition lost a tactical advantage. One of the few occasions since 1979 when we had wrung real concessions from the Government was when we took the Consolidated Fund through the night and won concessions on housing legislation to exclude old people's dwellings. Therefore, it was a loss all round. It is relatively easy for the Government to get a majority of 100, and private Members lost significantly.

The business motion affects not only private Members' motions, but public petitions and new writs.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I can reinforce my hon. Friend's argument about the Consolidated Fund. There was a time when the Consolidated Fund debate started no later than 4 pm, possibly after a ten-minute Bill, but even that was discouraged. We are now lucky if the Consolidated Fund debate starts before 10 pm. That is because it is thought that the motion for the recess Adjournment should be spatchcocked in with the Consolidated Fund. I accept entirely that this is a cross-party matter, in the sense that the late John Silkin agreed to it without consultation. It is no good our standing up and saying that the Tory Government are doing this because, in fairness, an agreement was made between those on the Front Benches, but it is a serious erosion of rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I realise that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) gave the Consolidated Fund as an analogy, but I am sure that he will now come back to the business of the House motion, which deals with the length of time for which the later motions can be discussed.

Mr. Cryer: I was just about to come to another analogy, the three-hour Adjournment debate. It used to be open ended, but now it lasts for three hours. That is also for convenience——

Mr. Dalyell: It used to be on a different day.

Mr. Cryer: It is on a different day generally, but not necessarily.

The amendment provides:

"if Mr. Speaker shall be of the opinion that the time for debate has not been adequate, he shall, instead of putting the Questions as aforesaid, interrupt the business and the debate shall stand adjourned."

What is wrong with that? It allows Mr. Speaker some discretion. Mr. Speaker tends to take careful notice of any representations that the Government or the Opposition make about proceedings in the House, as he is bound to do. Under the amendment, he could use his discretion. As I said earlier, the amendment prevents Mr. Speaker from becoming the Government's pawn. Under the business of the House motion, Mr. Speaker does not have any discretion, but must put the motion at 7 o'clock. He is not allowed to make a judgment about the length of time that has been taken for the debate.

I shall make another analogy. If Mr. Speaker was not allowed any discretion and a Standing Order stated that, after a debate had been under way for a minimum of one hour, Mr. Speaker had to accept a closure motion, it would weaken and seriously change the procedures in the House. At present, Mr. Speaker has some discretion.

It is generally calculated that, after two or two and a half hours Mr. Speaker will take a closure motion. That depends on the nature of the amendment, but Mr. Speaker has some discretion. The occupant of the Chair should not be able to say, "It is 7 o'clock and time that the debate was finished. Let us put the Question." Mr. Speaker should have some discretion.

Some people take a different view; they say that Speakers are part of the establishment and do not do anything out of line. I do not entirely share that view. There have been occasions when a Speaker has taken a position that the Government do not like because he has decided not to accept either a closure motion or a business motion. The amendment will give greater discretion and will maintain, enhance and improve the independence of Mr. Speaker and his deputies. That is an important element.

Why this amendment to this motion? It is because the business motion relates to three items: private Members' motions, public petitions and new writs. If we pass this motion—I have no doubt that, if it were put to the vote, the payroll vote would be in the Aye Lobby—we would be debating three important subjects wrapped into one in under two hours.

The Government might say, "But you are taking time now to debate this issue. Surely the best thing to do is to stop talking and get on with debating the motion." But why was not that discretion allowed to me last Monday night? If the Government are so keen about debating the motions, why on Monday night did the Government Deputy Chief Whip organise a debate to exclude any business of the House from being debated? I am seizing the only opportunity that I have had to raise the issues and reservations that I consider important.

It has already been said that the Select Committee produced a recommendation and that, as it has about a dozen Back Benchers, and a former Minister chairing it, its recommendation should be accepted. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said at the time, Select Committee recommendations are not accepted in this place simply on the nod.

I can well remember a Select Committee that spent many months examining Albert Roberts and Reggie Maudling. It heard a great deal of evidence and took enormous care, and the recommendations were rejected. Therefore, I do not entirely accept the idea that because a Select Committee makes a recommendation, we must of necessity follow it. The business motion, putting the private Members' motions, public petitions and new writs together, would confine Back-Benchers, not expand their opportunities.

I was out of the House for four years, as hon. Members know. In those four years, Back-Benchers' rights have unquestionably been eroded in all sorts of ways. Cynicism has developed because of the way the Government try to dominate the Order Paper and there is greater organisation of procedure. The initiative, which could have been usefully deployed, has been taken away.

I do not want to sound like a 19th-century constitutionalist, but I have been in a modern assembly —the Common Market. I shall touch on the analogy only briefly. In that assembly everything—including the chairs of the various political groupings—is planned by committee and everyone works well together. It is amazing how Le Pen gets on with all the chairmen of the other groups inside the Common Market assembly. It is all stitched up. In the European legislature there are no opportunities to raise subjects in the wide variety of ways that we have in this place. Some may say that my position is rooted in the 19th century, but I disagree. This Parliament gives Back-Benchers the chance to use procedure to raise issues, and that is important. I am unhappy with the business motion because it will restrict Back-Benchers' opportunities to discuss matters.

Three important issues are covered in these motions —private Members' motions, public petitions and new writs. Public petitions and new writs have been discussed in the House in recent months. Some Back Benchers

[Mr. Cryer]

brought in petitions on Friday mornings, possibly to delay the business set down for the day. Anyone can use that technique. I remember discussing the Sessional Orders of the House, when people said that I was playing to the cameras. But anyone could have discussed them, just as anyone could have presented petitions on a Friday. Some say that large numbers of petitions are presented on Fridays to delay business, and that that is an abuse. It is not. Groups of hon. Members or an individual Member may want to delay private Members' legislation at any time, and this is a perfectly legitimate way of doing it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is anticipating the later debate.

Mr. Cryer: I am trying to suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it will take a great deal of time to discuss this important subject in detail. The business motion tabled by the Leader of the House—I am glad to see that he is still awake—imposes an important new restriction. We cannot encompass the subject of public petitions by 7 pm. I know that the business motion is not identical to the three motions following it, but we must be able to touch briefly on subjects the time for which the business motion seeks to restrict.

New writs are also significant. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the most recent exponent of the art of moving a new writ, would need at least half an hour in which to explain his views on moving new writs. The House is starting to fill up with Members interested in this subject—*[Laughter.]* There are still a few empty seats left should other hon. Members want to participate quickly in the next 40 minutes——

Mr. Beith: I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises, as a Committee Chairman, that an awful lot of Select Committees are meeting in the Corridor upstairs, as many of them do at this time on Wednesday afternoons. Those attending them may want to take part in the debate, too.

Mr. Cryer: I could not take part in the original debate because I was serving on a Select Committee——

Mr. Dalyell: Does my hon. Friend recollect how important it was, before the writ for the Richmond, Yorks by-election was moved, to hear in detail about the role of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the protégé of the Leader of the House who, I notice, is burying his head deeper and deeper in his documents because he does not like this subject? It was important to explain in some detail the improper use of a Law Officer's letter, as it was subsequently proved—after all, we have Sir Leon Brittan's word for it—that he would not have acted as he did had not Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it impossible to relate that intervention to the motion.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has pointed out the intricate detail involved in debating new writs. Moving the new writ in question took up a great deal of time; my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover spoke on it for about three hours——

Mr. Skinner: I was never out of order once.

Mr. Cryer: Unusually for my hon. Friend, he has just commented from a sedentary position that he was never out of order. He had prepared extremely carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has emphasised the value of the new writ procedure. It is important to bear that in mind when assessing the fourth motion today. Without enough time we cannot do justice to new writ motions——

Sir Peter Emery: None of these rights is being taken away from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) or any other hon. Member, except in as much as these procedures should not take place in private Members' time. It is good of the Government to say that these procedures shall not interfere with private Members' time and to stipulate that they must be carried out in Government time. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be delighted with that.

Mr. Cryer: Motion No. 4 refers to private Members' Bills being given precedence. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure is now providing us with a snapshot of the sort of views that he is going to express —but he cannot express them all in an hour and a half. Judging from the thickness of his pile of notes——

Sir Peter Emery *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Skinner: He has got it all in his head.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman has spent hours in the Select Committee and he wants to give the House a great deal of information on this subject.

My point is that the Government are going to restrict the time available to Back Benchers. New writs can be moved, first, because an hon. Member wants to bring one to the attention of the House; or, secondly, because a Back Bencher wants to use up a certain amount of time because he does not like a Bill that is coming up for consideration.

In any debate we need to consider the conventions of the constitution——

Mr. Skinner: May I put my hon. Friend right? On neither occasion when I moved a writ—before the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill or before the Abortion (Amendment) Bill—did I stop anyone moving a Bill. I prevented people from queue jumping. Enoch Powell was trying to jump the queue with his Unborn Children (Protection) Bill and the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) was trying to do the same with another Bill. It was not a question of trying to stop the Bills, but of an attempt being made to jump the queue and move ahead of other private Members' Bills.

Mr. Cryer: That fits in with what I am about to say. By rushing the motion through, there will not be time to examine the subtleties of the way in which the House operates. Those subtleties have developed over many years, but some people question their value and say that we should start with a shining new constitution. The experience of procedures and the reality of the way in which people work together have developed rules of thumb that are very helpful.

Perhaps I could give an example to illustrate the point. An hon. Member who wishes to raise a point of order during a Division has to put something on his head. At first sight, that seems daft and hon. Members feel foolish putting a hat on. People start to sing songs such as "Give Me the Moonlight" and we all make a joke about it. Its

purpose is to reduce the possibility of people raising points of order during a Division because that is an awkward time. The wearing of a hat is a hurdle for a Member who wishes to raise a point of order. It seems simple, but it works rather well.

En passant, I shall elaborate on our voting system. People ask me why we cannot have an electronic voting system which would be slicker and more efficient; hon. Members would not have to move from their places and we could get more votes through more quickly. People say that, if we had very long-range telephones hon. Members who were scattered all over the world on fact-finding missions on behalf of Select Committees could telephone their votes to the House. But the voting system that we have is simple and effective and works well. It also makes it difficult to cheat. We cannot discard all those ideas—throw them out of the window—without long and serious discussion. That is why the business motion is less than adequate. We have to consider the conventions of the constitution.

Our Standing Orders are varied by the motions. "Erskine May" gives us written opinions that have been accumulated over hundreds of years, and we also have the conventions of the constitution. If we are properly to consider the business motions, we should have to consider those matters too. I shall give a couple of examples about how we could include those in the discussion.

There is a convention that private Members' Bills brought before the House on Fridays will get through, as long as they are not extremely controversial. If they attempt to remedy a relatively minor matter, something that people accept as a matter of urgency, they will get through. There must be 100 hon. Members present to ensure that such a Bill gets a Second Reading, but by and large, it will reach that stage.

It is a different matter in the case of highly controversial subjects that split all the parties in the House. Liberal, Conservative and Labour Members have different views on abortion. The difficulties of using the private Member's Bill procedure properly and within the rules are manifold. I am not speaking specifically about abortion proposals that have been presented to the House over many years, but about any major matter of great controversy. The private Member's Bill procedure is not designed for that.

Mr. Heffer: What about hare coursing?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend gives a good example. Hare coursing is controversial and some people, mainly Tory Members, do not like any attempt to interfere with it. My hon. Friend the Member for Walton has tried to promote legislation on the matter on at least one occasion.

Mr. Heffer: I have tried three times.

Mr. Cryer: In such cases, Tory Members organise petitions or new writs, although I do not think that there were any new writs in relation to hare coursing. Certainly they used the measures available to them in this place, and that reinforces the conventions of the constitution. We need a Labour Government committed to a programme in support of animals to eradicate hare coursing and all other examples of cruelty to animals. We could try a private Member's Bill but we know the obstacles and hurdles that exist. Therefore, it is vital to discuss the conventions of the constitution, those unwritten areas that make it difficult to define what sort of Bill will get through the House. The motions try to say that we must have a path for private Members' legislation that is free from any attempt to delay or obstruct it.

As I said, the Opposition used to have the opportunity to delay and obstruct on the Consolidated Fund. The Opposition can do that to Government legislation, although we do not do it often. On one glorious occasion, we used that opportunity and as a result, the compulsory sale of old people's dwellings was removed from legislation to sell council dwellings. We have lost such opportunities and the Consolidated Fund is a pale shadow of what it used to be. That is why I am concerned that Back Benchers should not give up something that they could use in this place as part of the to-ing and fro-ing in the production of legislation.

The production of legislation should never be easy. It should always be subject to hurdles because it affects thousands of people. I chair the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments because I am concerned to see that the powers that are given to Ministers are not used in an arbitrary or unfair manner. The same applies to the business motion. I guarantee that the business motion will be supported by the payroll vote. There may be some diffident Tory Members, but I do not think that there are many.

Mr. Skinner: It is not as easy as my hon. Friend makes out, because some of the payroll vote have gone to the Savoy, to the big spree of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Some of them have been told not to stop for long, and some of them do not want to stop for very long, including the Prime Minister. We are now reaching the hour when it is conceivable that the Government have the necessary 100 Members to close the debate. I rather suspect that the presence of the Chief Whip means that he might shortly move the closure now that the junketing is about to finish.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend shocks me. I am fairly cynical about this place, but I cannot believe that the Government are manoeuvring. I see the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), kneeling at the feet of the Leader of the House. Is that in order? He should know the rules of this place. I thought that somebody was about to use a sword on a delicate spot.

If what my hon. Friend says is true, it appears that the Government are preparing to muster 100 Members for the closure. That shows that our fears are very real. This is a Government-inspired manoeuvre. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said—the Government Chief Whip was not here at the time and missed the comments—there are a lot of Select Committee reports on procedure. We have not had an explanation of why this report has been put forward today. I know that the Leader of the House is not used to the job but he gave a paltry speech.

I know that the Chief Whip desperately wants to hear what I am saying, and does not want to plot any more to bring about the downfall of yet another Back-Bench comment on the matter in hand.

The Leader of the House hardly gave us an explanation, but he gave the excuse that this has been done before. The Government took out the ten-minute Bill slot on Budget day. Three years ago they took it out by convention, and on the other occasion by practicality. This issue merited a

[Mr. Cryer]

longer speech from the Leader of the House, not simply to soak up time, but to explain why the Government have chosen this report out of the rich variety of Select Committee reports on procedure. They are lined up on the shelves, gathering dust, awaiting their time on the Floor of the House.

It is not as though the motion says that we will finish at 7 o'clock so that we can deal with more Procedure Committee reports. We are finishing them so that we can get items 2, 3 and 4 on the Order Paper through as rapidly as possible—like a dose of salts. I think that I am right to mention my reservations and suspicions about why this is going on.

Some of my hon. Friends, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) may have served on the Select Committee on Procedure and perhaps they have come to an agreement. I wonder whether the Government have put down such a motion to get this business speeded through using a Select Committee report. Not only this Select Committee report but all the others need debating time, but they are not getting the time allocated to them. It is a conundrum.

I suspect that the reason for the motion is not that the Government want to help private Members but that they want to make things easier for themselves. That is what Governments generally wish to do. Therefore, they have moved motions which will exclude private Members from participating in the procedure of private Members' motions, which will reduce private Members' rights to present public petitions—they will have to choose other items and there will be a time limit—and which will affect the operation of new writs. Ordinary Back-Benchers can use their ingenuity to bring subjects to the attention of the House, through debate on motions for new writs. It gives them an opportunity that would otherwise have been put to one side. When a new writ is moved, it is for the benefit of the House but probably for the inconvenience of the Government.

Mr. Beith: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member's train of thought, but sometimes when new writs are moved—as on this occasion when we are discussing the new business motion at some length—they are a sign that the Government are not listening to the general anxieties of some hon. Members. New writs are one of the means by which those anxieties can be expressed. The hon. Member's experience, and my own, shows that if one does not inconvenience a Government they will never listen.

Mr. Cryer: That is absolutely right. This——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Tim Renton) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 94.

Division No. 88] **[5.44 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil

Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to..

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:-

The House divided: Ayes 84, Noes 233.

Division No. 89] **[5.56 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gordon, Mildred
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Livsey and
Mr. Alex Carlile.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher

Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Haynes, Frank
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motions in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe relating to Private Members' Motions, Public Petitions and New Writs may be proceeded with until Seven o'clock; and at that hour, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall put successively the Question already proposed from the Chair and the Questions on such of the remaining Motions as may then be made, including the Questions on any Amendments thereto which he may have selected.

Private Members' Motions

6.8 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That—

Private Members' Motions (Business of the House)

Unless the House otherwise orders, Private Members' notices of motions shall not be received for any day other than an early day, if—

(a) with respect to any private Members' bill, they would have an effect similar to that of motions of which notice may be given under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business);

(b) they would have the effect of varying the practice of the House or the provisions of Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings) or Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) so far as concerns the precedence, arrangement or timing of business;

(c) they would have the effect of allocating time to any proceedings;

(d) they would have the effect of amending or varying any Standing Order; or

(e) they would have the effect, whether by amendment or by the making of a new Order, of dispensing with or varying the effect of, this Order.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the House has already suggested that, with this, we may discuss the other two procedure motions:

That Standing Order No. 133 (No debate on presentation of Petition) be repealed and the following Standing Order be made—

Time and manner of presenting petitions

(1)—Every petition presented under Standing Order No. 132 (Presentation of petitions) not containing matter in breach of the privileges of this House, and which according to the rules or usual practice of this House can be received, shall be brought to the Table—

(a) on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, after a Member of the government shall have signified his intention to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion, or after a Minister of the Crown shall have signified his intention to move, pursuant to Standing Order No. 10 (Sittings of the House (suspended sittings)) 'That the proceedings of this day's sitting be suspended', and

(b) on Fridays, at the commencement of public business; provided that petitions remaining to be presented at Ten o'clock on a Friday on which private Members' bills or Motions have precedence under Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall stand over and may be brought to the Table after a member of the government shall have signified his intention to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion.

(2) Proceedings under paragraph (1)(a) and (1)(b) of this Order shall not be interrupted at Ten o'clock or at half past Two o'clock respectively.

(3) Mr. Speaker shall not allow any debate, or any Member to speak upon, or in relation to, such petition; but it may be read by the Clerk if required.

That if a Motion to the effect that Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member is proposed to be made or is made after prayers on any day on which private Members' bills or notices of motion have precedence, and is opposed, proceedings thereon shall lapse.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We shall vote on the three procedure motions at 7 o'clock. I propose to speak briefly on all three now. The House will recall that on 1 February we dealt with the third report of the Procedure Committee on ten-minute Bills. The debate on that day also covered the second report of the Committee, dealing with private Members' time. We did not bring it to a conclusion, following a request by hon. Members, and the matter was held over to a subsequent occasion. That is the purpose of today's debate.

Since the previous debate I have reflected on the speeches made, and I remain convinced of the need and justification for the three motions. As this is, in effect, a continuation of the previous debate, I do not intend to repeat my speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the Leader of the House. I should have informed the House before he rose that I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), to leave out paragraph (d). I selected the amendment on the previous occasion that the matter was debated. I have not selected the other amendments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I had dealt with that amendment in my previous intervention.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I asked the Leader of the House to make sure that he addressed the issue raised by the amendment. The motion covers not only matters that went to the Procedure Committee but any attempt by any hon. Member ever to use private Members' time to make a substantive decision about any Standing Order.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Let me reiterate the central point of our position. I believe that the three motions, taken with the additional day for private Members' business in the Sessional Order to amend Standing Order No. 13 which I moved on 22 November, provide a fair and reasonable deal for the House as a whole and for Back Benchers. Indeed, they were so regarded by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and many other hon. Members in the previous debate.

If the way is to be cleared for private Members' business to be considered largely unobstructed—that is, through the motions on new writs and petitions, motions 4 and 3—an additional day having already been provided for that business, I do not think it unreasonable to expect hon. Members to operate within the parameters of the agreed procedures and within the time available within the system, and to preclude them from doing otherwise. That is the central purpose of the motion on private Members' motions.

Any hon. Member who introduces a private Members' Bill which is long, complex or controversial should be aware of the risks of failure arising from the inherent nature of the Bill and should not blame the system if the Bill fails to get through.

In the earlier debate my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) emphasised what she called the will of the House. It has also been raised tonight. She suggested that if a private Member's motion were passed to give precedence or some other advantage to a private Member's Bill, so be it. That was the very question addressed by the Procedure Committee. I explained previously that if we allowed that to be the position, that would itself destroy the balance of the accepted convention for dealing with private Members' business.

It could nullify the effect of the ballot for private Members' Bills if a Member successful in obtaining a high

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

place in the ballot found his Bill being upstaged by a Bill lower down that had a stronger lobby behind it. I do not think that that prospect is made more acceptable by the amendment on the Order Paper in my hon. Friend's name. Although the intention might be to secure favourable treatment for a Bill, such a procedure could be used to hinder other Bills. That is one feature we would not want.

As for the point raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) as he is anxious to be identified—I understand why—the procedure of the House has been used on previous occasions in a way which was never intended. The Procedure Committee addressed itself to that, at the invitation of Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said that hard cases make bad law and that we should think carefully before changing procedures in response to one or two incidents.

We have thought about it carefully, and so has the Procedure Committee. When the procedures of the House have been used in a way that was never intended, it is reasonable to plug the gaps and to eliminate the weaknesses that are exposed by such unintended use. I add to that the hope expressed by you, Mr. Speaker, that we shall not go through this kind of thing again.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): My right hon. and learned Friend made consistent reference to motions being used in a way that was not intended. May I refer him to the ruling of the Speaker in 1927 on which our privileges have been based ever since? That ruling specifically said that altering time and seeking extra time was not solely within the competence of the Government but was rightly also within the province of private Members. How is it an abuse if that was what the Speaker ruled?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The target of the report that we are debating was not the impact of decisions or wishes of the Government on anything but the potential impact of one set of private Members' rights on another set of private Members' rights. It is that balance which the report carefully seeks to maintain. In paragraph 5 the Committee said:

> "Our fundamental approach in tackling this problem has been to seek to preserve and strengthen the balance between, on the one hand, the rights of private Members to have their balloted Motions debated without disruption, and, on the other, the legitimate expectations of Members with Bills in the first six allotted places".

So it is not a matter between the Executive and private Members. It is an attempt to implement a recommendation made by private Members for private Members for the better management of the business of the House.

I believe that the three motions, with the others that were debated, make a sensible package. They have been debated in prime time already for about one and a half hours. We had a substantial debate on the substance earlier this afternoon. We have a further opportunity of debating the motions for the remainder of the hour. On that basis, we shall have debated them for more than enough time to bring the matter to a conclusion at 7 o'clock. I commend the motions to the House.

6.17 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I speak for the second time in support of the motions. Before I come to their merits, although I do not want to repeat at length what I said on the previous occasion, I want to deal with the argument which has been put to us again today that there has been a great conspiracy on the part of the Government.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Between the two Front Benches.

Dr. Cunningham: I should remind my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) of what I said in the previous debate. I consulted Back-Bench Members of the parliamentary Labour party in public at a meeting which was advertised on the Whip. My hon. Friend was probably doing something important, but he did not come to that meeting.

Mr. Skinner: I was probably in the Chamber——

Dr. Cunningham: He probably was.

Mr. Skinner: —doing the job for which I am paid.

Dr. Cunningham: There has been every opportunity on this side of the House for consultation and discussion, and there is to be a free vote. I shall list my hon. Friends who served on the Committee: the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther), for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who is in his place, and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who was here earlier. They are not the kind of people to join any conspiracy with the Treasury Bench or, in many cases, with this Front Bench. I do not think there is a shred of evidence to sustain the conspiracy argument.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), for whom I have a high personal regard—*[Interruption.]* I have a high personal regard for my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover too, but I do not agree with him on this matter.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed cannot sustain his argument; there is no validity in it. He has not a shred of evidence to support his argument.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is serving on a Select Committee at this moment. He told me that if he had been able to take part in the debate he would have wanted to draw attention to the fact that in the Procedure Committee he moved and voted on an amendment that was a much better compromise than that which is being offered to us today.

Dr. Cunningham: We should have argued about the merits of the proposed changes. I do not suggest for a moment that all my hon. Friends agree with the view that I have expressed about the proposed changes. However, I believe that they disagree with those who say that in bringing the recommendations before the House in this way they have somehow been involved in a behind-the-scenes deal with the Government. That is not true. That is not true in my case, either.

We are trying to protect Back Benchers from the depredations of other Back Benchers. That is the force of the argument for change. Back-Bench Members' time is not being dramatically changed by the proposals, except in one instance. It is unacceptable that, with the shortest period of notice, a Back Bencher can move a motion in the Chamber to change our Standing Orders. The proper way to change Standing Orders is for the House to set up a Select Committee of Back Benchers to take evidence and

to come back to the House with recommendations. That is the orderly way to change our procedures, and that is the proposal. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that I do not accept the argument that, willy-nilly, at short notice, Back Benchers should have the right to come into the Chamber, move a motion and turn the procedures of the House upside down.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend will, I am sure, want to make it clear that a motion would have to be on the Order Paper before it could be moved. Hon. Members, therefore, would be notified. Furthermore, there would have to be a majority for the motion. Surely those are two enormous safeguards.

Dr. Cunningham: That is a statement of fact, so it has to be right. However, I do not accept that that is the best way to examine the procedures of the House. It would be better to appoint a Select Committee of Back Benchers to consider the matter thoroughly. Interested though I was in my hon. Friend's amusing speech earlier today, it was nevertheless an attempt to prevent the House from reaching a decision today. I am in favour of the House reaching a decision on these matters.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I apologise for the fact that, because of official business with a Select Committee, I was unable to be here for the earlier debate. I can attest to the consultation procedures to which my hon. Friend properly referred. However, does he not agree that he is now dealing with two distinct, albeit connected, issues? I agree with my hon. Friend and the Leader of the House about the first—the use of private Members' motions to change the Standing Orders relating to private Members' Bills. However, my hon. Friend has introduced another element: that the House can change any Standing Order with or without notice. I take his point that there is a connection in this instance, but are they not two separate issues that ought to be debated separately instead of together?

Dr. Cunniagham: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but I do not agree with it. That would be another means to cause delay. All hon. Members who are in the Chamber know what the issues are. The report has been before us for many months. We had an opportunity to debate it on an earlier occasion. There can be no confusion about what the House is being asked to decide. My hon. Friend may have made a pedantic point, but it is not a point of major substance, or one with which I can agree.

I intend to support the motion in the Lobby.

6.24 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I spoke earlier only on the procedural motion. I wish to make three specific points. The Procedure Committee attempted to ensure fairness for those who are successful in the ballot for private Members' motions and for those who are successful in the ballot to introduce private Members' Bills. They have little enough time. If hon. Members were advocating more time, it would be a different matter. We should thank the Government for providing an additional day.

The Procedure Committee has tried to safeguard the rights of hon. Members who are successful in the ballots so that their motions can be properly debated. Neither writs nor petitions should curtail their time. The Procedure Committee has not limited the time in which hon. Members who are successful in the ballots can discuss these matters; they can be discussed at other times. Writs could be discussed in Government time. I should have thought that that would be an advantage for Back-Benchers; writs would not be dealt with in private Members' time. The Procedure Committee suggests that petitions should be dealt with at the end of the day instead of the beginning.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) argued that an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) altered the package. That is not correct. The amendment would have provided additional time—it would not have altered the package—for private Members' Bills. The Government have met that point to some extent by providing an additional day.

Whenever there is a request for Standing Orders to be changed, the Procedure Committee is asked to examine the request and make recommendations. Hon. Members who are against the motion believe that they will lose their special rights, or privilege, to introduce Bills. They want to be granted special rights to introduce a motion, thus taking precedence over other hon. Members who have been successful in the ballot. That is unfair and should be stopped. It was seen by the House to be unfair. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) spoke for three hours on one occasion to prevent a Bill from being debated. We want to save the hon. Member for Bolsover the trouble of having to speak for three hours to prevent queue jumping.

The Procedure Committee heard a great deal of evidence on the subject and has provided a complete package. The evidence is printed at the back of the Committee's report. The Procedure Committee wants to safeguard Back Benchers' rights. The rights of Opposition Front-Bench and Treasury Bench Members are unaffected; they have nothing to gain or lose by this. The fact that the Government have found so much time to debate the matter—twice in prime time—is excellent.

Mr. Cryer: Suspicious.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman says that it is suspicious. Is not that what hon. Members want? Do they not keep pressing the Government for more time? Is that not what Back Benchers keep asking the Leader of the House to do? The moment that it is done it is called suspicious. Hon. Members cannot have it both ways. It has been done for the benefit of Back Benchers. We should thank the Government and not be bloody-minded about it.

6.29 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, to leave out paragraph (d).

I shall be very brief as other hon. Members wish to speak. I shall not repeat my arguments on the main issue although I remain of the view that it is hard to tell Back Benchers that they should never do what the Government do every day—seek more time for Bills. I wish to concentrate on my amendment to leave out paragraph (d).

The motion has a far wider effect than the Chairman of the Procedure Committee or the Leader of the House have admitted. It precludes private Members from ever using private Members' time to bring about a change in the Standing Orders. I am not sure whether the hon. Member

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) followed that point. I agree with him that the most desirable way to change the Standing Orders, if there is a problem, is to refer the matter to the Procedure Committee, get a report and act on that report. But what happens if the Government do not provide time for the report? My experience is that they choose to provide time for those reports which, for one reason or another, they wish to bring forward.

The Chairman of the Procedure Committee, the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) will be the first to realise the many occasions when I served on that Committee on which we could not get some of our proposals before the House. If, in those circumstances, he and other hon. Members decided that enough was enough —that one of us has won the ballot, so we shall bring forward the changes and not be fobbed off by the Government any longer because they do not like the changes—we would be unable to table a motion to give effect to the Procedure Committee's recommendations because it would not be receivable in the Table Office. All that we can do is table a take-note motion which does not have any effect. The Government are off the hook again because they do not have to proceed with the matter.

Sir Peter Emery: It would be quite possible for the Procedure Committee to move a motion asking for time, but any report of the Procedure Committee should be approved by the House and then acted upon by the Government. We could pass that quite easily.

Mr. Beith: Any motion to give effect to changes in the Standing Orders, which is what is required to change Standing Orders, would be precluded at the Table Office. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor I nor anyone else could get past the Table Office clerks, who would be bound by the motion to say that amending or varying any Standing Order is prohibited by the motion. I do not understand why the Leader of the House included that prohibition in the motion. It widens it far beyond its original purpose.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman and others will accept my amendment even if they do not agree that it is also legitimate for hon. Members to seek the approval of the House for further time for private Members' Bills. That is a separate issue. Why it has been wrapped up in this motion, I do not know, but the effect is to place a clear limitation on hon. Members. Perhaps the Leader of the House is not in a conspiracy; perhaps he is as innocent as he so often looks and does not realise that that is the effect of the motion. That is a possible explanation.

Mr. Spearing: Without taking any view on the timetable motion, suspicions or anything else, I understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the Leader of the House included paragraph (d). I understand that there was a procedural motion without notice. Would not the whole matter be resolved at a subsequent stage, if it is not acceptable to the Leader of the House tonight, by stating that any procedural motion must have so many days' notice? The question of Back Benchers' rights would remain open and everyone would be protected by the notice required.

Mr. Beith: I agree with that observation and I am in favour of requirements of notice being laid on individual Members and the Government. Both should have to give notice of changes in Standing Orders.

Dr. Cunningham: I want to get the record straight. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that he understood why the Leader of the House and I had included that change. I make it absolutely clear that I had nothing to do with the drafting of the motions on the Order Paper. Of course, I studied them and agreed to support them, as I have made clear, but I was not involved in drafting them. I must say to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that it is not that I do not understand what he is saying; I simply do not agree with him.

Mr. Beith: I think that the hon. Gentleman should agree with me. I tell many of my constituents in many cases, "If only you had looked at the small print." At some time in the future, hon. Members will say, "If only we had looked at the small print because we are precluded from bringing about changes which the Procedure Committee has recommended and the Government do not like, or in some other way acting in a perfectly proper manner to serve the interests of our constituents and the House." For the moment hon. Members should forget whatever views they may have had on a controversial instance in the past, look at the merits of the argument and read the small print.

6.34 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate and I shall be brief as I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

The motion is utterly disgraceful. It proposes to remove from Back Benchers the last shreds of their rights to influence the business of the House. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House has not addressed himself to the principal issue that I raised last time—the difference between obstructive activity and that which seeks the will of the House.

Only one hon. Member has to decide to move a by-election writ and talk for three hours. Some hon. Members can present petitions all morning but there is no way in which the House can give precedence or extra time to any Bill or have a Standing Order changed without the will of the House. The first motion means that an hon. Member cannot ask the House to decide whether we shall change a Standing Order or give a Bill extra time.

I have been very restrained about answering this allegation in the past, but in view of the fact that yet again reference has been made to queue jumping, I should like to point out to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee that the Bill for which I was seeking time came up after the six Bills that were ahead of it in the ballot. I did not seek immediate consideration of all stages; I sought Second Reading only, so it stayed very firmly in its place in the queue and there was no queue jumping. Had there been queue jumping the queue could not have been jumped without the will of the House and that is crucial.

The motion says that Back Benchers may not seek the will of the House. My amendment, which you quite properly did not call, Mr. Speaker, tried to meet the case that was put last time that a Back Bencher could take up a great deal of time on the Floor of the House in discussing a Bill that did not have much support and then try to push

something through on a small vote. My amendment was trying to make certain that there was substantial support across the House before any such motion could be tabled and I am sorry that you did not call it.

It really is a question of protecting our last rights. If those rights go, there will be no other way than by lottery that an hon. Member can come to the House and ask for any change in Standing Orders. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was quite right to say that, if the Government of the day do not want to do something, the Procedure Committee, Select Committees or anyone else will not be able to ask individual hon. Members to use their place in the ballot to propose respectable recommendations. If we pass the motion, we shall be totally at the mercy of the Executive. That is why there is agreement between the two Front Benches. There will simply be nothing left. We have had those rights for years. I regret that tonight's debate is not better attended so that people can hear the arguments.

6.37 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, you had a request under Standing Order No. 20 for a debate on an important matter that was urgent and specific. I do not know and I am not asking you why you turned down that application, but we could have been debating that issue had a different decision been made.

We would have been debating the social fund and the fact that according to the courts in some circumstances people can claim money that the Government have deprived them of in the past few years. Nearly all Opposition Members would have preferred to discuss the social fund, and those poor people who do not have two ha'pennies to rub together, instead of messing about with a motion which has come from the belly of the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). He spawned it and he did not know what he was doing when he produced it.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has shown that the hon. Member for Honiton has gone a bridge too far—he is taking away powers without even knowing that he is doing it. The Leader of the House, the Chairman of the Procedure Committee and my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) have not explained the answers to the charges that have been made on three separate occasions by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

It is shabby that we should be spending our time attempting to stop Members moving writs. Some might regard it as fantasy land, but imagine what would happen if the Government did not want to move a writ for the Mid-Staffordshire by-election. Suppose the Government thought that because of public attitudes to the poll tax, high interest and mortgage rates and so on, they would not, despite their 150 majority over Labour, go ahead with the Mid-Staffordshire writ. Indeed, suppose the Government went against an earlier decision and moved an amendment stating that the by-election must be held within, say, three months.

Suppose that the initiative of an Opposition Member was required to tell the people of Mid-Staffordshire, "You will have the chance of a by-election." The Government might vote that down, but at least the voters of Mid-Staffordshire would have been alerted to the fact that the Labour party, through one of its Back Benchers, was prepared to try to secure a by-election. That type of scenario might be remote, but the opportunity that now exists for a Back Bencher to take the initiative is being taken from us.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): In private Members' time.

Mr. Skinner: Private Members raise issues that the Government dare not touch. There have been many occasions when private Members have brought forward on a Friday issues that the Government would not raise. Indeed, the hon. Member for Honiton brought forward a private Member's Bill recently and managed to obtain a Second Reading.

Dr. Cunningham: The effect of what is before the House would not prevent any Opposition Member from moving a writ for a by-election. It would simply prevent it happening in private Members' time. We would not be giving up the right to move a writ for a by-election if we decided to move a writ. A danger of moving a writ for a by-election against the Government's desire is that, if it is voted down, there cannot be a by-election in that Session of Parliament.

Mr. Skinner: I appreciate what my hon. Friend is telling me and I do not need to be educated on the subject. I fear, however, that he is wrong. Such matters on a Friday come up as first business. From Monday to Thursday they come up at the commencement of the sitting, before Question Time, and, as Government business, they are held over. From then on the Government are in control. We had an example of that once this Session.

That is why I say that a different set of circumstances applies on Fridays. Why does my hon. Friend think that the proposed prohibitions and bans have arisen? On Friday the Government do not always have 120 Members present. They do not want to be burdened every Friday with having to contend with a Back-Bench adventure. On Fridays, the Government are not always in control of the activities of Back Benchers.

The Government do not want to be bothered every Friday with such matters. Ministers and others on the Government Benches want to be elsewhere. They do not want to have to keep sufficient supporters here to control the House. The hon. Member for Honiton will recall that when, on a recent Friday, he secured a Second Reading for his Bill, only 53 Members voted for the closure motion. That is how the Government like it. They love it because it enables Ministers to trot around the country on photo opportunities, on fact-finding tours and doing whatever else they want to do.

Let us deal with the nitty-gritty of the matter. It is nonsense to say that the Government are worried about the business of Back Benchers on Fridays. It is being suggested that the Government are telling us, "We are doing this only because we are trying to look after you on Fridays." Who believes that? After all, the Leader of the House has spent most of his time swanning around the world, at the United Nations and elsewhere, meeting Foreign Ministers and others. Also, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has two houses to visit on Fridays.

Is it really suggested that he is anxious to accommodate Opposition Back Benchers in what they wish to achieve on Fridays? Of course he is not. In the television age he wants to tell the moguls who run the networks, "Here is the business for Friday. We can tell you spot on what will

[Mr. Skinner]

happen next Friday." Every day on programmes about Parliament we read the details of what business will take place here.

From Monday to Thursday the Government can be sure of being right about that—because they are in control of the business, knowing that certain items will be raised, finishing with the Adjournment—but they are never too sure of what will happen on Fridays. Indeed, five or six Bills might be down for discussion on a Friday. Had the hon. Member for Honiton not listened to the advice of the Tory Whip, my hon. Friends and I might have slipped two more Bills through. A Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) nearly got through. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Honiton had his elbow jerked by the Government Whip on duty.

Sir Peter Emery: Keep talking.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman tells me to keep talking. He knows as well as anyone what happens on a Friday. On that day there is always an opportunity for Back Benchers to get something through. Ministers may not be in evidence. So let us put an end to the suggestion that the Leader of the House is worried about Back Benchers and is anxious to make life smooth for us on Fridays.

If that were the case, we would not have occasional Government statements made on Fridays. I am not against the Government making statements on a Friday, when there are not many Members present. In those circumstances I may be called by Mr. Speaker to put a question. That happened last Friday when we discussed Hong Kong.

But it is a bit cheeky for the Government, who may wish to make statements on a Friday for their own benefit, thereby disrupting private Members' time, to say that they are anxious to protect Fridays for Back Benchers. It has been suggested that Government statements have been made deliberately to reduce the time that would otherwise be available on a Friday for a private Member's measure that the Government do not like.

If the Chairman of the Procedure Committee wanted to do something good for Back Benchers, he could have advised the Leader of the House to allocate 10 more Fridays for private Members. The Government occupy the time on some Fridays. Why did not the hon. Member for Honiton have the guts to tell his right hon. and learned Friend that his Committee recommends that Back Benchers should have more time for Adjournments, motions and private Members' Bills? There might not be any queue jumping if more days were allocated for private Members' Bills. That would have been far preferable to the paltry little concession that is being made.

Sir Peter Emery: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would do me the kindness of reading the report.

Mr. Skinner: I have read it.

Sir Peter Emery: In that case, the hon. Gentleman must have overlooked, which is often the case with the hon. Gentleman, the recommendation that extra time should be given twice a week to Back Benchers for Adjournment debates. He should not make the sort of allegations that he is making without knowing the facts, which is often the case with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: I said that the concession was paltry. Indeed, the Leader of the House even forgot that it was in the report. If the hon. Member for Honiton were sensible, he would have said that, in anticipation of the proposals being passed by the House, 10 more Fridays should be provided for private Members' Bills and motions.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) will be aware that, if it is the wish of the House that a Member shall not jump the queue, that is the end of the matter. If a Back Bencher wishes to move a writ, he or she can do that. Although there may have been a majority on Second Reading for the Bill that she introduced, the fact remains that the will of the House on that occasion—and in 1985 when Enoch Powell moved a Bill on the same issue—was to the effect that so-called queue jumping should not occur.

Miss Widdecombe: I cannot quite equate the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) with the will of the House. If he wished to move a by-election writ, he did not have to seek the will of the House; he could go ahead and do it. But I could not get extra time for my Bill unless the House agreed to my having more time. That is the difference between the two.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Lady could not have had her ear close enough to the ground. I assure her that, in the days prior to that Friday, scores of her hon. Friends, some of whom were prepared to support her Bill on Second Reading, told me, "I hope to goodness that you manage to stop it on Friday, Dennis." Certainly Government Members did not want to spend the weekend here; they had had enough having to stay for the Friday—*[Interruption.]* There were a greater number of Members supporting me on the two Fridays when the hon. Lady presented her Bill than I had experienced in 20 years.

I shall tell the Leader of the House what he should do. Why not take the motions one at a time? The right hon. and learned Gentleman has heard the request of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed and if he accepts the amendment, he will do the House and himself a favour. By the time the Prime Minister has finished with the Leader of the House, he could well be a Back Bencher, and he might want to do some of these things on a Friday. He will not always have two houses to sweep and clean with Lady Quango on Friday when we are battling here.

If the Procedure Committee wants to do something decent, I shall give it some ideas. Why not take up the matter of starting our proceedings at 9 am? Why not take up the question of having full-time Members of Parliament? Why not consider ensuring that every Member has one job as a Member of Parliament, and one job only? Why not take up the idea of clocking on, like millions of our constituents have to do? Why not do all those things? A report on those issues would be controversial, and this place would be full to debate it.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about Back Benchers' rights, why did he not take up the matter of the Labour Front Bench using the time for ten-minute Bills, as happened the other day?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That matter should be discussed on another occasion. It does not concern the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Skinner: I must answer that question, Mr. Speaker. One of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench passed the Bill to another Front Bencher. The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has not been a Member long. He is a bit wet behind the ears and he probably did not realise that it had been passed by one Front Bencher to another.

Many improvements could be made for Back Benchers. We are in the so-called television age. If the Chairman of the Procedure Committee wants to do something useful, such as consider those matters that I have suggested—perhaps he and other hon. Members could present a multitude of other issues—he might get some support from those of us who want to take some power from the Executive and hand it to Back Benchers. Over the past 20 years during which I have been a Member, there have been six occasions—many of which have been alluded to—when powers have been taken from Back Benchers, and they have never been restored. It is time that we took some of those powers back.

6.52 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I am sure that we all enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We have discovered what he does in the rare moments when he is not in the Chamber—he has obviously started writing his autobiography. Many of us will look forward to reading it.

There are many arguments about whether there should be more or less time for private Members' business. In a previous incarnation, I sometimes wished that there were no time for that business. Nothing gives a Government Chief Whip more nightmares than the prospect of private Members' business on Friday. It is an art of its own in terms of parliamentary procedure. Over the years, I probably lost more nights' sleep over private business than over everything else put together.

We should not give more time to private Members' business. If the Chairman of the Procedure Committee said that more time should be allocated, I would strongly oppose that view. However, we must strenuously protect the time already given. I have grieved when the time granted has been abused by hon. Members using a number of devices. In the past year or so—I cannot remember the exact time—I unsuspectingly applied to present a petition to the House on a Friday morning. To my horror, I found that there were many other petitions, which were clearly to be presented to block private Members' business. Consequently, I said to the House that I did not intend to present my petition, because I did not think that my constituents would wish to have their petition mixed up in a blocking procedure.

The motions are thoroughly worthy in that their aim is not to remove Members' rights to move writs or present petitions, but solely to protect private Members' time. I hope that the House will support that worthy and laudable aim.

6.54 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): We have been debating a number of different issues more or less simultaneously which may be confusing to those hearing or watching these proceedings. The first part of the debate on these matters was spent deciding how long we should debate them and whether an amendment should be made. In that debate, matters were rehearsed relating to the substance of the motions on the Order Paper.

In the past three quarters of an hour, we have discussed one motion which relates to a well-founded attempt by the Leader of the House, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Mr. Cunningham), to stop a gap which was ingeniously discovered by the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and her hon. Friends in pursuit of a controversial private Member's Bill. A gap in the procedures was found by which to extend, through private Members' motions, the opportunity for debate on private Members' Bills, which were otherwise limited in time. None of us would deny the hon. Lady's right to attempt that.

The main question is whether, in the balance of the private Members' time available, that facility should be used and whether it is desirable. Although I agree that the hon. Member for Maidstone had the right to make that attempt, the balance of private Members' time should be retained as it is, and that path should be closed. I disagree in some measure with the motion because of the method used to close it. I am concerned with paragraph (d). I fully understand why it was inserted.

It would seem necessary and common sense to deal with the situation precipitated by the hon. Member for Maidstone. I understand that the motion was tabled without much notice. I agree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that, perhaps inadvertently, the inclusion of paragraph (d) precludes any Member from tabling a motion to amend Standing Orders at any time, however much notice is given—whether it has been promoted by the Procedure Committee or otherwise. That encroachment on private Members' rights may need to be considered again.

I ask the Leader of the House, who takes these matters seriously and my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland to consider the motion again, if it is passed, so that Members' rights are maintained without allowing the route taken by the hon. Member for Maidstone to be followed. I hope that, even if the Leader of the House cannot accept an amendment—I hope that he will—the motion will be ameliorated.

6.58 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The motions do not touch on the subjects on which the hon. Member for Bolsover, (Mr. Skinner) spoke—the power of Back Benchers and the right of the legislature to curb the Executive. In the two minutes that are left I simply wish to say that I hope that the House will do something to redress the balance between the power of the legislature and the power of the Executive.

The House should be a curb on the Executive which scrutinises properly. Instead we have become a tool of the Executive. That has distorted the balance of power in this country. It is time for another Dunning's motion that the power of the Executive has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 83, Noes 218.

Division No. 90] **[7 pm**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Benn, Rt Hon Tony

Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Day, Stephen
Dover, Den
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Gill, Christopher
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Shersby, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Summerson, Hugo
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Beith and
Mr. Nigel Spearing.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Chwyd, Mrs Ann
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John D. Taylor
Mr. Sidney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put successively the Question already proposed and the Questions on such of the remaining motions as might then be made.*

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 73.

Division No. 91] **[7.12 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bradley, Keith
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Galloway, George
Gill, Christopher
Gordon, Mildred
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heffer, Eric S.
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Knowles, Michael
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marlow, Tony
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Speed, Keith
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Bennett and
Mr. Gary Waller.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That—

Private Members Motions (Business of the House)

Unless the House otherwise orders, Private Members' notices of motions shall not be received for any day other than an early day, if—

(a) with respect to any private Member's bill, they would have an effect similar to that of motions of which notice may be given under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business);

(b) they would have the effect of varying the practice of the House or the provisions of Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings) or Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) so far as concerns the precedence, arrangement or timing of business;

(c) they would have the effect of allocating time to any proceedings;

(d) they would have the effect of amending or varying any Standing Order; or

(e) they would have the effect, whether by amendment or by the making of a new Order, of dispensing with or varying the effect of, this Order.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Standing Order No. 133 (No debate on presentation of Petition) be repealed and the following Standing Order be made—

Time and manner of presenting petitions

(1)—Every petition presented under Standing Order No. 132 (Presentation of petitions) not containing matter in breach of the privileges of this House, and which according to the rules or usual practice of this House can be received, shall be brought to the Table—

(a) on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, after a Member of the government shall have signified his intention to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion, or after a Minister of the Crown shall have signified his intention to move, pursuant to Standing Order No. 10 (Sittings of the House (suspended sittings)) 'That the proceedings of this day's sitting be suspended', and

(b) on Fridays, at the commencement of public business; provided that petitions remaining to be presented at Ten o'clock on a Friday on which private Members' bills or Motions have precedence under Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall stand over and may be brought to the Table after a member of the government shall have signified his intention to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion.

(2) Proceedings under paragraph (1)(a) and (1)(b) of this Order shall not be interrupted at Ten o'clock or at half past Two o'clock respectively.

(3) Mr. Speaker shall not allow any debate, or any Member to speak upon, or in relation to, such petition; but it may be read by the Clerk if required.—*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 35.

Division No. 92] **[7.24 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*

Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Callaghan, Jim
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Gordon, Mildred
Heffer, Eric S.
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Livingstone, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Richardson, Jo
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

New Writs

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That if a Motion to the effect that Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member is proposed to be made or is made after prayers on any day on which private Members' bills or notices of motion have precedence, and is opposed, proceedings thereon shall lapse.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 40.

Division No. 93] **[7.35 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Callaghan, Jim
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gordon, Mildred
Heffer, Eric S.
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Knowles, Michael
Livingstone, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Government Trading Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 2

MAINTENANCE OF STANDARD CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF CIVIL SERVANTS

'All Civil Servants working within an area of work within a department where a Government Trading Fund is in operation shall be subject to the same general conditions of appointment, service and promotion as exist in the Civil Service generally. Where it is deemed to be necessary to vary those conditions a ballot must first be held of all staff affected and the result of the ballot must show a majority of votes cast for the changes contemplated.'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.47 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Opposition tabled the new clause because there is some anxiety about the conditions of service, appointment and promotion in the Civil Service. The service is likely to undergo quite a change in organisation, management and accountability to Parliament, and the new clause seeks to ensure that the same general conditions of appointment, service and promotion as exist in the Civil Service generally will obtain in any agency in which a Government trading fund is, or will be, in operation.

When those conditions are varied, we seek to establish a necessary condition before such variation. It is that a ballot must first be held among affected staff, and its result must show a majority of votes cast in favour of the contemplated changes.

Governments should be able to do certain things; certain changes should not be subject to negotiation with Civil Service unions or employees. For instance, a party might give a clear manifesto commitment to setting up a Ministry of Justice. If it won the general election on that manifesto, civil servants could be separated from, say, the Home Office and sent to work in the new Ministry. Any Government must have a right to do that.

It is difficult for the Opposition to draft new clauses, because they lack the expertise of parliamentary draftsmen. It could be said that there are some imperfections in the new clause, but the spirit of it is clear. I hope that the Minister will be able to comment on some of the questions asked by the Opposition.

Other conditions such as local pay, bonus schemes and promotion procedures could be varied. There is a clear case for making changes only after consultation with the staff, and some should be made only after the agreement of the staff. I am not suggesting that that must be the case, but if, for example, a Government proposed that the number of days of annual leave should be reduced for no good reason, the staff would have to agree to that and receive extra pay or other benefits. If the country becomes wealthier, a Government may never need to do such a thing. Staff should be consulted on a large range of matters and, of course, they should be consulted through the

recognised channels, and that means through the recognised Civil Service trade unions. I shall say no more about that because it is only by way of explanation.

The meat of the new clause is in the first part. Promotion procedures, terms and general conditions of appointment that exist in the service now should exist in agencies. In future, better conditions could obtain in agencies, but we certainly do not want to see worse conditions.

There are persistent rumours about moves away from the traditional trade union negotiating machinery. Those rumours have not been substantiated. The framework agreement for the proposed Employment Services Agency does not mention any recognised procedures of Civil Service unions. That worries the Opposition. Civil servants who have an interest in these matters and certainly some people in Civil Service trade unions and people who hold office in those unions have the feeling that there will be changes. They are not spoken about at present, but there is a feeling that perhaps the traditional trade union negotiating machinery will not continue if the Conservatives win the next general election and are in power in the 1990s. Coupled with that, there is a feeling that there is in progress a gradual derecognition of trade unions.

Before going into those matters in some detail, I shall give some good news about Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The staff there are currently negotiating a new pay grading package and I understand from talking to civil servants that the negotiations are going well. I commend HMSO on its approach. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether such negotiations are envisaged for any other agency with a Government trading fund. If it is, many people will be much happier and will sleep much better tonight.

HMSO was initially set a financial objective of a return of 5 per cent. on net assets in the form of a current cost operating surplus. The framework document said that progressively more demanding financial objectives would be laid down by the Treasury. That has proved to be the case and the return of 5 per cent. has been increased to 8 per cent. Opposition Members are familiar with that process because it is similar to the one applied to health authorities which have to find efficiency savings every year, those savings being added on by the Department of Health as real increases in money available to the National Health Service. Only so much can be squeezed out of an orange or out of HMSO. It clearly can effect savings by producing Acts of Parliament with smaller print. No doubt that will be one of the options considered by the chief executive. It may go outside and perhaps print Jeffrey Archer's books so that it can make a profit to enable it to carry on with the standards of service that we have been used to. If it tried to get the contract for printing the Prime Minister's memoirs, that would be a retrograde step.

HMSO provides a quick and efficient service and prints on reasonable paper in a reasonable format because that is necessary for the public. I do not argue that no financial considerations should be applied, but one can push such considerations until they have a negative effect upon the well-being of the country. Similarly, the Central Office of Information is to have trading fund status if the Bill becomes an Act. We are worried about the exact conditions and procedures for the COI when it operates a trading fund. The cheapest way to disseminate public information is not to disseminate it at all. Questions will be asked and certainly the chief executive of the COI will ask whether it is worth publishing so much information. He will ask whether it will cost too much. The price of paper might rise. Will that mean staff cuts because at least some information must be published on paper?

There are other problems. The COI provides information for other Governments and shows visiting Ministers around the country and provides briefings for them. Hon. Members take part in that valuable exercise. Does that mean that, if the COI is short of money in February or March and has to make a 5 or 8 per cent. return on assets employed, it will think that perhaps if it charges too much the Department sponsoring the visit—the Treasury or the Department of the Environment—might not accept its offer? It might think, "We will not show the visiting Minister Cardiff or Swansea, but we shall make him put up with visiting Coulsdon or Surbiton." I do not know the answer to those questions, but they must be addressed. There are reservations about the operation of trading funds and clarity is necessary.

There are other management problems. Companies house in Cardiff had a strike for about one day last year after an employee was suspended for five weeks. The dispute was eventually settled, but it should not have occurred in the first place. My understanding, such as it is from reading about the matter in the papers and talking to some of the civil servants who were involved, is that it was a problem not of new prodecures but possibly of macho management and the breaching of existing procedures.

If a civil servant or other employee does something wrong that merits suspension, surely the proper procedure is for that employee to be asked for an explanation and to be accompanied by a representative when the explanation is considered. After that, management has the right to take action and, if it thinks fit, to suspend the employee. I understand that in the case that I have mentioned that was not done and that there was a hasty recourse to suspension. The staff felt that the existing well-tried and constituted procedures were not being used and, as a result, I regret that over-hasty industrial action occurred. I am sure that the Minister will agree that the Government have to make sure that only the best management practices are used and the best managers employed to be chief executives of agencies. We do not want any macho men.

I have some specific questions for the Minister, and they are topical because they relate to the Employment Services Agency that will be created on 1 April. Is it intended that the agency will have a trading fund? I suspect that it will, and that raises questions about how the agency will operate. There is much concern about that. If it has a trading fund, how will it operate so that it commands the respect of the Civil Service and of those people who are seeking jobs through the various organisations that will depend on the agency?

8 pm

Secondly, the first draft of the employment services framework agreement was received by the Civil Service trade unions on 16 February. I am told that management will want all discussions and consultations—the whole package—wrapped up and ready to be implemented by 16 March.

I know that the Financial Secretary gave a fair commitment in Committee that there would be meaningful negotiations at departmental level with management and the recognised Civil Service unions. However, a month is

too short, because there is no time for the unions to circulate papers for discussion. Perhaps all this was in the pipeline, well before we had the debate on the Bill. Perhaps a slot in the timetable for all the various processes had already been made and management were reticent to extend that timetable. I do not know whether that is right, and I do not know whether trade unions are able to have meaningful discussions in a month. I hope that they will try and, equally, I hope that the Civil Service management will pay attention to what the Financial Secretary has said and will co-operate.

I hope that there will be no problems as a result of the timetable, and that there will be no complaints from the trade unions that they have been unduly stampeded and that they have been unable to consult properly about the framework agreement. Can the Financial Secretary assure me that adequate time will be given for those discussions?

Thirdly, there is no reference in the framework document to existing trade unions, or to existing negotiating structures. That is somewhat upsetting, and it gives concern to Opposition Members. The previous framework documents had references to existing Civil Service unions and negotiation structures. I do not know why the proposed framework document does not have such references. I should have thought that it would be sensible to continue to have them. Is there any reason for this? If it is an oversight, it ought to be put right, because it would help squash the rumours that there is a move away from the traditional negotiating structure, which is well tried and tested and has worked very well in the Civil Service. It would also squash rumours that perhaps there is a move to derecognise Civil Service trade unions. I shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say.

Fourthly, if the Minister says, "Don't worry," and that the management of the Civil Service will consider the problems after the agency is set up on 1 April, my supplementary question is: if there is no reference to existing trade unions or negotiating structures in the present framework agreement, how will problems be patched up after April if the agreement is changed in the meantime?

It is important that there is some reference to those structures and I hope—perhaps as a result of discussions with Civil Service trade unions—that we can get this agreement right. I do not believe that previous framework agreements have been broadly right. I am not objecting to their content and coverage, but the new agreement seems to be a slight departure. For example, the same time has not been taken over discussions—some of the previous agreements took about a year. I know that we have had about three previous framework documents, so perhaps this one should be a little quicker. However, there has been a departure from the previous agreements, and hon. Members are worried about the change.

At present staff in agencies have remained civil servants, employed by the appropriate Department, and they are broadly subject to the existing terms and conditions that civil servants are subject to elsewhere. There are some changes. There are delegated personnel management functions, such as those at Companies house, Cardiff. There are performance bonus schemes on the horizon as well as salary grading structures and variations on those.

Another problem is that the management at Companies house, Cardiff sought to exclude the employees from a bonus scheme if they had more than 24 days sick leave. Women tend to take more sick leave than men, for various reasons. Clearly if one applies that 24-day policy it will be unfair and will discriminate against women. I suspect that we need to think about the type of management at Companies house, Cardiff, at the moment. I hope that they are learning, because we do not want that sort of upset to be continually reported in the newspapers, as has been the case with the problems at Companies house.

Certain principles need to be adhered to and they have been clearly put down by the Council of Civil Service Unions. I have here a document from the CPSA which lists seven points, saying that staff in agencies should

"(a) remain civil servants"—

I do not think that there is any dispute between Members on the Front Benches about that, unless the agencies are eventually privatised, and I add that as a caveat——

"(b) remain available for transfer to other parts of the Civil Service;"—

I must confess that the Financial Secretary, in Committee, gave a useful assurance on that matter—

"(c) remain covered by the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme;
(d) continue to enjoy the best possible promotion prospects by the continued limiting of direct recruitment;
(e) remain subject to pay rates determined by National pay arrangements and agreements;
(f) retain the protection of National rules governing recruitment, probation and dismissal procedures;
(g) continue to be covered by National terms and Conditions of Service."

I do not think that any hon. Member wants to see people on low pay in the north of England simply because there is higher unemployment there. I do not think that any hon. Member wants to see difficulties for civil servants in certain agencies because the management feel that they can employ staff on lower pay or lower conditions of service than management in other agencies.

We have a national Civil Service. We should be proud of it, and we should pay for it. I hope that the Minister accepts that that is an entirely reasonable demand, and that he can see his way, if not to accept the new clause, to give an assurance that the Government accept the intent of what we seek to achieve.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): The debate on new clause 2 is slightly different from the discussion in Committee not so long ago. However, I think that it is worth reiterating the fears and worries of Opposition Members about what will happen to the professional conditions of service and the value of the Civil Service. We can be given assurances that everything will be all right, but I and my hon. Friends believe that we need those assurances in writing. We hope that the Minister, the Secretary of State and the Government will honour the assurances and pledges that they have given in the House tonight.

We are discussing conditions of service, which are valuable to people in all walks of life, no matter what their profession, training or job. It is important that we ensure that we do not leave any uncertainties about what the future holds for the staff concerned. It is essential for professional civil servants to have the opportunity to enhance their careers and conditions of employment by being able to transfer to another division, which, as has already been pointed out, may be impossible if they are working in smaller units.

When staff are placed in separate units and individual funding is introduced, there is a danger of isolation and a

"divide and rule" mentality. People who are now working in a large professional group in which the structures and financing are generally understood may find that, once they are working in small, isolated units, they are not only vulnerable for reasons of costing and funding, but isolated from colleagues in similar professions all over the country. Such financial pressures could worsen the conditions of staff gradually, group by group.

I have worked for large corporations—including the British Steel Corporation, before it showed me the door—and remember similar financial arrangements. Staff were organised into groups with their own operating plans, which they had to abide by in order to survive. I was working in research. My colleagues and I found ourselves in a financial straitjacket which, eventually, made us less efficient and less professional; as a result, the confidence and morale of the whole department became lower and lower. The agencies and funding organisations for which the Bill provides must not be isolated and forced to make decisions that will be detrimental not only to staff conditions but, eventually, to the entire service.

Many of us criticise some of the actions of the Civil Service, but it is still seen throughout the world as perhaps the most professional service anywhere. That did not happen by accident; it is the result of years of experience. Governments of all persuasions have used and appreciated the service in the past, and, we hope, will be able to do the same in future. I do not see the point of changing the system, but the Government are plainly determined to do so. All that we can do is to ensure that professionalism, efficiency and, of course, the work force are protected.

New clause 2 would ensure that that protection was provided through some form of national agreement. The Government do not have a very good record on trade union relations, and I hope that their aim is not to break down the organisations and then pick them up one by one, thereby lowering not only wages but professional standards.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I sympathise with the objectives of the new clause. It is designed to reassure civil servants who are involved in new and, in some respects, experimental developments in Departments in which many have worked for years, and to ensure that major changes are made only in consultation with them.

It is inevitable that the trading fund approach will—as it should—invite greater inventiveness by both management and staff in regard to how jobs can be done most effectively. In some circumstances, that is bound to mean larger rewards being ofered to attract staff to difficult jobs, or to give more recognition to effective performance than traditional Civil Service systems have tended to allow.

Anyone who doubts the need for such action should consider the experience of the tax inspectorate, which—as has been revealed in successive tranches of evidence to Committees of the House—has found it difficult to retain staff in the present competitive environment. Although the tax inspectorate is not a "next steps" agency, its experience demonstrates the difficulty of holding qualified staff with marketable skills when plenty of other employers are prepared to pay much more for those skills.

8.15 pm

I was surprised and concerned to find that Civil Service management had been so hamstrung in the past: a private operator has to act as a matter of urgency to avoid losing trained staff. If the training agencies do their job, there is bound to be more diversity. Like the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), I do not want whole areas of the country to be designated low-pay areas, and to become centres of primarily part-time employment, just because the Government suddenly see the possibility of a quick cost saving. Much could be lost, especially in the more sensitive spheres. Many of the bodies concerned are either dealing directly with the public on matters of great individual concern involving constitutional rights, or dealing with security matters or confidential information held by Government Departments about individuals. We do not want to lose the valuable concept of a public service.

The question is, can we marry two concepts? I should like to believe that we can obtain greater efficiency in every sense—not just economic efficiency, but an efficient service for the consumer. That may mean a Government Department—and hence the generality of taxpayers—or an individual obtaining a licence, a service, information, a map or a charter from the Government agency. It is essential to carry public sector workers with us, and the new clause is directed to that end. Whether it is slightly too cumbersome to achieve its object, or should be incorporated immediately in the Bill, is a matter for discussion, but I strongly support its general aims and hope that the Minister will find some way of meeting them.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) spoke of the need for assurances in line with the seven points cited by the CPSA which were quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). I feel that those assurances are likely to be required in legislation.

I, too, would like an assurance: that the Government, if they do not accept the new clause because of drafting problems, will be willing to introduce suitable amendments later. I do not really trust general statements that this, that and the other will be protected when they are not written down in statute. Statute applies to the future and, although a future Labour Government may change a good deal of it, much will undoubtedly remain for a long time. There is nothing wrong with getting things right now.

I also hope that the specific assurances that we require will apply to all grades in the Civil Service, and not just to executive grades. Let me stress that the new clause requires a ballot on any planned variation in the conditions of civil servants. The Government are keen to introduce ballots, often of a peculiar nature, in certain circumstances—when they feel that it will benefit them to do so. If there are to be ballots, they should allow civil servants some say in, and control of, transfer arrangements as a consequence of any change in the agency in which they happen to work. It would be a healthy development if such provisions were added to assist the membership of Civil Service unions, by contrast with the kind of ballot provisions that are often brought before the House with the purpose of hemming in organised workers and restricting the development of their collective interests.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I shall respond first to the points made by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), and in doing so, I hope to answer the questions of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), before referring to other contributions.

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

The establishment of a trading fund will not in itself affect the terms and conditions under which civil servants are employed. Departments and agencies are increasingly tailoring their arrangements for personnel to meet their business needs. That process must include the possible introduction of changes in conditions other than those that apply to the Civil Service generally. I stated in Committee that Departments, like all good employers, should, and do, take every step to consult their employees when considering any changes that could have significant implications for them.

Announcing the next steps initiative, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"The Civil Service unions will be consulted about the setting up of particular agencies. They will also be consulted if any change in terms and conditions of civil servants is contemplated."—[*Official Report*, 18 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 1149.]

I reinforce my right hon. Friend's comments by confirming that we shall consult and seek consultations with Civil Service trade unions in sufficient time to allow for meaningful discussions before the introduction of any new agency or trading fund status.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Wrexham welcomes the developments and negotiations in respect of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and its employee representatives. The hon. Gentleman asked whether it will serve as a model for other agencies and trading funds. Clearly it will be up to their managements to make their own proposals. They will not share the same specific problems, situations and opportunities as have arisen in respect of HMSO, but I am sure that the spirit manifest in respect of the negotiations for that body will—in particular because of the warm response that it has received from the Opposition—be emulated by other managers. I am delighted that things have gone well for HMSO, for which I was responsible when it became an agency.

The views and comments of staff and trade unions are an important component in considering change—but ultimately management must take the decisions on how that challenge is met.

The hon. Member for Wrexham asked a number of specific questions, particularly about the Employment Services Agency. He inquired whether it will be transformed into or have a trading fund. At present, it does not fall within the powers of the existing legislation, or as it will be modified by the Bill. Therefore, it will not be possible for the ESA, as it currently operates, to have a trading fund.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there will be sufficient time for consultation with the unions on the framework document that is the precursor to the establishment of an agency for the employment services group. There have been several discussions with the trade unions since February 1988 on the intention to establish an agency. I am confident that there will be further consultation in line with the statement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in time for the completion of the framework document.

The hon. Member for Wrexham asked why the framework agreement does not mention trade union consultation. The Employment Services Agency and the framework document are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. Although I acknowledge that the framework document does not refer specifically to trade unions, it makes the chief executive responsible for conducting "effective employee relations". I expect the hon. Gentleman to agree that that includes consulting staff and trade unions.

Dr. Marek: It will be helpful if the framework document refers specifically to that aspect. The problem is that it does not. If the Government's intention is as the Minister says, they will save themselves a lot of problems, and dispel many rumours, if they will state it clearly.

Mr. Lilley: I shall convey the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The important point is that the framework document spells out the chief executive's responsibility for ensuring "effective employee relations", which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House want to see. Discussions are continuing between management and trade unions on the consultation document, and I am sure that the remarks made during today's debate will be considered in the course of them.

Dr. Marek: Unless a specific reference to trade union consultation is made in the framework document, after April no structure will exist for it. I repeat that it will be useful if that aspect is included in the finalised document.

Mr. Lilley: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but the absence of a specific reference to trade union consultation does not alter the substantive position and the natural relationship between management, employees and trade unions in any Department, which I hope will continue in a constructive and co-operative way.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) said that we have the finest Civil Service in the world and that we do not want to undermine it in any way—I entirely agree. My experience as a Minister has revealed and confirmed that we have a very good Civil Service, of which we as a country can be proud. I cannot agree that it should necessarily be petrified and not be subject to change to take advantage of the best management thinking and practice. I am sure that the Civil Service would not wish to be fossilised. The development of agencies is entirely compatible with the Civil Service's fine traditions.

The hon. Member for Heeley asked whether the Government are planning to erode the conditions under which civil servants work. We want the management of agencies and trading funds to enjoy flexibility. It is not our intention that that should be used to lower standards but to make standards and conditions more appropriate, where necessary. In many circumstances, change may not be necessary. In others, such as with HMSO, it may be desirable to make conditions more relevant to the type of agency and its function.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) supports the general objective of new clause 2, even if he thinks it is a little heavy-handed. I sympathise with the underlying principles that motivate the Opposition in tabling the new clause, but I have even stronger reservations about its effectiveness in achieving the Opposition's objectives and about its desirability. Therefore, I cannot recommend that the House accepts new clause 2.

8.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I apologise to the House because, although I was put on the Standing Committee, for reasons that the Government Whip understands, it took place at the same time as the Committee stage of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, so I did not attend the Committee. The House should understand that if an hon. Member has been extremely active, and has taken up two thirds of the time in Committee, as I did on the PSA Bill, one cannot absent oneself.

I was curious as to what answer the Minister would give to the pertinent questions put by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). I want to ask two short questions and a long question. First, may we have clarification as to why the measure, like so many others, is being dealt with by the Treasury? What has become of the Minister for the Civil Service? It is not my nature to complain about the discourtesy of not being here. I am not in any way sniping or getting at the Minister for the Civil Service, who is one of the most courteous Members in the House, but I am curious about what has become of the Civil Service Department.

Am I right in assuming that, by degrees, control of all matters in relation to the Civil Service has gone back to the Treasury, that the Minister for the Civil Service is a Minister only in name on Monday afternoons to answer parliamentary questions, and that his real function and role are as Minister for the Arts? *[Laughter.]* Because of the ministerial mirth, I suspect that is about right. We should have explained to us why, over the months and years, the Civil Service Department has been eroded and, as so often before, power has returned whence it came and whence it always will come, the Treasury. Incidentally, I do not say that it is a bad thing, but I think it should be clarified.

Mr. Lilley: If I may clarify it briefly, the Bill is a trading funds Bill, although you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have allowed us to range more widely and to talk about agencies. That is only an indirect aspect of the Bill. The Bill is about Government accounting and trading funds. It has much to do with accounts and accountability. That is why the Treasury has taken the lead. I would have been only too delighted to hand the matter over to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Dalyell: I take that with a pinch of salt. I do not think that the Treasury is ever delighted to hand over power, but we shall let that pass.

My second question is a gentle one. The Minister has said that every reasonable step is taken to consult, and I have no doubt that he meant it, but he also talked about consultation in sufficient time. One lesson that I have learnt from the saga, if I may put it that way, of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers is that consultation, where it has taken place, has been rather sudden.

Is the Minister sure that there is sufficient time for proper consultation on decisions that affect the lives of individuals? Trade unions do not complain for fun about not having time properly to consult. There are great difficulties for people who have to move, often in groups, from one part of the country to another. People have mortgages and children at school. Human problems arise. May we have the absolute assurance that there is sufficient time for consultation?

My third question was prompted by Professor Peter Hennessy, a professor at Strathclyde. On 9 February, when referring to the Public Accounts Committee and the performance of Parliament, he told a large audience in Glasgow:

"performance is very patchy and, in one case, that of the Public Accounts Committee, is invariably far superior to the rest. Why? Because the PAC has superb back up in the shape of the National Audit Office and the rest do not. I think it was the former MP for Canterbury, David Crouch, who said the difference between the PAC and a standard department-shadowing select committee was the difference between a management consultancy and a pressure group. He's exactly right. I hope the Procedure Committee under Sir Peter Emery, which is currently looking at the power and the back-up of select committees, will have something robust to say about this when they report—and about the ludicrously restrictive 'Osmotherly Rules' which give civil servant witnesses 60 ways of saying 'I can't answer that' when they appear before select committees."

I want to take the opportunity to ask about the protection of civil servants appearing before Select Committees of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the new clause before us. I do not think that it relates to that. I have given the hon. Gentleman quite a bit of licence.

Mr. Dalyell: I just hoped, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you would give me even more rope. I was straying into a question that interests me greatly. I suspect that I shall have to write a letter, drawing the attention of the Minister to the guidelines for giving evidence to departmental Select Committees.

Without going over paragraph 4 of the guidelines, I want to ask the Minister one question. Is he sure that civil servants, from agencies or anything covered by the Bill, have the protection that they should be given? The Osmotherly rules came at a time when Select Committees were less developed. There is a problem. I am not persuaded that the Opposition or I have a better answer because there is a question of flexibility. Has the Treasury given any thought to allowing civil servants to be more forthcoming and not to take refuge in those rules? I am not thinking particularly of the Select Committee on Defence and Westland, in which I am particularly interested. I am concerned about general flexibility for civil servants to answer questions as candidly as they would wish.

I see help coming to the Minister from the Officials' Box. I hope that the Parliamentary Private Secretary is fleet of foot. I suspect that the House may learn something interesting on the subject. As the PPS has arrived, I can sit down and await those words of wisdom.

Mr. Lilley: In response to the question about sufficient time for consultation, obviously the time needed will vary from case to case, but there would be no point in consulting if there were not time to carry out the consultation. Therefore, it is in everybody's interest to ensure that there is sufficient time for consultation.

As for the second point about evidence to Select Committees, I fear that my response to that is the mirror image to the first question put by the hon. Gentleman about whether I should be the Minister responding to the debate. I am not equipped to respond to questions about the accountability of civil servants to Select Committees.

Dr. Marek: We have had an interesting debate. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr.

[Dr. Marek]

Michie) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for the pertinent points they raised, which demonstrate the Opposition's concern about the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made some intriguing points. When he writes to the Minister, perhaps he will send me a copy of the letter, because I should like to see what points he has in mind. I am sure that they are pertinent and should be considered carefully by the Government. I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for his support for the principle of the new clause.

We fear the Prime Minister's heavy hand and the Conservative dogma of cutting public expenditure and privatisation. There are some good points, however. The negotiations with HMSO are a case in point. The Minister gave useful assurances in Committee about consulting the Civil Service trade unions and about the movement of civil servants between agencies and other parts of the Civil Service. It would therefore be wrong for the Opposition to divide the House on the new clause. There is still concern, but in view of the assurances that have been given, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

PROHIBITION OF PRIVATISATION (NO. 2)

'No part of a Government department where a Government Trading Fund has been established shall be privatised within five years of the establishment of the fund.'. —*[Mr. Battle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Our main concern about the next steps programme is that Government trading funds should not become a simple and quick staging post for privatisation. I hope that the Government will allay our fears by accepting that there should be a period of five years after the establishment of a trading fund within which it cannot be privatised. The eighth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in July 1988 says:

"We confess to being slightly confused by the relationship between the Next Steps and the Government's privatisation policy."

I remind the House that privatisation is still a hallmark of the Government's policy. In his speech to the Audit Commission in June 1989, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"Privatisation will continue as an essential part of our policy. There is a major programme in the pipeline and other parts of the public sector will become candidates as they develop a more commercial approach."

The phrase

"as they develop a more commercial approach"

is crucial to the setting up of Government trading funds and agencies. We wonder what the Government mean by "a more commercial approach."

In the White Paper published in December 1989—"The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" —we read:

"Next steps is primarily about those operations which are to remain within Government. But it cannot be ruled out that after a period of years, agencies, like other Government activities, may be suitable for privatisation where there is a firm intention of privatisation. When an agency is being set up, this will be made clear."

I hope that the Financial Secretary will make that absolutely clear tonight. He ought to specify the period that is suggested in new clause 4.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report also said:

"The essential thing in any individual case is to avoid uncertainty. If an announcement that part of a department is to become an agency is greeted with the suspicion that it might be privatised, such uncertainty could well damage efforts to improve efficiency and the quality of service. If the organisation is to be privatised, it should be made clear at the outset that this is so."

We must ensure that the damaging effects of uncertainty do not devalue the quality of service that is provided. Therefore, the Bill ought to be amended to specify a clear period within which privatisation cannot take place. We owe it to civil servants to give them a clear reassurance.

In the Standing Committee, the Financial Secretary made the interesting remark, "We certainly do not dig up the roots the day after planting." That is a wholesome image which is in tune with current green thinking, but there is evidence in other policy areas that the day after planting, the Secretary of State for the Environment, for example, as a result of pressure from certain parts of the country, came to believe that the poll tax ought to be uprooted, or looked at, root and branch, for next year. I know that you would rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I were to pursue the Financial Secretary's analogy any further. However, it appears that what is set down one day as a policy is uprooted the next. We want the Financial Secretary to assure us that in this case that will not happen.

8.45 pm

More pertinent to the debate is the comment of Sir Peter Middleton, the permanent secretary to the Treasury, in the evidence that he gave to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee:

"As part of the process of seeing whether these organisations should be agencies, it is perfectly natural to look at the three things I suggested: privatisation, contracting out and simply dropping the activity. Secondly, becoming an agency may be a step to privatisation later; it is all part of getting a more commercial attitude. I think this is particularly true of the various trading funds. It is very difficult to privatise things that do not charge for their output. That is the basic problem."

I suggest that that is exactly at the heart of the debate. We must examine that statement about developing a more commercial attitude, particularly as we are dealing with publicly divided services.

In the 1980s, the Government embarked on a great economic experiment. The policy watchword for nearly a decade has been "Privatise". There has been total addiction to what some people would describe as the myth of the arithmetic of the workings of the perfect free market model. During our consideration of the Bill, the Government have moved the emphasis slightly, but it still does not contain the limited guarantees that would make clear to civil servants where they stand, or would make clear to the public that we are talking about preserving, extending and improving the efficiency and quality of services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) referred in the debate on new clause 2 to the Government having isolated people into units. The word "units" is

interesting. It is not a question of looking at people as individuals. The word "units" leads us directly into the accountancy language of economic management. Great claims are made for the "next steps" initiative. We are told that it will lead to improved services. However, all the emphasis is placed on financial performance. That emphasis masks the shift in Government thinking from quality to quantity. How can efficiency and improved quality of service be accurately measured? It is difficult to devise objectives and empirical tests for service industries that prove that the service has been delivered.

I recollect that the Treasury instructed local government to implement a programme called urban programme monitoring initiatives. Although spending on the urban programme for the inner cities was less than 1 per cent. of the total budget, the Government instructed local authorities to monitor those programmes in such detail that, when the planting of trees took place, council officers or voluntary groups were instructed to count the number of trees that had been planted and to return to the site six months later and count them again to find out whether they were still there. They were also instructed to measure the distance travelled when vans or minibuses took elderly people to their luncheon clubs. The accuracy of the figures was all that mattered, regardless of the fact that that might damage the services provided.

Documents have been submitted while the National Health Service and Community Care Bill is being considered in Committee, and emphasis is placed in the medical audit documents on input, output, throughput and episodes of patient care. The emphasis is on quantity measures that have been lifted from accountancy models, using target indicators. However, such models have a habit of cutting out those parts of the service that cannot be measured in detail by mathematical models, although they provide a crucial service to people.

Paragraph 3.19 of "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" under the heading "Impact on Agency financial management" states:

"The general framework for providing and managing Civil Service resources described above will give a range of choices. These include—whether an Agency's running costs current expenditure is allocated and monitored gross or net and thus whether its receipts influence or determine the amount it can spend".

That reminded me that the rationale behind the critique of state-planned economies was precisely that gross output measures did not exactly work. It reminded me of the story of electsic lamp factories where the plans were to measure only in aggregate watt power, so they could not produce any low-power lamps. It also reminds me of the story of women unloading bricks from a truck and smashing many of them because if the unloading were done more carefully they would produce less and be paid less, the driver of the truck would make fewer runs in the day and finally, his enterprise would clock up fewer tonne-kilometres. Those are recorded episodes of what happened under state-planned economies.

In an article on industrial management in "The Soviet Economic System" Alec Nove writes:

"In every case the essence of the problem is that the centre is trying to set up an incentive system designed to achieve more efficiency, but, because it does not and cannot know the specific circumstances, its instructions frequently contradict what those on the spot know to be the sensible thing to do."

Yet that is precisely what the Government are doing.

The great irony of our time is that, precisely when the Soviet and other planned economies are moving away from that model, our Government are insisting that it should be the model for the public sector. I hope that there is still time to say that it might not be the best one. It seems strange that the Government are turning to such evaluations precisely when the Soviet Union is desperately struggling to move away from the straitjacket approach. It is not sufficient simply to mimic the organisation and methods of private business, because they may not be appropriate to the circumstances.

It would be unfair to put to the Financial Secretary all the recorded cases of the Government urging Labour and Conservative local authorities to contract out street cleaning to the private sector only to find that the job was not done properly and the on-cost had to be taken on board again. In Leeds, the local authority contracted out the laundry services only to discover that they ran at a loss when previously they had been fine.

More recently, the Government have been obsessed with pushing various services into the private sector. That is mirrored by the community care proposals put before the House which demonstrate precisely the problem. The London borough of Barnet contracted out its services for the mentally handicapped to an agency and then had to rescue the agency because it was running into insurmountable financial problems as it could not cope with the capital costs of running the services. In other words, some of the costs have to be absorbed by larger organisations and shared around.

The Government know precisely that the proposals are an attempt to control costs from the centre while disowning responsibility for the quality of the service provided once the fund is set up and we move towards the agencies. What will be the Minister's overriding concern when he sets the performance targets? We suspect that it will be to control the costs from the centre with a view to reducing them. The measures that will be used are those that can be most easily measured but which will drive out vital unmeasurable considerations.

We are entitled to ask to whom the public will complain when they feel that the services are not adequately delivered. An interesting phrase is used in the White Paper when it refers to the Minister and his Department as "the owner of the service".

It is ironic that the service is being handed to the agency chief executive who is being made responsible and the Government will disown the service and take no responsibility for its functions.

Paragraph 4.3 of "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" stated:

"Parliamentary control is maintained through—the affirmative Order establishing each fund—the scrutiny of statutory annual accounts, and the power to examine the fund Accounting Officer."

Paragraph 4.5 continues:

"Because a fund's detailed cashflow is removed from normal Parliamentary Supply controls, Parliamentary approval is required, by affirmative resolution Order, to the setting up of each fund and the overall limit on its borrowing."

Once they are set up, they are then disowned and passed to the responsibility of those agency chief executives.

In some areas of public policy, we have been there before. We have only to look at the organisation of the health authorities, the development companies and the authorities that deal with water. It will not be sufficient for

the Financial Secretary to reply to the debate by saying that in three years' time there will be monitoring to see how it is working out.

We cannot leave the Bill and the proposals for the trading funds as if there were a bonded warehouse or a holding operation—holding the functions for privatisation in the near future. The threat of privatisation continues to hang over those functions that have been assigned for agency status. One way in which the Government could allay those fears would be to accept the new clause and remove that threat once and for all by removing the ambiguity and by making it absolutely plain to the Civil Service staff and to the public who need the services where the Government stand.

Mr. Beith: I do not want to go into detail on performance indicators, on which the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) made some comments, because I have tabled a new clause on that subject.

New clause 4 bears directly on whether the trading funds are a bonded warehouse on the trade route to privatisation. That is a perfectly legitimate concern. The Government have the reputation of being the privatising Government. When a similar allegation was made on another occasion, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that there was a grain of truth in that. Obviously there are probably candidates for trading fund status which might also be on the list as candidates for privatisation.

The Government must have realised by now that privatisation is rather unpopular, and the experience with water and electricity should convince them of that. Some of the merits of the more commercial approaches to some aspects of the work of the organisations involved are lost in the general sense on the part of the public that they are being done—that their assets are being taken away from them and that they are losing any control that they had over services that are important to them.

They would certainly have that feeling if that threat were to hang over some of the key services that are possible candidates for trading funds. I am thinking of services such as passports, the licensing of patents, and other matters where people's basic right to do something is at stake. It is important for the Government to dispel the impression, if it be false—of course, it may not be false—that trading funds are a halfway house to privatisation.

It will not do the business of setting up trading funds any good if they are seen in that light, because it will not be a route to ensuring that we can have an effective operation going on within the public service. What is the motivation that we need to give the staff involved? We want them to know that it is possible to be a public servant providing a public service. but doing so in a way that is more cost-effective and more conscious of the member of the public as a customer of the service than some of the traditional methods may have been. If those two factors are to be married, the last action to achieve it will be for the staff involved, and some of the public, to feel that the Government are preparing the way for privatisation.

It seems that the purpose of the amendment is almost met by the reality that it is almost inconceivable that the Government could get a privatisation off the ground within five years of setting up a trading fund. So it would not hurt the Government to make it clear that they have no intention of seeking to do so, and thus avoid the necessity for the amendment.

It would help even more if the Government would say that in most areas of the public service—particularly in those areas in which the Government are a monopoly provider of some right, opportunity or privilege which, if withheld, would be a great disadvantage to a member of the public—they do not contemplate privatisation. If they did that, they would give a fairer wind to the trading fund proposals and the next steps initiative, which are all about providing a service to the general public or, in some cases, to Government Departments in a more efficient way.

9 pm

Mr. Dalyell: I preface my remarks—I am sure that I shall be in order in doing so—by saying that in my Scottish constituency experience, the civil servants with whom I deal, including those in the Inland Revenue at East Kilbride, are people of high quality who are obliging. I wish, as the constituency Member, to register my view that overwhelmingly they do an excellent job in my constituency. I believe that civil servants are caring people who, when asked properly, go to infinite trouble, especially where there is a good case to be answered.

But there is a problem to which I draw the attention of the Minister. In Scotland—and, I suspect, elsewhere outside London—to get promotion, often civil servants are expected to move to London. The Civil Service unions which have been considering the measure say that too many promotions have involved moves to London and that such moves are increasingly unpopular, for obvious reasons, with civil servants from Wales, Scotland and the English regions. The unions say:

"To management's credit, after many years of union pressure"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. Member again, but I wonder whether he is dealing with the clause that is before the House, which is entitled "Prohibition of privatisation".

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) made an interesting speech in which he concentrated on the subject of centralisation. I am on precisely the same point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Bluntly, if he was in order, I believe that I am in order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member is not challenging the Chair. I listened carefully to the remarks of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who spoke pertinently to the new clause. I am wondering where the hon. Member's argument is leading us in relation to privatisation. Perhaps it will become clear if I give him another minute in which to develop his theme.

Mr. Dalyell: It certainly will, Madam Deputy Speaker. The unions say:

"To management's credit, after many years of union pressure, cautious moves are now being made to develop a coherent regional career development policy (the 'Eight Cities Initiative'). Yet this promising beginning will be completely undermined if the agencies are allowed to build miniature Berlin walls around their own mutually exclusive personnel and pay systems."

It all comes back to what will happen to centralisation if agencies are allowed to go their own way.

The unions say:

"One of the 'advantages' of an agency system identified by the Ibbs report was the gradual erosion of national bargaining. Clearly, this threat is of major concern to the union, given the likelihood that decentralised bargaining will

be used to drive down pay and worsen conditions of service in certain areas (particularly outside the South East of England)."

I think that I am absolutely on target and in order in asking about the Government's thinking on promotion and centralisation. Under the developments which we are considering, will there be any easing of the pressure to move to this city, whether from Edinburgh, Leeds, Wrexham or elsewhere? Will structures be developed to provide a regional promotion ladder so that people do not feel bound to turn down jobs necessary to their career because housing in London is beyond their pocket? It is a matter of mortgages, housing and schooling for young families. Those factors should not rule out upward mobility in a career. Under the agency set-up, how do the Government envisage that this problem will be alleviated, if not solved?

Mr. Bill Michie: This is a major part of the debate. There are genuine fears that the Bill has nothing to do with efficiency or with whether the service will be better for the Government and the nation but is the first step towards privatisation. In Committee, we spent a considerable time discussing what was meant by a three-year review. I got hold of the wrong end of the stick. I thought that the three-year review started after three years, but the Minister confirmed that the review will take place within the first three years, and then we will know what is what. I understand that every Government Department, like every department in the private sector, must be watched, reviewed and changed, but we are suspicious about why this is being done.

We spent a considerable time talking about what the review was all about, and I found some of the Minister's comments ominous, to say the least. Even now, I am not sure whether it is a review or an evaluation. I suspect that the intention is to fatten up one of these units, as has happened in the past, or to slim down some of the operations to make them more attractive for privatisation. Either way, as we know from what is happening in other sectors of industry, the financial restraints or management edicts can be such that the business or unit is no longer attractive to anyone.

That is a good excuse for the Government to say that it does not work at present but would work much better in the private sector. All these tactics have been used, and I see no reason why the Government will change their spots and not use those techniques as they see fit. By the time that happens, most of the damage will have been done to the professions and agencies, so it will be difficult for the Opposition to argue against some change taking place.

There is just cause for concern. The Minister stated, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said, that he is not likely to dig up the trees or the roots the day after planting. Everyone accepts that. I make the point that he would probably start scratching at the roots the day after planting to see how the tree was getting on. I presume that that is what the evaluation and review are all about. Having said that he would not dig up the trees, the Minister said in Committee:

"The hon. Gentleman seeks to put an unduly gloomy interpretation on the period of review. It is normal to provide for a review period."

At the beginning I accepted that. He went on to say:

"The purpose of the review is to consider the progress made during the review period."

I am not sure what he meant by that. What worries me is what the Minister went on to say:

"As I have said, the vast bulk of the agencies are by their nature unsuitable for privatisation. However, one cannot rule it out absolutely across the board because in certain cases it will be appropriate,"

It is clear that in certain cases there is more than a possibility of privatisation. We may breathe a sigh of relief and say that most of the agencies will remain as they are. But let us read on. The Minister said:

"circumstances may change so that some agencies fall into that category"—

those agencies which in the previous sentence he said were not the right sort of agencies for privatisation—

"which were not there initially."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 23 January 1990; c. 30.]

We have every just cause to move the new clause and press it to a vote. The Minister gave assurances that there would be stability for at least three years and that the Government were not thinking about privatisation. However, in his summing up it was obvious that privatisation was very much in the minds of the Government. We need a categorical assurance that, at least for the first five years, none of the agencies, as spelt out in new clause 4, will be privatised. That is not simply because of our political arguments against privatisation. It is because of the argument that we advanced at the beginning of the debate—that we have a good, professional Civil Service and that the changes in the Bill are already causing anxiety among Civil Service staff and Opposition Members.

All that we need is a period of stability. It is not unreasonable to ask for a guarantee from the Government that, for at least five years after the installation of the agencies, there will be no privatisation. I hope that the Minister will come up with a positive answer to that point.

Mr. Harry Barnes: This is an important new clause and I am pleased to hear that we shall vote on it. Our views should be registered in the Lobbies.

We need the new clause to protect us from the Government's general ideology. They have learnt that they can privatise anything. The new contribution that they have made to political thought in capitalist terms is that privatisation knows no bounds. They have learnt to develop tactics to achieve privatisation. The measure can be applied within the Civil Service as well as many other public services, such as the National Health Service. We should protect ourselves against that.

In many ways, the new clause is modest. It says:

"No part of a Government department where a Government Trading Fund has been established shall be privatised",

and it might have stopped there but it goes on

"within five years of the establishment of the fund."

If it had stopped at "privatised", it would have meant that if the Government wished to privatise one of the agencies they would have needed primary legislation. Possibly that is the type of amendment that should have been tabled. I realise that in politics there is a need to be practical and to press the Government as much as possible within reasonable bounds to make them accept at least the amendments and new clauses that they may have half conceded against some of their instincts and interests. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heely (Mr. Michie) has said, at least that would provide some time for reflection before making any move.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

In the past, Socialists have been used to ideological disputes. There has always been an argument about public ownership and about whether we should have nationalised industries or other forms of ownership in which there is greater worker participation, for instance. There has also been a continual debate about the bounds to which Socialism should go in relation to ownership. Should it be to the "commanding heights" of the economy, as Nye Bevan described it in terms of public provision, or should it extend to the lot, as some people, on some occasions, have engaged in advocating when on an ideological bent that they could not stop?

9.15 pm

In fact, we have the mirror image of what has happened in the Conservative party. Conservatives have now become the people who want the lot. In the end, there are no bounds to the areas to which their ideology can take them, irrespective of questions such as the nature and running of society, the power forces that exist in society, and problems of exploitation. Conservatives have come to the view that the Government can privatise everything. That has always been obvious in relation to industry. We have had big battles in the House about the steel industry and about whether it should be part of public or private provision.

Under a Right-wing Conservative Government, we could have expected that the public utilities, such as water and gas, would be added to the list and that there would be major debates about them. We feel that privatisation is inappropriate because those areas should be within the public responsibility and be surrounded by democratic organisation. However, the extra consideration that the Government now have in mind is that all public services, including local government, the Health Service, the Civil Service, and the prisons—as can be adduced from their ideological tracts—are open for privatisation. All that is needed is a command Government, holding the reins, dishing out the contracts and the public money that can be used in those areas. But that is not what we should have.

Hon. Members have said how grand the Civil Service is and have referred to the good tradition of the Civil Service in this country. Part of what is good about the Civil Service is its tradition of public service and the fact that it does not have to believe that it must make ends meet or do things as cheaply as possible and run according to the market guide. The people involved in it are not there just for themselves; they are associated with the work that they are doing and are concerned about the services that they provide.

The House itself seems to have become a body in which there is too much interest in oneself. This applies especially to Conservative Members. They have too much interest in their own commercial values, and are less concerned about the fact that they are here to provide a public service. They should be willing to act to provide a public service and, to some extent, to sacrifice their own individual interests, promotion, concerns and advancement to achieve that end. Although there are obviously counter-forces in the Civil Service, in that people are interested in their own promotion, we should nevertheless nurture that spirit in the Civil Service.

The new clause at least tries to protect something that has existed in the past and would allow us to try to hold on to the spirit of the Civil Service even though we are talking about Government trading funds and agencies and all the problems that they will create before we can absorb the people concerned back into a proper public service. That spirit should then be reflected in all the other public services to which I have referred. Perhaps we can then enter into discussions about how far that spirit of public service and social provision should be extended into areas such as the public utilities and our industries, at least as far as the "commanding heights" are concerned.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) made a vigorous and intellectually stimulating speech. I shall try to resist the temptation to follow all the intellectual hares that he started, much as I should like to do so.

The hon. Gentleman quoted my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who said that "next steps" was primarily about those operations that are to remain within Government control. Where there is a firm intention to privatise, this will be made clear when the agency is being set up.

Before agencies are set up, all other options, including abolition and privatisation, are examined. In most cases, this examination leads to the conclusion that the nature of services provided by the agencies does not make privatisation a feasible or realistic option. That is particularly true of bodies such as the planning inspectorate. That is not to say that some activities might not be contracted out, but generally our expectation is that most mainstream activities of next steps agencies will continue to remain within central Government for the foreseeable future.

We cannot rule out the possibility that in a few cases circumstances might change. But even if they did, privatisation is not likely in practice to take place until five years have elapsed. A major review of options is not likely to take place until the framework document is reviewed, usually about three years after agency status has been conferred. Experience suggests that primary legislation would almost certainly be required, so five years is likely to be a minimum time-scale. I think that I said in Committee that the chances of any privatisation occurring before five years had elapsed was "vanishingly small".

It is one thing to give assurances; it is another to set up an absolute legislative barrier. I cannot foresee all possible circumstances, and I therefore cannot absolutely rule out privatisation in less than five years. Moreover, as Conservative Members see major benefits arising from privatisation—for staff as well as for taxpayer and customer—I should not wish to do so either.

Opposition Members seem to suggest that we might be concealing an intention to privatise. I assure them that there is a clear difference between us on the question of privatisation. We on the Conservative Benches are proud of our belief in privatisation. We believe that it is a valuable and essentially popular policy. If we intend to privatise, we make it clear; we boast about it and do not hide our light under a bushel.

Mr. Bill Michie: We are getting more worried. The Minister seems to be saying, "We are not likely to privatise for five years, but we may." All this dithering is not helping the profession or the Departments that we wish to protect. It would be much easier, fairer and more honest to allow

a five-year cooling-off period. That would be no skin off the Government's nose—unless they intend to do something but are not prepared to say so.

Mr. Lilley: I think that I have made it clear that it is extremely unlikely that there would be privatisation in under five years after the agency was set up. That is why the sort of ban that Opposition Members seek is unnecessary. But it is conceivable that, in some remote circumstances, it would be desirable to privatise an agency in a shorter timescale, so it would be foolish to rule it out. It is foolish to close off options—even remote options—ahead of the game.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West said that our privatisation programme was the consequence of an obsession with the theory of the perfect market. That was a hare that I was tempted to follow because, in a book that I wrote with Samuel Brittan, one chapter demolished the myth of the perfect market. It is a silly idea. We work on the basis of an acknowledgment of the imperfections of life and one of the responses to those imperfections is to acknowledge that private ownership works much better than public ownership. The hon. Gentleman went on to describe some of the absurdities that follow from state planning, centralised control and public ownership. The lesson to be learnt from that is: "Privatise where you can, and where you cannot, decentralise or commercialise."

It is bizarre to suggest that the creation of agencies is a centralising measure, still less the creation of trading funds. They are both decentralising measures that give greater managerial flexibility to those bodies remaining firmly within the public sector. That is a desirable thing to do.

Mr. Battle: Is it not the case that, although managerial responsibilities will be given to the chief executive of the agency, the financial purse strings will still be held by the Minister?

Mr. Lilley: They will be given greater commercial freedom within the discipline and accountability of the trading fund, which is desirable. That is why Governments of both parties have successfully operated trading funds. Neither party is ideologically opposed to trading funds in principle.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West suggested that we were in some way disowning quality of service when we set up agencies or trading funds. That is not so. The Minister will remain responsible to the House for the quality of service of agencies which remain part of his Department. The report on the next steps programme said that agencies would be required to report not just on efficiency but on "quality of service targets" over the previous year, "set against previous trends". They will be responsible for quality and they will be given targets for quality and be expected to report on whether they met them.

Mr. Dalyell: The interesting book that the Minister wrote with Sam Brittan is well worth reading.

I want to ask the Minister about the mechanics of parliamentary questioning. As I understand it, it will be much more difficult, via the Table Office, to table questions under the new policy, although I concede that there is a general report back. Have the Government asked the Clerks what will happen in relation to parliamentary questions?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments on my book. He is one of a rare and select breed, but I did not realise he was of such a rare and select breed to have read my book. That puts him in a very narrow and refined coterie.

The accountability of agencies to the House, and their responsiveness to questions, will be unaltered by the establishment of an agency. I am happy to confirm that. It is only nationalised industries that are not properly accountable to the House which is a good reason for privatising them.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that he thought that privatisation was unpopular. I hope that he and his party will come out firmly against it at the next election, because that will considerably undermine his party's standing and improve the Government's. I am glad for his hints about that. He thought that we should go along with the amendment and give a five-year guarantee. I do not agree with him.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) spoke of promotion and centralisation, and their inter-relationship. I could respond that he was asking the wrong question under the wrong clause to the wrong Minister, because that is a matter for the Minister with responsibility for the Civil Service. However, I shall endeavour to be helpful: the establishment of agencies is not a centralising measure, but a decentralising one.

We believe that there should be interchanges of staff at all levels between Departments and agencies. In particular, we think that it is important that all who aspire to rise in the Civil Service should have experience of management and, where practicable, that should include a successful period in an agency. I hope that my explanation meets some of the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) said that he found my statements in the Standing Committee ominous when I referred to reviews. However, he did not complete the quotation that he read out, the last few words of which were:

"But that will be . . . rare."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 23 January 1990; c. 30.]

I reiterate that and say that it will be very rare.

Mr. Michie: "Comparatively rare."

Mr. Lilley: Right—"comparatively rare." I reiterate the word "rare": I am even prepared to drop the word "comparatively". However, the interesting logic of the hon. Gentleman's remarks and of those of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) rests in the presumption that many of these bodies are, in principle, privatisable. There is an interesting reversal of roles in this. We do not think that there is scope in most of these cases for privatisation; we do not even think that it would be meaningful to envisage it. So to fear it, or to suggest that agencies are all prime candidates for privatisation and that it requires only restraint or legislative prohibition to stop the Government privatising them, seems a little bizarre.

9.30 pm

Mr. Barnes: Unfortunately, the Minister is not the only Conservative writing books on this subject. The general thrust of Government policy in recent years, especially since the third electoral victory, has been in the direction of privatisation. One does not need to be a crystal ball gazer to see the trend.

Mr. Lilley: Apart from being a distinguished author with at least one reader, I am also the Minister responsible for privatisation. I do not have the grand title of my counterpart in Poland—the Plenipotentiary for Privatisation—but I am supposed to be looking for opportunities to privatise. Be that as it may, in most of the areas that we are discussing today it is not a runner. Opposition Members are unduly concerned.

I do not want to prolong the debate; I believe that I have answered the main points. I have confirmed that those who are worried about privatisation have nothing to fear in the context of most of the agencies. The chances of any of them being privatised within five years are vanishingly small, and in my view the new clause is unnecessary.

Mr. Dalyell: I have had a quick word with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and have discovered that we both thought that it has not been made clear that those who have a spell in an agency will somehow improve their promotion prospects or earn brownie points. I am not saying that that is wrong; I am saying that it is an interesting statement.

Have guidelines been issued to this effect? Do civil servants know that this is now policy?

Mr. Lilley: I have made this point in a letter to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). It will apply increasingly as more agencies exist in which civil servants can become successful. I can, however, confirm that the idea is more widely known than the hon. Gentleman seems to suggest. The document "Developments in the Next Steps Programme" states:

"The Government agrees there must be genuine interchangeability between policy and executive functions. Therefore, while there is no question of a mechanistic approach to career planning, the Government will aim to ensure that as part of their career development key staff can gain experience of both management and policy work."

So the basic notion has been spelt out in public, even though some hon. Members found it novel.

Dr. Marek: The quotation in the Minister's document is rather different from what he said before. I am sure that it would surprise most civil servants to learn that their promotion prospects will not be as good if they have not worked in an agency. Of course I know that it is the Government's intention that up to three quarters of the Civil Service will eventually be part of agencies.

For the life of me I cannot understand why the Financial Secretary is not prepared to accept our new clause. It is sensible and talks about no privatisation within five years. The Financial Secretary has said that there is only a remote possibility of any agency being privatised before five years. If it is remote that is a good reason to accept the new clause. He did not say that accepting the new clause would be good management policy because it would be good for the morale of civil servants working in the agencies. We have had a good debate apart from that point which did not come across from the Government.

Any civil servant who works in an agency or who suddenly finds himself in an agency will be unsure of his future even though it is not the immediate intention to privatise that agency. If our new clause and the guarantee that it contains were accepted, at least civil servants would have five years during which they would continue to be part of the Civil Service and there would be no question of people being compulsorily hived off, made redundant or moved from one area to another. That would be good for the morale of civil servants and that would be reflected in their work. Of course that would also be good for the public. It is a pity that that matter was not mentioned by the Government.

The other fears have been well illustrated by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I am glad that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) seems to share our worries about this matter and I am happy to have his support.

The new clause is important and simple. It was not difficult to draft and did not require the expertise of a parliamentary draftsman. The Government could have accepted it, but they have not. Could one of the reasons be what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his speech to the Audit Commission on 21 June 1989? At that time, he was the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and he said:

"Privatisation will continue as an essential part of our policy. There is a major programme in the pipeline and other parts of the public sector will become candidates as they develop a more commercial approach."

It worries the Opposition that, as parts of the public sector develop a commercial approach, they will be candidates for privatisation.

Five or ten minutes ago, the Financial Secretary said that the Government will privatise where they can and commercialise where they cannot. If we add to that what the present Chancellor said on 21 June last year, it is clear to me and to my hon. Friends that eventually there will be plans for privatisation of substantial parts of the Civil Service. The Government say that that is not true, but they will have to do more than they have been doing up to now to convince us of that.

This has been a good debate and the arguments have been well advanced. There is a clear division of opinion between the Opposition and the Government and I ask my hon. Friends to vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 77, Noes 148.

Division No. 84] **[9.38 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham	Eastham, Ken
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Battle, John	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Beckett, Margaret	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Beith, A. J.	Flynn, Paul
Bermingham, Gerald	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Boateng, Paul	Foster, Derek
Bradley, Keith	Fyfe, Maria
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Galloway, George
Buckley, George J.	George, Bruce
Callaghan, Jim	Golding, Mrs Llin
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Gordon, Mildred
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Heffer, Eric S.
Clay, Bob	Hood, Jimmy
Clelland, David	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Howells, Geraint
Cox, Tom	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Cryer, Bob	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Cummings, John	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Dalyell, Tam	Lamond, James
Darling, Alistair	Leadbitter, Ted
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Dewar, Donald	McAvoy, Thomas
Dixon, Don	McWilliam, John
Duffy, A. E. P.	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Eadie, Alexander	Marek, Dr John

Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Couchman, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 5

ESTABLISHMENT OF TRADING FUNDS:

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

'.—(1) No order establishing a trading fund shall be made until the responsible Minister has published—

(a) details of the performance indicators against which he intends the record of the trading fund in terms of quality of service to be measured and judged; and

(b) clear guidelines as to what information the accounts and reports of the trading fund will have to include.'.

—[Mr. Beith.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause requires that no trading fund shall be established until the Minister responsible has published details of the performance indicators against which he intends the record of the trading fund to be judged, and clear guidelines as to the information that the fund's reports and accounts must include.

It is generally agreed that proper performance indicators must be set for trading funds. That was stressed by the report of the Public Accounts Committee, which stated:

"We consider it important that departments and Agencies aim to be fully aware of the types, levels and standards of service their customers are looking for."

The Committee insisted that agencies should ascertain their customers' views, as should Departments before they became agencies. The report added, in paragraph (xii):

"we consider it necessary that Agencies should be required to demonstrate the relative success with which their activities are carried out . . ."

It is equally important that the performance indicators are known in advance, otherwise the danger is that a trading fund will be established that has as its explicit objective the provision of a service more cheaply without regard to the quality of that service or to the interests of the community as a whole.

I stress both considerations, because many of the activities undertaken in the public service by organisations that might be turned into trading funds relate to the granting of a licence or permission to an individual that has important indications for the community. Such licences or permissions can be provided much more cheaply if the public service does not examine carefully whether an individual is a fit person to hold a particular licence, a vehicle is fit to be licensed, or a passport granted —which, in the absence of adequate security, might be issued against forged documents.

In many areas, there is public interest in the job being done extremely thoroughly and carefully. There is also public interest in ensuring that the individual customer enjoys a quick response. To achieve both is frequently

[Mr. Beith]

expensive. If performance indicators do not allow for that, there will be serious repercussions for the individuals and for the community as a whole.

Another powerful argument for knowing the performance indicators is that so many of the services involved have no competition. The benefits of a trading fund and of running part of the public service on a more commercial basis may include greater efficiency, more self-reliance, and greater autonomy for the individual civil servant. Many advantages could flow from people providing a service on an efficient basis that they have organised rather than having to conform to a centralised model.

One of the main gains to be derived from a commercial style of operation will arise only if there is competition. In many cases, that will be impossible. The list included in next steps includes the vehicle inspectorate, Companies house, HMSO, and the weights and measures laboratory. It is inconceivable that they could face any competition. There could not really be two organisations producing rival copies of Acts of Parliament to see which was cheaper. However, I am bound to say that they are now so expensive that someone should be able to produce them more cheaply. The other day I was reminded by the Clerk of the House that the daily part of *Hansard*, which now costs £5, cost only sixpence when he entered the service of the House. That is a pretty staggering rate of inflation, even for the Governments of both parties that have been in power over that period.

In a great many of the services listed, it is impossible to imagine competition—the Department of the Registers of Scotland, the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Directorate, the Driving Standards Agency, the Employment Service, the Passport Office, the Patent Office, and the radio communication division in the Department of Trade and Industry which gives approval for the use of certain kinds of radio equipment which might interfere with the network. In none of those services can there be a competitor. Therefore, it is open to the agency to charge what it likes and to provide indifferent service.

One reason for considering the trading fund approach has been the experience in many parts of the public service that the lack of the spur of competition makes it likely that inefficiency will persist. I have been a strong critic of the passport offices on that account. We are talking about areas of work in which there cannot, by definition, be competition. That makes them particularly inappropriate for privatisation. It also makes it all the more important that we have clear performance indicators which are discussed in advance so that we know that they will be concerned not solely with cutting the cost of the service, but also with the level of service the customer can expect —for example, how quickly he can get his passport.

The performance indicators should be concerned with the general public interest and should ensure that, where regulation, public protection or security are involved, they are attended to thoroughly and carefully. No agency should be created unless we know in advance what the criteria are. That is one aspect of the new clause.

The other aspect is that we should know what will be in the published accounts of the agency, and what an agency will be required to make available by way of information to the public. In Committee I questioned the Minister about what appeared to be a hole in the legislation which seemed to give the Treasury the ability to tell a trading fund that it did not need to publish accounts or to direct it, indeed, not to publish accounts. As the question was difficult to answer at the time, the Minister has since written to me, setting out why he believes that it would not be necessary to amend the Bill in this respect. I am grateful to him.

Having studied the matter carefully, the Minister asserts that, because section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 is not being repealed, all trading funds will be required to prepare statements of account and lay them before Parliament. He says that that obligation has not disappeared. What he was concerned about in the part of the Bill to which I referred in Committee was the timing of other forms of account which the Treasury may require agencies to provide. That is all well and good, but I still think that we should know at the point when an agency is set up whether the information which the public and Parliament will get about it will be adequate to measure its performance.

Those seem to be reasonable objectives to which the Minister should agree. I see no reason why they should not be incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. Lilley: I welcome the emphasis that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has placed on the importance of quality of service to the customer. I have great sympathy with that aspect of the new clause that could be regarded as an attempt to put into statute the Government's intentions. I assure the hon. Gentleman that our general intention is that all agencies will be set performance targets, including quality of service targets. In general, I hope that it will be possible to give some indication of what the targets will be when the order establishing a trading fund is debated, but it may not always be possible to provide full details, as the new clause would require, because there will inevitably be a time lag between publishing the order establishing the trading fund and the date on which the fund comes into being.

We also think it important to encourage the development of better measures of output and performance over a period. I therefore do not think that it would be appropriate to limit such measures in every case to those that were published before the publication of the order establishing the trading fund.

The second part of the amendment would require the responsible Minister to issue clear guidelines as to what information the accounts and report will include. The hon. Member may not be aware that in December the Treasury published guidance on the coverage of trading funds accounts in a bookled entitled "Trading Accounts: A Guide for Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies". I can recommend it to hon. Members as a delightful read if they ever suffer from insomnia. Copies have been placed in the Library.

We envisage that proper guidelines and quality standards will be set for each trading fund. We shall want details of how they have performed. We shall also want to compare targets and previous performance.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Government Trading Bill, the Ways and Means Motions relating to the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill and the Social Security Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Government Trading Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Lilley: It would be inappropriate to enshrine such a provision in rigid statutory form, as the new clause attempts to do. However, I sympathise with the spirit that underlies it.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 6

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONER

'Within one year of the coming into effect of this Act, the Treasury shall lay before Parliament proposals for the establishment of a Civil Service Commissioner (Ombudsman) who shall have power to set minimum standards of service for Civil Service agencies providing a service to the public and financed by means of a trading fund, and to look into, and recommend appropriate remedies and compensation for, complaints made by members of the public with regard to the operation of any such government agency or trading fund.'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Marek: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 6 is related to new clause 5, but goes a little further. It would give the public a little more confidence in the quality standards that are to be set by agencies and trading funds. It provides for an ombudsman who would have control over quality standards. It would not be left just to the Government.

The Government and the Civil Service have not done much work on establishing how agencies could measure the quality of services provided. Certainly very little work has been done on providing the mechanisms for consumer or staff input into quality control.

Mr. Peter Kemp, the "next steps" projects manager, gave evidence to the Public Accounts Committee which is recorded in the Committee's 38th report, published in October 1989. He said:

"The word 'customer' is a very dangerous and difficult word to use in the context of public service."

That leads me to believe that those who are organising agencies and Government trading funds do not like the word "customer" and therefore do not use it. They are more concerned with administration and saving public money.

A better quotation is again to be found in the Public Accounts Committee's October 1989 report. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) asked:

"How do they know what the taxpayers and customers who use the DSS want and think of their present service?"

The matter under discussion was the introduction of agency status for the Department of Social Security. My hon. Friend said:

"If you do not know it how can you set up an agency system designed to meet their requirements efficiently and effectively? I am asking what specific plans you have to consult them."

Mr. Kemp replied:

"I do not know what specific plans the DSS have, nor am I quite sure how the DSS would set out specifically consulting claimants or claimants' representatives."

That is the problem. Therefore, we have tabled the new clauses. The work has not been done. The introduction of trading agencies and trading funds has more to do with the Government's wish to save public money and to improve administration. They want to introduce even more commercialisation, with a view to eventual privatisation.

It is possible to consider the consumer and staff input. To make a constituency point, Wrexham has a DSS consumer committee. I wonder how many DSS consumer committees there are up and down the country. That is one way of getting more consumer input into quality control. The DSS office in Wrexham works very well, but that is certainly not always the case in other parts of the country.

I shall quote two documents about civil servants, their contact with journalists and their use of official information. My first quote has some lessons for Government trading funds. The new draft code of conduct was published following the Official Secrets Act 1989. Paragraph 9904 states:

"Civil servants must exercise care in handling the information that has come into their possession in the course of their official duties and should not forget that they are employed for the purposes of the Department in which they are now serving. They owe duties of confidentiality and loyal service to the Crown. Since constitutionally the Crown acts on the advice of Ministers who are answerable for their Departments in Parliament, these duties are for all practical purposes only to the Government of the day."

Of course there is no question of looking after any concerns of the consumer or the public—some people might say, quite rightly—but the Government exist for the benefit of the public and the consumer and it should be absolutely clear what rights consumers have and what quality standards Ministers set for their civil servants in various Departments so that they can perform their services for the benefit of the public.

If the ethos behind the new draft of the code of conduct were enlarged, quality standards would not be made available for the public. Something would be said so that the public thought that there were quality standards, but they would not have full access to information about exactly what they meant, how they operated and what redress the public would have in any instance where they thought that the standard of quality fell short.

I shall also quote a document dated November 1989 which has been circulated quite widely in the Civil Service. It is from the office of the Minister for the Civil Service and is entitled, "Relations with Journalists". Paragraph 11 states:

"In cases of doubt or disagreement, the final approval for appearances in these as in other current affairs programmes rests with the Prime Minister,"—

the Prime Minister's heavy hand is appearing again—

"who will wish to take account of recommendations by Ministerial colleagues and, as Minister for the Civil Service, of any views put forward by the Head of the Home Civil Service, as to the propriety of participation by civil servants. The main considerations will be whether the final result is likely to be of value to the Government, the Civil Service and to the Department concerned."

It says nothing about whether it will be of any value to the public or whether quality standards will be maintained.

[Dr. Marek]

I know that the document deals with relations with journalists, but it is pertinent to say that that paragraph says nothing about objectivity, truth or benefit to the public. It simply says that the final result is likely to be of value to the Government; whether it is right or wrong or whether it is meritorious is not mentioned. It is concerned only with

"the Civil Service and ... the Department concerned; whether Ministers and civil servants can be seen to be behaving naturally, or forced in a play-acting situation by 'fly on the wall' techniques; and whether the discussions can be recorded without damage to the relationship between Ministers and civil servants. Any submission to No. 10 should deal specifically with these points."

If the relations that the Government have or would like civil servants to have with the media and the press and their code of conduct are anything to go by I do not have much confidence in what the Government say about quality standards to the public, being understood by the public and having the general confidence of the public.

I tabled a written question about the passport office and how it would improve its quality standards. I was told in reply:

"The passport department will be aiming in 1990 to process all straightforward, non-urgent passport applications within a maximum of 30 working days during the peak period between January and June, and within 20 working days at other times. Urgent cases will receive priority and should not normally be subject to delay".—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 882.]

I am confused about what

"should not normally be subject to delay"

means when the first part of the answer refers to 20 days and the latter to 30 days. It is not good enough to have passport offices with quality standards of 20 days for half of the year and 30 days for the other half. That is not good enough and the public will not put up with it. The Government must do better. The new clause seeks to do something about it, and it would be a step in the right direction.

The Opposition are the party of the consumer. The Conservatives are for bureaucracy and administration and it is time they realised that if they are to do better—and they must do better if they are to come within sight of the Labour party at the next general election—they should consider the consumer more.

Mr. Lilley: I can appreciate the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) showing interest in, and having views about, the draft code of conduct, but it concerns only relationships between the Crown as employer and civil servants as employees of the Crown, so it is not strictly relevant to quality of service. Nor is it distinctly related to agencies and trading funds.

I have some sympathy for the intentions of the new clause. Next steps agencies fall within the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the ombudsman, and he can investigate complaints of maladministration made against them. The ombudsman proposed by the amendment would unnecessarily duplicate the existing investigative powers of the parliamentary commissioner.

The new clause also proposes that the ombudsman should have statutory powers to set minimum standards. That would clearly conflict with the exercise of ministerial responsibility and accountability to Parliament. The Minister in charge of a Department is responsible for setting standards for quality of service. That remains just as true in the context of agencies. He may be called to account by Parliament for his decisions.

It would, at the least, cause confusion to superimpose on those established and well-understood arrangements a separate statutory authority for an ombudsman to set standards. I therefore cannot advise the House to accept the new clause.

Mr. Bill Michie: I listened to the Minister carefully, having listened even more carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). It seems strange that the Government should feel that there is no need to protect public interests by means of an ombudsman to whom people can bring complaints and queries.

I recall long debates on social security legislation involving the establishment of new regulations by which people would get money from the DSS. The system of appeal was changed. My hon. Friends and I complained that instead of having the normal independent tribunal, the Government were removing from the public their ordinary rights should they feel aggrieved about their treatment by Government Departments or other organs of the establishment.

In that case, the Government of the day took away the right of appeal to an independent tribunal and announced that should there be anomalies or complaints, complainants should appeal to an officer in the department concerned. If, after that officer had made his judgment —saying, perhaps, "I am sorry, but you are not entitled to a grant"—the person still felt aggrieved, he or she could appeal to the next senior officer. As we pointed out at the time, the junior officer concerned would be in the same department as the senior officer and would, of course, take instructions from his superior. In that case there was no genuine appeals system. Although we pointed that out, the Government were not prepared to listen to our pleas.

We are anxious to have in position a genuine ombudsman so that if a person feels that he or she has not had a fair deal from, say, a DSS office, application can be made to the ombudsman. It seems that the existing ombudsman is not all that busy, due, no doubt, to the existing mechanism for appeal. The Government say that we do not need an ombudsman and that the work can be done through the Secretary of State, yet they have set up an ombudsman mechanism that is additional to the Secretary of State to deal with social security benefits. Goodness knows, the Secretary of State has enough power already.

An anomaly exists. For some strange reason, the Government are afraid of having someone who is independent of the Government and Departments and who can protect the interests of ordinary people who come across misdeeds or misunderstandings in Departments. I hope that, even at this late hour, the Minister will reconsider and at least be consistent with Government philosophy in the past.

10.15 pm

Dr. Marek: The Financial Secretary's reply was unconvincing. We must stand up for the consumer, who has a vital interest in these matters. The new clause goes some way towards securing that interest, and I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in the Division Lobby.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 50, Noes 133.

Division No. 95] **[10-15 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Boateng, Paul
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
McAvoy, Thomas
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Robertson, George
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill reported, with an amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill *[Money]* (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

10.27 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for paying sums to Scottish Enterprise, in so far as not already authorised by the Resolution (Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill *[Money]*) of 9th January, in respect of the exercise of its functions and in respect of its administrative expenses;

(b) for making loans to Scottish Enterprise for the purpose of the exercise of any of its functions; and

(c) for fulfilling guarantees given by him in respect of sums borrowed by Scottish Enterprise from persons other than the Secretary of State or given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Scottish Development Agency from such persons,

so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £3,000 million.

In this Resolution—

"general external borrowing" has the same meaning as in the Act;

"relevant aggregate amount outstanding" means the aggregate amount outstanding, otherwise than by way of interest, in respect of—

(a) the general external borrowing of—

(i) Scottish Enterprise and its subsidiaries; and

(ii) the Scottish Development Agency,

(b) sums issued by the Secretary of State in fulfilment of guarantees under the Act or by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in fulfilment of guarantees under Schedule 2 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, being sums which have not been repaid;

(c) sums paid (other than by way of lending) to Scottish Enterprise by the Secretary of State out of money provided by Parliament but with there being deducted—

(i) any such sums repaid to the Secretary of State by the body; and

(ii) any such sums paid in respect of the administrative expenses of Scottish Enterprise; and

(d) loans guaranteed by Scottish Enterprise and by any of its subsidiaries; and

"subsidiary" has the meaning given by section 736 of the Companies Act 1985.

The new money resolution has had to be introduced because of the extensive amendments that the Government have tabled to the financial arrangements that are to apply to Scottish Enterprise. I hope that we shall have an opportunity in Committee tomorrow to debate the various amendments substantively and I look forward to explaining the purpose behind them and their effects at more length then.

On this occasion, I hope that it may suffice if I simply sketch out, first, the objectives behind our amendments; secondly, the technical means by which the objectives will be achieved; and, thirdly, the implications for the money resolution. Our objectives can be expressed briefly—they are to simplify and to make more flexible the financial arrangements for Scottish Enterprise. I hope that Opposition Members will share those objectives. They will be achieved primarily by doing away with both public dividend capital and national loans fund lending, both of which have proved complicated and inflexible, and replacing them with voted loans.

Voted loans will allow far more flexibility in comparison with the limitations of public dividend capital and national loans fund lending. I expect that to be widely welcomed by those who operate the financial arrangements. Because the loans will be voted, there will be no diminution of parliamentary oversight—indeed, quite the reverse. Our intention is to use voted loans only for those functions funded at present from public dividend capital or national loans fund lending. However, the provisions that we propose would in principle allow the flexibility of using grant in aid and/or voted loans for the full range of Scottish Enterprise functions, with the single exception of administrative expenses which are to be limited to grant in aid only. That will allow the maximum scope for responding to future circumstances.

The amendments that the Government have tabled in Committee, as well as deleting powers in relation to public dividend capital and national loans fund lending and inserting instead new powers in relation to voted loans, also make two other consequential changes. They make explicit provision to allow a special payment of grant in aid to the Scottish Development Agency to extinguish the outstanding PDC and NLF obligations and they make provision to recover to the Consolidated Fund the future receipts relating to those investments made with PDC or NLF resources that remain in being when the PDC and NLF regimes disappear.

A further modest but useful amendment gives the Secretary of State for Scotland, rather than the Treasury, the power to guarantee external borrowing.

This supplementary money resolution provides the necessary supporting framework for the amendments. It supplements the original money resolution by referring to the new funding mechanism of voted loans and by authorising the payment of grant for all Scottish Enterprise's functions. It also gives authority to the Secretary of State to use money provided by Parliament to fulfil guarantees given by him in respect of borrowing by Scottish Enterprise.

Finally, the supplementary resolution provides that the total financial resources available to Scottish Enterprise are not to exceed £3 billion. That is in line with the amendment to clause 23 that the Government have tabled. The revised limit now includes the full range of programmes and activities for which Scottish Enterprise will be responsible, whereas the limit published in the Bill was not so comprehensive. I can, however, assure the House that there has been no change in the underlying figures; it is simply that now all funding items, except administrative items, have been brought into account.

I hope that I have explained the rationale for, and effect of, our financial amendments and the consequential need for this supplementary money resolution, and I commend it to the House.

10.30 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): We shall have the opportunity tomorrow to discuss the money resolution in detail in Committee if we wish to do so, but this is a useful opportunity to debate the question of

money. During the six weeks of the Bill's passage through the House, it has become increasingly obvious that the Government face major problems—not in this detailed technical financial material but in the availability of money to Scottish Enterprise. It has been an illuminating few weeks, during which all that we seem to have got from the Minister is talk of flexible enterprise or enterprising flexibility. We need to go into more detail on the question of money.

The funding seems to be disappearing. Week by week we move further away from the intention in the explanatory and financial memorandum:

"It is intended that the resources made available by the Secretary of State to the two new bodies should initially be broadly equivalent to that which would have been provided for their predecessor bodies combined."

We have said that that is about £500 million, but that money seems to be disappearing. The grant in aid, which is the main source of money for the SDA, was cut in real terms by £3 million last year, while the grant to the Welsh Development Agency rose by £6 million. The SDA seems to be chronically strapped for cash. People are not even proposing projects any more, because they know that there is no chance of their being accepted.

I should be more likely to believe the commitment in the Bill if it came from the Secretary of State for Wales but the Secretary of State for Scotland has a credibility gap in respect of the resources to be provided for Scottish Enterprise. I am told by Welsh Members that the Ebbw Vale garden festival and the valleys initiative are both going ahead. When the Glasgow garden festival went ahead, everything else seemed to stop because of the problems of financing. The Welsh Development Agency had 510 staff in 1988-89 and 580 in 1989-90—an increase of 70 in a year. The contrast with the SDA's staff, who are seeking every opportunity to leave, is considerable.

It is not only the grant-in-aid money that is in doubt; the Scottish Development Agency has also been told to sell its property portfolio. Last year the surplus on the property portfolio was £13·6 million. That is being sold off, and the proceeds will go to the Treasury. Where is that surplus—the income—to come from in future to fund Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise? Parts of the equity portfolio are also being sold off, which will give a short-term return to the Treasury, but not to Scottish Enterprise.

When we look at what has happened to training, we see that the money absolutely disappears. Expenditure in Britain on training has been substantially cut, and not just in absolute terms. The cut per trainee is falling; for a youth training scheme trainee it is planned that expenditure should fall from £50 to £33 per week by 1992-93. Employment training expenditure will be cut from £1,040 in real terms in 1989-90 to £1,002 in 1990-91. The expenditure per filled place per week will fall from £97 to £90. Technical and vocational education initiative expenditure for participating students will fall from £229 in 1989 to £90 in 1992. As the number of educational compacts increases, the amount of money to spend on each compact falls from £143,000 to £100,000.

The Confederation of British Industry says that we need a skills revolution, but in Scotland the Training Agency's budget is being cut. In Scotland the budget for next year, comparing like with like, is nearly £30 million down, without allowing for inflation. If we allow for inflation, the budget is nearly £50 million down. The budget for Scottish Enterprise will be much closer to £400 million than £500 million. By next year there is likely to be about £50 million off the training budget, and about £10 million—we cannot be exact—off the property income, and some more money off the equity income. Goodness knows what will happen to the grant in aid.

In addition, the local enterprise companies are likely to need extra staff for decentralisation. A calculation was made by the Training Agency that it would need about 540 extra staff for Britain. If Scotland needs an extra 50 staff, how will they be paid for? It is likely that a decentralised Scottish Development Agency will also need extra staff. It looks as though we shall be about £60 million to £100 million short.

A few weeks ago the Secretary of State was bouncing around with his new toy, Scottish Enterprise. He was buoyant about it, but the dream is coming to an end because he is now caught between a rock and a hard place. On one side he has Bill Hughes and the Prime Minister——

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Not him again.

Mr. Worthington: Yes, I am sorry. I find it essential to mention Mr. Bill Hughes because it causes great embarrassment to the Government, and that is what we are here for.

On the one hand there are the problems of Mr. Bill Hughes and the Prime Minister, who seem to be addicted to strong local enterprise companies; on the other hand there is a commitment to strong, central core funding. Today's *Glasgow Herald* has the headline "Losing the SDA" and talks of a European development agency being set up just when we in Scotland are about to do away with the SDA. It is a careless article, but the flavour of it is that Scottish Enterprise is not seen as positive, but as a loss. We must challenge the Government to say from where the money is to come. I mentioned the Training Agency, the property portfolio and the grant in aid. I am sure that other hon. Members will want to talk during the debate about their fears over the loss of money to the new towns.

The Government have a major credibility problem—which they will have to face within the next few weeks—of how to fund the organisation. Tens of millions of pounds have to be found and there is no sign yet of where the money will come from.

10.39 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I had not intended to speak in the debate, until I arrived at 9.30 this morning and was confronted by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who asked me to speak for five minutes tonight. Perhaps it was a mistake to agree, but it is my duty to do so. After all, the issue is important.

I did not understand a word of the Minister's speech, but I think I share that predicament with most of humanity who have been attempting to follow his remarks in the Standing Committee. I notice, incidentally, that he has filled up the Order Paper with hundreds of technical amendments—at least, I suppose he will say that they are technical; if they are not, we shall be here until Christmas. The amendments will cost a great deal of money, which necessitates tonight's money resolution.

[Mr. Norman Hogg]

About £150 million a year is spent, from the public purse, on the Scottish Development Agency. We spend about £100 million a year on the development corporations. That is a great deal of money, and it has been spent, year in, year out, ever since we set up the new town development corporations.

The Minister has always agreed with me that the new town development corporations have played an important part in bringing inward investment to Scotland. They have worked in support of Locate in Scotland, and their recent achievements have been considerable. I pay tribute to their work. They have brought employment to Cumbernauld new town and to other new towns, such as that in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

If we are spending £100 million a year on the new towns, what will we spend on them after the corporations have been wound up by the Bill? Will money on the same scale still be spent on the new towns, with the express purpose of achieving inward investment and of keeping the new towns attractive to outside industry? I hope that the Minister will be able to say something about that, even though, strictly speaking, the money resolution does not touch on that matter. At this time of night one does not have to be, strictly speaking, in order but I hope, in any case, that the Minister will reply to my important point.

10.43 pm

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) was candid enough to admit that he had not understood what I said, and so much was plain from his contribution, which, although extremely interesting in the context of a matter that we shall debate in depth when we discuss the new town clauses in the Bill, was not relevant to the resolution, which is a supplementary money resolution relating to Scottish Enterprise.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said that the money was disappearing. He will see, if he reads the resolution, that the total financial resources available rise from £1·2 billion to £3 billion—so the money can hardly be said to be disappearing. The hon. Gentleman also talked nonsense about net grant in aid and the SDA's budget. He knows perfectly well that what matters to the agency is the money that it has to spend, and that is covered by its gross expenditure budget. Anyone who looks at the record over the last decade will see that, at constant 1988-89 prices, the budget has gone up from £140·7 million in 1978-79 to £160·2 million in 1990-91. That is an increase in real terms of some £20 million and reflects the resources that the Government are putting into the agency and the increasing success of the agency's economic activities. It is nonsense to talk of a reducing budget.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Wales. If he looks at his own favourite measure, that of Government provision for Wales, he will see that in 1979-80 the Welsh Development Agency received Government provision of £48·4 million compared with Government provision for the Scottish Development Agency of £64·9 million—a difference of about 30 per cent. In 1988-89, the difference had risen to almost 40 per cent. from a Government provision of £66·6 million for Wales to £91 million for the Scottish Development Agency. The hon. Gentleman is on weak ground in trying to compare us with Wales.

The sale of the agency's property portfolio will not adversely affect the funding of the agency and in due course Scottish Enterprise. The Government have determined provision for next year and the following two years—the first two years of Scottish Enterprise—to maintain a constant level of gross expenditure. If receipts fluctuate we will take that into account in fixing the Government's direct contribution. The Training Agency budget is £9 million lower for 1989-90 than for last year, although it is still substantially up on the figure of £120 million in 1988-89.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister says that it is £9 million down, but that applies only if the Minister counts in this year's figures which were centrally counted last year. If the Minister compares like with like, the amount in the budget this year and what was spent last year under the same headings in the Scottish budget, he will see that the gap is nearly £30 million.

Mr. Lang: The figures that I gave the hon. Gentleman of £267·3 million for 1990-91 compare with £210 million in 1988-89. That is a substantial increase. If he looks at individual programmes he will see that expenditure in Scotland on the youth training scheme had an outturn in 1986-87 of £85·1 million while the estimate for the current year is £104·6 million. The figure for training unemployed adults was £23·5 million in 1986-87 and the estimate for 1989-90 is £131·4 million. Those figures are a credit to the Government and show that we are providing the necessary resources to meet the needs of our programmes. Those programmes are increasingly effective in delivering results. We are anxious to make provision for the future of Scottish Enterprise in a flexible way that is relevant to its needs. The supplementary money resolution does that, and I commend it to the House.

10.47 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): It is worth rising briefly to express some disquiet and dissatisfaction at the way in which the Minister gabbled through his rather unconvincing brief in an attempt to allay the substantial doubts of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington).

I appreciate that this is a supplementary resolution and that we are dealing with the finances of Scottish Enterprise. I certainly do not wish to stray beyond that. I am aware of the figures on the face of the resolution. They are megabucks. Much money is talked about, but my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie was trying to establish exactly how much will be available on the ground in real spending terms for the first financial year of the new organisation. In that context the Minister was less than helpful.

I recognise that we can argue interminably about the record of the Scottish Development Agency and Government expenditure, but the commitment of the Government in the past few years has been anything but whole-hearted. I detect the Government's sleight of hand. When it is convenient Ministers talk about net Government contributions, but when it is not convenient

they talk about gross spending, knowing that much of that comes from the sale of assets. On many occasions the record of the agency has been inhibited by difficulties.

At one time people in the SDA said that there was no financial problem, but that the trouble was in getting forward schemes that were suitable for expenditure and which the agency wanted to support. There is no doubt that in recent years it has been a different picture. We have repeatedly been told that there are good projects that the SDA would like to support, but that it is not in a financial position to help. That has increasingly been illustrated by some discontent with the performance of the SDA, when its budget was squeezed during the successful Glasgow garden festival.

I do not want to bandy words about the performance in Wales, but I think that the financing of the Welsh Development Agency has been more generous in the past year or two. I do not think that the 30 to 40 per cent. gap that the Minister was talking about was conclusive. It was interesting to note, as we have remarked before, that the Welsh Development Agency is going to survive, and that a very different structure from that picked for Scottish Enterprise has found favour with the Secretary of State for Wales.

The real issue—the one that we have never got to the bottom of—is exactly what will be available to Scottish Enterprise for training and for the traditional role of the SDA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie talked about the training budget. Of course, the expenditure figures that were being used by the Minister of State included a number of items for 1990-91 that did not appear in the expenditure for 1989-90. The enterprise allowance scheme, with £40·7 million, is an obvious example, and there are a number of others. If I wished maliciously to delay the House, I would run through them, but I will not on this occasion.

The figure is due to drop by some £9 million. It is not clear whether there is to be additional money for all the imaginative new schemes that we are assured will emerge from the local enterprise companies, once Scottish Enterprise is up and running.

I remember that I said one or two somewhat doubting things during the exchanges, when the Secretary of State made a statement on the Floor of the House about public expenditure in Scotland during the coming two or three years. I pointed out at that stage—I think, with some justification—that there was concern about the way that the industry budget of the Scottish Office was going to decline in cash terms. I questioned whether that was a wise decision at a time when the Scottish economy undoubtedly faces problems with investment, and when the cold wind of recession is undoubtedly beginning to blow. I also asked what that meant for Scottish Enterprise, because, if the industry budget is cut, it does not seem to augur well for the atmosphere of the new launch of Scottish Enterprise or for the kind of funding available to it.

I was told, somewhat tartly, by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) that I should know my business better than that, and that that was not the time to make an announcement about that particular matter. I took that rebuke as bravely as I could, but I think that I am entitled to ask the Minister when will be the right time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred to the fact that the memorandum on the front of the legislation, to which the money resolution is attached, predicts that the spending power of Scottish Enterprise will be broadly equivalent—I think that was the phrase used—to the existing budget. I presume that the existing budget is index-linked, although even that is not made entirely clear. Presumably there will be some allowance for inflation. If that is so, I am sure that you will be the first to understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker—although I know that I cannot ask you to agree, as that would be improper—that that would be a sad anti-climax after the kind of expectations for Scottish Enterprise that Ministers raise in their more optimistic moods.

I remember one Sunday when I gritted my teeth to sit in front of my television set to watch the Secretary of State for Scotland on "On the Record". It was not a particularly stimulating hour, but one of its more interesting features was the distinct hint dropped by the Secretary of State that he was going to win his battle with the Treasury and that there would be substantially more cash for Scottish Enterprise than was outlined in the broadly equivalent standstill budget referred to in the memorandum on the financial effects of the Bill.

I do not suppose that the Minister of State will want to announce actual figures. That might be asking him to do too much and he might not be in a position to do so—I can readily accept that. He may not be able to be as flexible as that, although "flexible" seems to be the fashionable adjective of the night. I think, however, that we are entitled to say a word about the budget, and to ask when the amount—which we hope will be an increase, going beyond the principle of "broad equivalence"—will become public knowledge. That is not an unreasonable request, particularly when we are considering a supplementary resolution dealing with the finance of Scottish Enterprise.

There is no doubt that the rather superficial support that was marshalled for the idea of the one-door approach when Scottish Enterprise was first launched is now beginning to evaporate. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred to an article in the *Glasgow Herald*, but there are many other illustrations of the diversity of view about how the organisation should be organised, the basis on which it is founded, the likelihood of obtaining the proper talent and whether the structure is sufficiently—what is the right word?—flexible to do the job as it is advertised.

That argument will continue. You and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may well read press reports of further crisis meetings of representatives of the Prime Minister's office, which Mr. Bill Hughes—as author and progenitor of the scheme—will attend to complain about the way in which it is progressing, and the bureaucracy that he believes is choking it. Others will claim that it is not so much being choked as running out of control, with friction and confrontation built in almost by definition.

Above all, however, the concern about resources will continue. I do not expect the Minister to put us out of our misery today—I fear that he will have to leave us in a state of anticipation—but it would help me, at least, if he could say a word about when the long-awaited announcement about additional finance will be made. I have never been in office, and I have not his knowledge of the financial timetables involved in legislation such as this.

We are now running up to the start line. Chairmen are being appointed and boards are being formed; yet the Minister has told us—no doubt honestly—that there are not even any draft agreements between the existing SDA

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

and Training Agency and the local enterprise companies. There are not even any draft memos and articles of association to be made available to those of us who are following events closely in Committee. That is rather mysterious: it suggests a certain hand-to-mouth, make-and-mend approach to important parts of what we are told is the flagship legislation of the decade for the Government. I can remember when that term was applied to the poll tax, but it seems that there have been second thoughts.

Many details have not been filled in, and the financial details should take pride of place. I hope that, with the leave of the House, the Minister will be able to speak again, and that he will tell us when we shall know what the budget of Scottish Enterprise will be. Presumably the budget will be "divvied up"—if I may use a Scottish colloquialism—among the local enterprise companies very shortly. They will be out of the development stage and up and running within months, and the necessary decisions cannot be delayed for long. It will take some time to make arrangements for the division, the assessment of bids and the final allocation for each company; the timetable must therefore be fairly tight. No doubt it is already well defined in the Minister's mind, and I do not think it is too pressing or improvident of me to ask him to say a word about it.

10.59 pm

Mr. Lang: I had already replied to the debate when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) chose to rise to his feet, which was somewhat surprising. Nevertheless, I shall repeat some of the points that I made.

The Scottish Development Agency has never suggested to us that its budget was insufficient for its needs. It has increased in real terms compared with when Labour was in power, and it is fulfilling a far more effective role than it was 10 years ago.

As to the Glasgow garden festival, I have not heard it suggested that there were insufficient resources available from the SDA for that venture. The general opinion is that it was a triumphant success.

The hon. Gentleman tried to draw unfavourable comparisons with Wales. I do not know whether he believes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales should have the say-so over apportioning the Scottish Office's resources, but that seems to be an undesirable undevelopment.

The Training Agency's programmes and resources have varied, as has its resources. But that variation reflects changing circumstances. The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed that unemployment has been falling, that there have been demographic changes, and that more and more young people leaving school are entering higher and further education. It would be wholly inconsistent with the Government's responsible approach to the handling of resources not to take account of such changes. For those reasons, the budgets of the SDA and the Training Agency are more than adequate.

As to the Scottish Enterprise budget for 1991-92, the hon. Gentleman has held his present post long enough to know the calandar of events in which budgets are spelt out. This year will be no exception. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for paying sums to Scottish Enterprise, in so far as not already authorised by the Resolution (Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill [Money]) of 9th January, in respect of the exercise of its functions and in respect of its administrative expenses;

(b) for making loans to Scottish Enterprise for the purpose of the exercise of any of its functions; and

(c) for fulfilling guarantees given by him in respect of sums borrowed by Scottish Enterprise from persons other than the Secretary of State or given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Scottish Development Agency from such persons,

so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £3,000 million.

In this Resolution—

"general external borrowing" has the same meaning as in the Act;

"relevant aggregate amount outstanding" means the aggregate amount outstanding, otherwise than by way of interest, in respect of—

(a) the general external borrowing of—

(i) Scottish Enterprise and its subsidiaries; and

(ii) the Scottish Development Agency,

(b) sums issued by the Secretary of State in fulfilment of guarantees under the Act or by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in fulfilment of guarantees under Schedule 2 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, being sums which have not been repaid;

(c) sums paid (other than by way of lending) to Scottish Enterprise by the Secretary of State out of money provided by Parliament but with there being deducted—

(i) any such sums repaid to the Secretary of State by the body; and

(ii) any such sums paid in respect of the administrative expenses of Scottish Enterprise; and

(d) loans guaranteed by Scottish Enterprise and by any of its subsidiaries; and

"subsidiary" has the meaning given by section 736 of the Companies Act 1985.

ENTERPRISE AND NEW TOWNS (SCOTLAND) BILL [WAYS AND MEANS] (NO. 2)

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise any payment into the Consolidated Fund of sums falling to be paid into that Fund by virtue of the Act.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the levying of charges towards expenditure under the Act in connection with provisions relating to—

(a) the investigation and determination of complaints and disputes relating to occupational and personal pension schemes;

(b) the compilation and maintenance of a register of occupational and personal pension schemes; and

(c) the making of grants by the Occupational Pensions Board.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

PETITION

Local Government Finance

11.1 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I beg leave to present a petition that has been signed by a considerable number of my constituents. They draw attention to the fact that last year Socialist-controlled Basildon district council imposed the largest rate increase in the country, of 57·2 per cent. My constituents are filled with considerable disquiet because of the vast sums of money that the local authority has been spending ever since.

The petitioners draw particular attention to the council's spending on area management and leisure facilities, and to the fact that the Tower gate theatre is to be further subsidised to the tune of £1·6 million, or otherwise it will go into liquidation.

Huge sums of money have been spent on the new civic centre, and last Wednesday Valentine's day cards were sent to everyone in Basildon at a cost of £46,000. The petition reads:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for the Environment to use his powers of influence to ensure that local authorities such as Basildon do not set excessively high rates of community charge, the average of which should be no more than £278, and if they do, that he should cap the community charge. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray".

To lie upon the Table.

Sub-post Offices

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

11.3 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak about the future of sub-post offices. I do so because of representations that have been made to me about the commercial pressures under which sub-post offices are operating, and because I am conscious that they are a valuable adjunct to any village store, enabling many villagers to sustain a local shop against the massive competition from supermarkets and hypermarkets.

In effect, the sub-post office allows a local community to retain a retail outlet that might otherwise disappear, to the disadvantage of village people. It does more than that. The village store is not just a place where local people shop. It is a social centre where local people meet each other, where village gossip is exchanged and where, according to the length of time the storekeeper has been in possession, information about local services is disseminated. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that a village without a church, a school and a local shop is no village at all. As I said, the viability of the shop will depend to a great extent on whether it contains a sub-post office.

Thus, the future of sub-post offices is of great importance to every locality which has one, particularly villages; their future must also be important to the Post Office. Yet today a shadow lies across their future. Four years ago, there were 20,000 sub-post offices. Today, there are 18,500. In the past 12 months, well in excess of 100 sub-post offices have closed, mainly because they or the village shops had lost their commercial viability. In 1985, for example, it is estimated that the sub-post office network lost 4 per cent. of its business.

The new uniform business rate will impose an additional financial burden from which commercial pressures will prevent sub-post offices from seeking relief. Thus, it seems more than ever necessary for the Government, in their own right and as the effective owner of the Post Office, to consider whether they are making the maximum use of sub-post offices and whether section 7 of the Post Office Act 1969, amended by section 58 of the British Telecommunications Act 1981, is too restrictive.

As the Select Committee on Trade and Industry stated in its report last year:

"In 1986 the Government recognised the case for wider powers and indicated that it would seek an early opportunity to introduce legislation to extend the Post Office's powers."

It added:

"No legislation has emerged: nor have Ministers granted wider powers."

The Select Committee recommended that the Government should take steps to grant wider powers; so do I. The reason is simple; 10,000 of the smallest sub-post offices operate at a loss of between £20 million and £30 million each year. They transact 14 per cent. of total sub-post office business and represent 21 per cent. of total sub-post office costs. Without more business, they will cease to exist.

The profitability of other sub-post offices is threatened by changes that the Post Office has introduced recently, and particularly by its willingness to let other retail outlets sell stamps and, speaking locally, to allow a sub-post office to open in a hypermarket at Theale on the edge of my

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

constituency. That approach undermines any security that a sub-postmaster may think he has as an agent of Post Office Counters.

No doubt the Minister will tell me that Post Office Counters allows sub-post offices to provide banking and money transmission services, and certain services for central and local government, public corporations and some former nationalised industries, and that, since 1984, it has allowed sub-post offices to sell milk tokens and British Telecom phonecards and to provide facilities for cashing cheques drawn on banks other than Girobank and the payment of family credit. All these are to be welcomed, as is the intention to allow the community charge to be paid at sub-post offices. In no way do I complain about the number of Government-funded services that sub-post offices can provide.

What I am asking is whether sub-post offices could be allowed to do more, and how I should respond to those sub-postmasters in west Berkshire who have told me that their contract with the Post Office is too heavily loaded in favour of the Post Office, which effectively lays down what a sub-postmaster can or cannot do without proper negotiation. It may be argued that that is reasonable, since the sub-postmaster is the agent of the Post Office and has had to pay the first quarter of his remuneration to take over the office in the first place. Perhaps, but when he gives up his sub-post office, he will receive no pension or gratuity; he must provide that for himself that out of whatever savings he has been able to accumulate. Therefore, the profit of his sub-post office will be crucial.

I find myself in agreement with the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, which asked Post Office Counters to enable sub-post offices to offer a wider range of services than the Post Office or the Government have hitherto considered. As the federation said, the more people use the sub-post office, the more Post Office business will be done, which is good for the postmaster, good for the Post Office and good for the continuing viability of the village shop.

In evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, the general secretary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters put it succinctly:

"To make sub-post offices more viable, we need more work."

In conclusion, therefore, I ask my hon. Friend what discussions have taken place to encourage the Department of Transport to increase the number of post offices that can issue vehicle excise licences over the current 3,610—including Crown offices—that so far are allowed to do so. Bearing in mind the fact that there are 18,500 sub-post offices, one may ask why the Department of Transport does not use those additional outlets to provide such a service to the ordinary citizen.

Has it been suggested to the Post Office that if it intends to use other retail outlets to sell its services, it cannot, in equity, deny that freedom to sub-postmasters? Also, are discussions taking place with representatives of district councils in England and Wales to enable all sub-post offices to handle payment of the community charge? I understand that that matter has been under negotiation. I should be grateful if I could be told whether it has been finalised.

These three measures could all help to improve the viability of sub-post offices. There are others, such as allowing them to provide financial advice, or to act as agents for TNT parcels, to name but two. I do not ask that sub-post offices should be granted a privileged status. However, I want my hon. Friend to consider what other services sub-post offices could be allowed to handle to improve their viability. In effect, I am asking him to underline the Government's commitment to the future of the sub-post office network and, indirectly, to the future of the village shop and village life.

11.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on having raised a subject which I know is close to the hearts of many hon. Members. It is a tribute to the strength of his feelings and his commitment to sub-post offices, not just in his constituency but throughout the land, that he has taken the opportunity to raise the subject in an Adjournment debate.

I recognise the special place that the Post Office occupies in our society. It has been in existence for a long time. Its connections with the Crown make the Post Office a national institution. Everyone makes some use of the local post office and is very much aware of its place in our society. However, I intend to spend a few minutes on trying to put in context the work of the Post Office.

It is easy enough to focus, as my hon. Friend has so eloquently done, on the problems that arise from time to time and to overlook the success story that the Post Office represents today. Since it ceased to be a Government Department and became a public corporation—as long as 20 years ago—the Post Office has transformed itself into a profitable organisation which is run very much on commercial lines. It has had a sustained run of profitability for at least 10 years.

In the past, the Post Office tended to operate as a monolithic, single business, though covering a number of distinct activities—letters, parcels, counters and Girobank. During the past few years there has been an increasing separation of the different businesses, which has provided the Post Office with a much more commercial incentive to make the best possible use of its assets and to develop its own businesses that deal at arm's length with other parts of the Post Office.

Post Office Counters was incorporated in 1987 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office. Since then, Post Office Counters has managed to make a small, though, I think, significant, operating profit on its turnover of some £800 million per annum.

It is also true to say that quality of service has been improved at the same time. The Post Office management certainly recognises that there is still scope for further improvement. Many of us might ask about the long queues in post offices. Research has shown that, despite such factors, customers generally have a high regard for the service that is provided by their local post office, particularly the sub-post offices. Customers believe that they offer a much more direct and personal service. As my hon. Friend rightly observed, they are regarded as an essential part of the local community. In rural areas, post offices may even be regarded as social centres.

Recent research by the Post Office Users' National Council, an independent body which is the Post Office's statutory watchdog, found that in general queuing times are shorter in post offices—particularly in sub-post offices

—than in banks, building societies or supermarkets. A new chapter on quality of service was introduced into the sub-postmasters' contract in 1989 setting out the standards of quality of service required nationally. We welcome that statement of a continuing commitment to improved quality.

We should also remember that the Post Office operates the largest retail network in the country. It has a network of about 20,000 post offices throughout the United Kingdom—considerably larger than any bank or building society and more per head of population than in France, Germany, Japan or the United States. In the United Kingdom, post offices are easily accessible to all but those in the very remotest areas. In urban areas, the aim is to have offices distributed so that no one is more than a mile from a post office, and in rural areas no more than two miles. Only a small proportion of offices—1,385 out of over 20,000 at the end of 1989—are directly owned and operated by Post Office Counters.

The vast majority of offices are sub-post offices, with which this debate is immediately concerned. They are franchised by Post Office Counters to self-employed agents, the vast majority of whom operate a private business alongside their post office counter—I shall return to that in a few moments. The post office provides a nucleus of business and brings in regular customers to buy stamps, post parcels and collect benefits and pensions; and the sub-postmaster needs to capitalise on that custom and understand and meet the needs of his local community in his private business. The range of private business is wide, and encompasses general stores, confectioners and newsagents, tea rooms, haberdashery and even laundry and dry cleaning.

Post offices—particularly those in rural areas, which account for just under half the network—therefore serve an important social function as my hon. Friend so rightly and eloquently pointed out. That was clearly recognised in the Act establishing the Post Office as a public corporation, which imposes on the Post Office a statutory duty to have regard to the social as well as industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom in exercising its powers. The Government have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to a network of post offices adequate to enable the Post Office to fulfil its statutory duty—and I am happy to do so again at the Dispatch Box this evening. I gladly take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work both of Post Office Counters and the sub-postmasters; post offices have an important part to play in maintaining local communities.

Decisions about the day-to-day running of the Post Office's business, such as the type and level of service provision in particular areas, are rightly operational matters for the Post Office Board. The Government's role is confined to broad issues of general policy and to matters of overall financial control. The Post Office is fully committed to maintaining an extensive national network, and in particular to keeping the rural network as close to its current size as possible. In recent years, closures in rural areas have occurred only as a result of force majeure—in most cases because it has proved impossible to find a suitable candidate willing to take on the business.

For smaller offices, the opening hours laid down by the Post Office were not always justified by the levels of business and could prove a disincentive to potential candidates. To overcome these problems in its smallest offices, the Post Office has introduced what are known as community offices. These may be open for only a few hours a week—there is no fixed minimum—at times agreed with the district manager. They may be run from someone's home so that they can offer a very flexible alternative.

Larger rural offices may also operate on a part-time basis with flexible opening hours where it is difficult to keep them open full time. These innovations, my hon. Friend will be glad to hear, have helped to minimise closures and have led to the reopening of 70 offices which had previously been closed. There are now some 1,350 of these community offices.

There is a fairly general perception that the Post Office network is shrinking and that rural offices in particular are fast disappearing. That impression was given by my hon. Friend. In fact, changes in the size of the network have been relatively limited. In 1909, there were 22,100 sub-post offices; 80 years later there are still 19,300. Furthermore, over the last year the sub-office network has been strengthened as some 110 directly run Crown offices have been converted into sub or agency offices.

I do not want to fall out with my hon. Friend over figures, but mine suggest that the net loss of sub-post offices at present is about 100 per annum out of that 19,300 total. I do not say that that is a good figure, but it puts in context the sort of performance that we are seeing from the Post Office in attempting to maintain its network, and that is a more encouraging figure than many believe.

The picture I have drawn hardly seems to be that of a dying business. Indeed, in many ways the business is being expanded. My hon. Friend referred to many of the factors involved. The Crown post offices tend generally to be more expensive to run than the sub-offices, and that, again, is acknowledged by the Post Office in the changes it is making, in a sense switching the concentration to sub-post offices which have a greater variety of business and, therefore, I believe, for the future, this can be regarded as being more encouraging.

The Post Office has power to provide services for central an local government, for public corporations and for some of the formerly nationalised industries. It also has a general power to provide money transmission services.

My hon. Friend suggested that the Post Office should be allowed to undertake new business. As he rightly pointed out, this issue was addressed in the recent Trade and Industry Select Committee report on the Post Office. My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie), said in 1986 that we in the Department of Trade and Industry accepted the argument for extending the Post Office's powers, an argument put forcefully tonight by my hon. Friend. The difficulty is to decide in what areas that would be appropriate.

We see difficulty in allowing the Post Office to extend its business into areas where the private sector already provides or could provide a service. That sort of direct competition between the private and public sectors would, we believe, inevitably and understandably attract accusations of unfair competition. I do not suggest that Post Office Counters is either uncommercial or insulated from all effects of competition. It is not. But as a public corporation it is not in quite the same position as a private business.

One of the areas where it has often been suggested that the Post Office's powers should be widenend to cover, as my hon. Friend suggested, is that of financial services. The

[Mr. Eric Forth]

Post Office already has some expertise in this area through its work for Girobank and the Department of National Savings. It seems to me that the sale of financial services, such as insurance and stock market investments, in post offices could raise serious difficulties. In this case, there is a clear danger that the Post Office label could be seen as implied Government backing for the products. Consumers would be likely to take the view that buying a financial product from a post office was somehow safer than buying it from an independent business. In that sense we would not be providing a level playing field or a fair competitive environment.

My hon. Friend will understand that this is a difficult area for us to justify allowing an extension of powers into those spheres, despite the eloquent case that he made. While I wish to continue to look at the issue, I hope that everyone will appreciate the difficulties that would be caused if we allowed post offices, with the sort of financial arrangements that they have, to encroach into areas provided by the private sector which could put small local private businesses in some jeopardy as a result of the competition that would be provided by the Post Office in that new way.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: May I reinforce the point I made? If, as it is, the Post Office is now using other retail outlets to sell, say, stamps, it is effectively taking business from the sub-post office, and thereby it is undermining the security of the sub-post office and the confidence that the sub-postmaster has in being a servant of the Post Office. It seems that what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander. If the Post Office wants to use other retail outlets, can it reasonably deny the sub-postmaster the same right to see what he can attract into his sub-post office to maintain viability?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes a fair and interesting point, which I shall consider. I do not want to be drawn into criticising the Post Office for its recent bold initiatives —for example, in selling postage stamps through other outlets, as my hon. Friend has pointed out. I want to find ways of dealing with those issues, but I remain conscious of the accusation that could be made that, by allowing the Post Office to extend its activities, we would endanger established small, private businesses.

It is fair to reinforce something that my hon. Friend pointed out—over the past few years, the Post Office has considerably extended its business through the sale of milk, gas and electricity tokens and British Telecom phonecards, by cashing other banks' cheques, through family credit payments and community charge stamps, by accepting community charge payments and by processing E111 forms for health cover in other European countries. That is a considerable step forward in extending the range of activities without necessarily competing in the financial services sector about which I have expressed concern. We must recognise the difficulties. I hope that my hon. Friend will be patient as we try to find the best way through them while emphasising the role of the sub-post offices.

When it comes to the relationship between the sub-post offices, the Post Office, other Government Departments —my hon. Friend mentioned the Department of Transport—and, in a different context, local authorities, we would look to the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters to make cases on behalf of its members and, where appropriate, for the Post Office to support it. I shall look at the relationship between the sub-post offices, the Post Office and other Government Departments. As a constituency Member, I have argued for extending the activities of my sub-post office in, for example, providing licences. I have great sympathy for my hon. Friend's view.

I want to strike a balance in paying great tribute to the work that the sub-post offices already do and to the extension of their activities in the community. I reassure my hon. Friend that we give this matter the highest possible priority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are aware of the need to maintain the rural sub-post office network in particular. I do not want to over-stress the difficulties, but we recognise those involved in going down the route suggested by my hon. Friend. I intend to keep the issue alive and to try to find the best way forward. We all want the best possible future for our sub-post offices, particularly our rural network.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 22 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent for the following Acts and Measure:

St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Act 1990
New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Ltd. Act 1990
Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Act 1990
Isle of Wight Act 1990
Buckinghamshire County Council Act 1990
United Medical and Dental Schools Act 1990
London Local Authorities Act 1990
Penzance Albert Pier Extension Act 1990
City of London (Spitalfields Market) Act 1990
Clergy (Ordination) Measure 1990

PRIVATE BUSINESS

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
(By Order)

Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Tuesday 27 February at Seven o'clock.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL
[Lords] (By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 March.

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 27 February at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As the next 11 Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, I propose to deal with them as a single group.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

PENZANCE SOUTH PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

TEES AND HARTLEPOOL PORT AUTHORITY BILL
(By Order)

VENTNOR HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL
(By Order)

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

MIDLAND METRO BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 March.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (NO. 2) BILL
(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 26 February.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HUMBERSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs Conference

1. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how plans are progressing for the international drug demand reduction conference in London from 9 to 11 April.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): Plans for the summit are well advanced. It will be opened by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the presence of the President of Colombia and the Secretary General of the United Nations. On the second day, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal has graciously consented to address the summit. A paper giving details of the outline programme is in the Library.

Mr. Rathbone: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that information, but since, after studying that paper, there is concern that the conference may be taken off the rails—to follow the more newsworthy track of studying the cocaine menace—will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure me that it will concentrate strictly, as many hon. Members believe it should, on the important issue of demand reduction?

Mr. Waddington: I assure my hon. Friend that great concentration will be placed on the problem of demand reduction, but it is difficult to see how one can discuss demand reduction except in the context of the large numbers of drugs coming into the country, particularly cocaine.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Home Secretary aware that Opposition Members are pleased that he did his homework in preparation for the conference by going to the United States and studying the problem there? Will he still have time to visit European countries such as Holland, France and Germany, whose experience may be more

similar to ours than that of the United States? When he was in the United States, did he have time to talk about the fundamentals, not the superficial elements, of demand reduction? As drugs are rooted in poverty, bad education and underprivilege of every kind, when will the Government do something about them?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman must face the fact that when living standards were much lower than they are today there was less of a drugs problem. I shall not have an opportunity to visit the European countries that he mentioned, but it is right to consider the experience of others and the position in different parts of our country. That is one reason for the new drugs initiative that we shall launch at the beginning of April.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: As Colombia is bearing the brunt of the war against the odious drug barons, is not it appropriate that President Barco will play such a significant part in the conference? What is our country doing to help Colombia in its fight, and what more should it do?

Mr. Waddington: I am glad to say that we give considerable help to that brave country and to its brave president. Recently, we gave Colombia £4 million of aid. The Home Office has contributed communications equipment for the anti-narcotics agencies, motor bikes for drug enforcement teams and training equipment for the judicial authorities.

Remand Centre, North Wales

2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to develop a remand centre in north Wales.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): We have no plans to develop a remand centre in north Wales. The number of remand prisoners from that area is insufficient to justify separate remand facilities.

Mr. Jones: The Minister's reply is extremely disappointing. We have been pressing for a number of years for remand facilities in north Wales. The majority of its remand prisoners are sent to Risley, which has been the subject of serious concern in recent years. It also involves long travelling times for solicitors and prisoners' families. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider the matter and consult his colleagues in the Welsh Office to ascertain whether some provision can be made—even if it is not a full-blown remand centre—to meet the genuine concerns that have been expressed?

Mr. Mellor: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. It is clearly unsatisfactory that people should have to travel long distances. In one sense, I suppose that it is good that not too many people from the hon. Gentleman's area are remanded in custody, as that suggests a lower level of criminality than in some other parts of the country. The average remand population from north Wales is about 80 which, unfortunately, does not make a separate establishment viable. That is the nub of the problem.

Religious Broadcasting

3. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the provision for religious broadcasting contained in the Broadcasting Bill.

Mr. Mellor: I recently had meetings with a number of groups. The Broadcasting Bill is an improvement in significant respects on present legislation relating to religious broadcasting. For instance, the present blanket prohibition of religious sponsorship and advertising will be lifted, and the Bill will allow Christian and other religious groups for the first time to own radio stations. I have undertaken to consider further whether there should be a specific guarantee for religious programming on Channel 3 and an exceptional discretion to allow religious groups to own local and non-direct broadcasting by satellite TV services. A further announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister for that helpful response. I know from the discussions that he has held that the hon. and learned Gentleman met many of the complaints put to him. Clause 83 of the Broadcasting Bill could radically curtail Christian broadcasting. Will the Minister consider introducing an amendment to clarify formally a matter that is causing much unrest, and about which the hon. and learned Gentleman had received many representations?

Mr. Mellor: I do not accept that there are restrictions on Christian broadcasting beyond those relating to editorialising which have always existed as part of the normal consumer protection arrangements covering British broadcasting. On the contrary, as I said in my original answer, the Broadcasting Bill makes possible an expansion in Christian broadcasting—which may go further, depending on the outcome of current discussions.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about the discussions that I held. It has pained me that some of the leaflets circulating among religious communities are inaccurate, although, thankfully, a number of leading churchmen are making that clear. Those inaccuracies include the point that the hon. Gentleman made.

Mr. Alison: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of how gratified Church and Christian groups, many of which have made representations to me and to other right hon. and hon. Members, are about the very positive way in which the Government are considering developing the Bill in the two directions he outlined? I and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) hope that my hon. and learned Friend will persist with his intended improvements and amendments; he will carry the whole House, the Christian community and the country at large with him as he does so.

Mr. Mellor: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend, who is playing a leading part in the discussions. I hope that we shall soon bring them to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Corbett: We welcome the Minister's response to the all-party pressure and the pressure from a large variety of church bodies to require the new Channel 3 television station to carry religious programmes. Does he accept that the problem could have been avoided had the Government

retained the public service broadcasting requirements for all new licence-holders, the better to ensure quality with quantity?

Mr. Mellor: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's latter point. However, I derived great assistance from the discussion in Committee on the matter in which the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues played a full part. I hope that all who played a part in considering the Bill will feel that what emerges is useful and worth while. What stands to come out of the Bill is clearer definition and wider opportunities than have ever been available. Whether we choose to talk about a public service umbrella or whatever, there will be an expansion of responsible Christian broadcasting which I think most people would like to see.

Children (Care Duties)

4. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his proposals to place the same duty of care on local authorities in respect of children in care as he proposes to place on parents for the crimes committed by their children.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): We have had no responses so far, but I expect any responses to be 100 per cent. in favour of the excellent proposals contained in my right hon. and learned Friend's White Paper, which has received such a warm welcome.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply, and welcome the proposals, particularly as there have been instances in my constituency where young people in care have committed offences. Will my right hon. Friend explain how the victims of offences committed by young people will be affected by the proposals?

Mr. Patten: The present position is that the victim of an offence by a young person in the care of the local authority is denied any recompense via compensation from the court. We intend to put that right, as I am sure the whole House would want us to do on European Victims Day.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that local authorities have a duty to ensure that children in their care do not commit offences repeatedly? Is not it wrong for some local authorities to allow children to commit up to 30 or 40 offences while they are supposedly in their care?

Mr. Patten: I think that I can guess the local authorities to which my hon. Friend refers. One or two local authorities, in the past at least, have failed to exercise proper care over the juveniles remitted to them by the courts. That is something which the Department of Health's excellent social services inspectorate is working hard to put right.

Convicted Killers

5. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the procedures governing the release from prison of convicted killers.

Mr. Waddington: I am carefully considering recommendations made last autumn by the House of Lords Select Committee on Murder and Life Imprisonment to change the release arrangements for life sentence prisoners.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is somewhat unsatisfactory that, in the 25 years to 1987, 51 persons in England and Wales were killed by people who had previously been convicted of homicide? Against that background, when he considers the House of Lords Select Committee report, will he bear in mind, first, that more openness in the review procedure may produce more confidence and, secondly, the assessment procedure which is at the heart of whether a convicted murderer is released?

Mr. Waddington: I have discussed that with members of the House of Lords Select Committee. Cases pending before the European Court relate to the machinery that should be in place to decide on the release of people who have been sentenced to life imprisonment. We should not make a decision on this until we have heard the result of those cases before the European Court. I take my hon. Friend's point about openness. The difficulty is that the Select Committee says that decisions should be taken out of the hands of Ministers and given to an independent judicial tribunal; but could such a tribunal assess the risk any better than a parole board? Whoever assesses the risk has an appallingly difficult job.

Mr. Battle: The Government have accepted that Armley, in Leeds, is the most overcrowded prison in Britain. It contains convicted prisoners and unconvicted young people on remand. Is the Home Secretary aware that this week the prison staff are in industrial dispute with his Department, and that the fresh start proposals have ground to a halt as a result of overcrowding? What steps will he take to alleviate the problem, and will we be offered any hope in the short term, rather than having to wait for long-term and medium-term solutions?

Mr. Waddington: I cannot see for the life of me what that has to do with question No. 5. As a matter of interest, however, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the prison department is trying to resolve the dispute.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the campaign to obtain parole for Myra Hindley? In view of the terrible crimes committed by Hindley and Brady, may we have an assurance that such people will never be allowed out of prison during their lifetimes?

Mr. Waddington: A formal review of Myra Hindley's case will begin in 1990, in accordance with the announcement made at the time of the previous review five years ago. It does not follow that the board will recommend release, or that I would accept such a recommendation if one were made.

New Prison, Fazakerley

6. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will again reconsider the proposal to build a new prison in Fazakerley, Liverpool, bordering the Fazakerley hospital.

Mr. Mellor: I am afraid that I see no grounds for reconsidering the proposed scheme. Contracts have now been exchanged for the purchase of the site, and we shall shortly be approaching the Department of the

Environment for a local public inquiry to be set up into the proposed scheme so that all relevant points of view might be aired and considered.

Mr. Heffer: That is a very disappointing answer. According to a written reply from the Minister, his Department considered 40 other sites for the new prison in the past two years. Why did the Department decide on a site immediately next to a hospital, in an area surrounded by housing? The city council, the local health authority, the parish council, local people and just about everyone else oppose the proposal. Why are the Government persisting with it when many other sites in the area and the surrounding districts could be used instead? Do the Government consider that we in Liverpool are a special type, and that we should become the prison centre of the north-west? We already have prisons there; why must we have another almost next door to an existing prison?

Mr. Mellor: The two most recent questions from Opposition Members about prisons reveal the Home Office's difficulties. On the one hand, complaints are made about old and overcrowded prisons; on the other, complaints are made when we propose to build a new one. The hon. Gentleman asks why the prison cannot be built somewhere else, but I dare say that others would object to that.

After the most exhaustive consideration, we believe that Fazakerley is the right site—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Gentleman shouting at me from a sedentary position. I have announced today a public inquiry at which all legitimate points can be put and considered, and that is the proper way for such matters to be dealt with.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister is misleading the House to some extent. My hon. Friend did not say—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not alleging that the Minister is misleading the House deliberately.

Mr. Loyden: He is doing so inadvertently, however, by suggesting that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) opposes what we all recognise as the urgent need for more prisons to be developed and built. His point was that the community that he represents as a Member of Parliament, which includes a large housing estate, renders the site inappropriate for building a prison. Should not the Minister make a decision about the problem in view of the strong feelings throughout Liverpool—not merely in my hon. Friend's constituency?

Mr. Mellor: We cannot reject every site that is available for a new prison because people do not want it there. People are fully entitled to object to a prison being sited in their community. We are providing for a local public inquiry at which the wheat can be separated from the chaff and the legitimate arguments from the illegitimate. We shall be bound by the decision that is reached. What could be fairer than that?

Crime Victims

7. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to approve the arrangements for the support given to the victims of crime.

Mr. Waddington: I have today published a victims charter, which sets out for the first time how victims of crime should be treated. It covers, among other things, keeping them informed of inquiries and court proceedings, helping them to secure compensation and how they are treated at court. The charter also raises some wider questions about giving victims a voice in criminal proceedings.

I have also announced today that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have acted immediately on the recommendation of the Home Affairs Select Committee a fortnight ago that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board should have more staff. We are meeting in full the chairman's request for 60 more staff to enable the board to gain control of the backlog. We are discussing performance targets with the board, but we are ready, with parliamentary approval, to make available another £17 million for compensation payments in 1990-91.

We also plan to increase our grant to Victims Support from just under £4 million this year to about £4·5 million next year to improve the help that local victim support schemes can give.

Mr. Greenway: Society has long demanded that greater prominence should be given to the interests of the victims of crime. I am sure that the whole country will warmly welcome the publication of a victims charter. On this day —European Victims Day—we lead Europe in the arrangements for looking after the victims of crime. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we need to make our criminal justice system more victim friendly? Should not we give more consideration to the way in which vulnerable victims are cross-examined in court, as well as to keeping them informed—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not seem to pay as much attention to the victims of crime as do Conservative Members— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a rather long supplementary question. Perhaps we may have a briefer answer.

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his warm welcome for the victims charter. He is right to point out that the British scheme is probably the most generous in existence. We pay far more in compensation to victims than is paid in Germany or in France. It is absolutely right that the Government should spell out their commitment to improving the lot of victims, that we should make absolutely plain what are victims' rights and that we should point out the good practice that should be observed by each part of our criminal justice system.

My hon. Friend asked for a more victim-friendly criminal justice system. I am sure that that is part of the message in the victims charter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I welcome the Home Secretary's announcement that additional staff will be appointed to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. How quickly will staff be recruited and appointed? Will more money be provided for the procurement of the new technology that is desperately needed and was recommended as far back as 1982? Will the Home Secretary advertise the scheme, given that only about 25 per cent. of the victims of violent crime and only a very small number of sexually abused children apply for compensation?

Mr. Waddington: One virtue of producing such a document is to draw victims' attention to their rights. That meets the hon. Lady's latter points. We have already begun to install computers in the Glasgow office. That meets the hon. Lady's earlier point. Staff will be recruited in April and May, so they should be in place before very long. However, first we must provide the necessary accommodation for them. It is a big increase—20 to 25 per cent. more than the existing staffing level.

Sir John Wheeler: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs will be delighted with his announcement today? Replying to a Select Committee report and accepting all the principal recommendations within two weeks must be a record. The United Kingdom now has the finest method anywhere in the western democracies of looking after the interests of victims, but what does my right hon. and learned Friend intend to do to ensure that the statutory agencies monitor the implementation of the victim support proposals that he has announced today?

Mr. Waddington: We shall, of course, do all that we possibly can to impress upon the statutory agencies the necessity to observe the high standards laid down in the victims charter. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. We saw the wisdom of the recommendations in the Select Committee report. That is why we accepted them without delay and are able to tell the House today that they will soon be implemented.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Home Secretary confirm that despite today's announcement the victims of crime who in 1989 were disqualified from receiving compensation by the Government's change in regulations are still not eligible for the assistance that the Government provide and therefore a substantial number of victims are disqualified from his scheme?

Mr. Waddington: I think that everyone would agree that it is important to concentrate our energies on those victims of crime who have suffered the most. Our scheme remains the most generous in the world.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept what I know will be the grateful pleasure of the people who run the Medway victim support scheme in my constituency, the second such group to be set up in this country? Does he agree that the victims charter will provide most valuable support for many voluntary organisations which have sought to bring a personal touch into caring for victims of crime?

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her remarks. The comments of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) were rather churlish in view of the fact that this morning the victims charter received the warmest possible reception from the chairman of Victims Support, Helen Reeves. I applaud the work of Victims Support up and down the country and I am glad that such schemes receive ever more support from the Home Office.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

8. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his consideration of the new evidence in the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Waddington: I have not yet completed my consideration of the further material which has been presented to me by a solicitor acting on behalf of the six men convicted of the Birmingham public house bombings. I will decide as soon as possible whether it justifies any intervention on my part.

Mr. Meale: As the Home Secretary is aware, some of the confessions that formed the major part of the case for the conviction of the Birmingham pub bombers were taken by the West Midlands serious crime squad. That group has since been disbanded because it was found to have been forging confessions. Is not that enough to warrant reopening an inquiry into the case?

Mr. Waddington: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, it is my job to consider whether there is any new evidence or consideration of substance that may cast doubt on the safety of the convictions, and I shall carry out that duty. As the hon. Gentleman knows, an inquiry into the West Midlands serious crime squad is being carried out by the West Yorkshire police. Although their inquiry is concentrated on matters which have occurred since 1986, if they wish to take their inquiries further back in time because of matters that come to their notice, I am absolutely sure that they will do so.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many people are rather tired of the concerted campaign to prove that those convicted criminals are innocent and to make people forget the nature of the crime that they committed?

Mr. Waddington: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I do not think that it is right for me to comment because I have a difficult duty to carry out. My hon. Friend will realise that I will carry it out.

Mr. Clay: Does not the length of time that the Guildford Four wrongly spent in prison haunt the Home Secretary as he continues to dither around finding one excuse after another for prevarication while evidence showing that the Birmingham Six were innocent builds up? How many more months, if not years, will they have to spend in gaol, wrongly, like the Guildford Four?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman's remarks were entirely uncalled for. He ignored entirely that Devon and Cornwall police have already carried out a detailed investigation into the matter; he ignored entirely that as a result of that investigation the case was taken to the Court of Appeal; and he ignored entirely that the Court of Appeal carried out the most exhaustive inquiry into the confessions made by the Six and into the forensic evidence.

Sports Grounds (Public Order)

9. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the Taylor report, he will introduce legislation as soon as possible to create new public order offences at sports grounds; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd); We are looking positively and quickly at the report's recommendations for new offences.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend accept that, as the Taylor report indicated, existing legislation is insufficient to deal with trouble and hooliganism at sporting events? Will he therefore support the introduction of three new offences to deal with, first, the throwing of missiles, secondly, the chanting of obscene and racist abuse, and thirdly, the invasion of pitches without good reason? Are not those reforms particularly important in view of the Government's second thoughts on the ID card scheme?

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's encouragement, but before a final decision is made we need to discuss the recommendations of the report with the police and the Crown prosecution service to ensure that they are enforceable and that they add effectively to the sanctions already available.

Mr. Randall: Notwithstanding that response, is the Minister aware that there is concern that the noises coming from the Government on the Taylor report have been almost entirely limited to the question of all-seater stadiums? When will the Minister tell the country what specific action the Government intend to take in response to Taylor? Why is the Minister so slow off the mark in responding to this urgent matter?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is very much mistaken. We were so quick off the mark that he obviously missed it. We accepted all the safety recommendations in the Taylor report and we are considering speedily and carefully the three recommendations for criminal legislation, so the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: When my hon. Friend considers the proposals for new legislation, will he bear in mind that many sporting events in this country take place not at sports grounds but throughout the countryside? At the moment, people innocently pursuing their lawful pastimes are inadequately protected from those who seek to disrupt them. Will my hon. Friend please bear that strongly in mind when considering new legislation?

Mr. Lloyd: I will bear those points very much in mind. As my hon. Friend said, it is necessary to consider the recommendations very carefully.

Electronic Tagging

10. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the experiment in tagging in Nottingham.

Mr. John Patten: The trial of electronic monitoring in Nottingham has run its full course and ended, as planned, on time. The results will be fully evaluated together with results from the other two trial areas, where the experiments continue.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister bear in mind the experience of Mr. Richard Hart, who lives in Nottingham and who was the first person in Britain to be tagged? His tag apparently indicated that he was absconding. The police went to his home, broke in and found him in bed with his wife, who was particularly upset. He was at home all the time. Before he went back to prison, his tag malfunctioned 15 times. Because he was unable to leave the house, the Departments of Social Security and of Employment said that he was not available for work, so he got no benefit. Does the Minister agree with the National Association of Probation Officers that the tagging scheme has been a fiasco and should not be extended elsewhere?

Mr. Patten: Characteristically, the hon. Gentleman is talking through his hat. He does not know what has been going on in his own back yard in Nottingham. We have seen in Nottingham a successful experiment which has run its full course and which shows how precise electronic monitoring is in revealing when there has been even the smallest breach of conditions. The hon. Gentleman talked about the National Association of Probation Officers. Does he get up and criticise the association every time a probation officer fails to control or get back to a bail hostel someone who should have been back on time? Of course he does not. The tagging scheme is in operation in 21 states in the United States of America where it is widely welcome and is a great success.

Mr. Lawrence: As the Nottingham scheme is one of three in operation, is not it true that electronic tagging has shown that it effectively picks up violations as soon as they occur, which the ordinary system does not do? Has my hon. Friend yet been able to form a view about the even newer development of tracking tagging?

Mr. Patten: My hon. and learned Friend is right in the first part of his question. Indeed, tracking tagging is full of possibilities for future use. Any right hon. or hon. Member who doubts the efficacy of electronic monitoring should talk to the people who have been subject successfully to electronic monitoring rather than being on remand in prison. Electronic tagging has led in some cases to people getting lesser, non-custodial sentences than they might otherwise have received.

Mr. Hattersley: If tagging in Nottingham has been such a great success, why did the clerk to the Nottingham justices say on behalf of the magistrates that it had been a complete failure? Now that the Minister of State has had his moment of publicity, should not he drop the whole daft idea?

Mr. Patten: First, the right hon. Gentleman is reporting alleged remarks by the clerk from the Nottingham justices which the clerk certainly did not make. Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman characteristically has not applied his mind to how to deal with offenders on remand or being punished in the community in ways other than the traditional way. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has thought seriously about criminal justice issues for a decade. He is politically and intellectually out to lunch on such issues.

Mr. Maclennan: If the Minister is prepared to announce today his complete conviction in the efficacy of the scheme, why has he bothered with experimentation?

Mr. Patten: We have not drawn our conclusions to a satisfactory end because we have three experiments. The hon. Gentleman is highly intelligent. He knows that when experiments are conducted it is necessary to wait until they are over before they are evaluated.

Mr. Alexander: Does the Minister agree that any failures are failures of the defendants rather than the system? Is not the advantage of the system that the authorities know immediately the bail condition is broken? Is not it significantly cheaper to have tagging than to keep defendants expensively in prison?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He knows, as I know, that unfortunately when people who are remanded on bail go into the community, they often breach their conditions, but we hear nothing about that from the Opposition.

Mr. Allen: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply I give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House.

West Midlands Police

11. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has anything to add to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 304, concerning DS Morton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No, Sir. The answers that I gave on 25 January and 1 February referred only to those officers who conducted interviews with those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings. I stated that specifically in my original reply.

Mr. Flannery: Why is the Minister hiding from the truth? This is the third time he has been questioned on the matter. Sergeant Brian Morton was expelled from the police force and gaoled because he beat up a prisoner to try to extract a confession. The reality is that he was in Queen's road police station in Birmingham during the whole time that the Birmingham Six were being brutally beaten up to extort confessions from them. Why does not the Minister face that and tell us the truth?

Mr. Lloyd: I said in an earlier written answer that Detective Sergeant Morton had been in prison for an offence. I said in the latter answer, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, that Detective Sergeant Morton had nothing to do with the interviews of the Birmingham Six. He photographed one of them—Hill—at one point, but many officers had jobs at the periphery of the investigation, in which they were not involved. Morton was one of them and unless the hon. Gentleman has evidence otherwise it is deeply irresponsible to imply that Detective Sergeant Morton had such involvement.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the German Defence Minister and one with the National Pensioners Convention.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Prime Minister accept that there is growing anger and dismay in Scotland at the way in which the Scottish steel industry is being run down by British Steel? Does she accept that, on the ground of competition alone, the time is right for British Steel's monopoly to be ended and for an independent steel industry to be established, based in Scotland? Would not that best serve the interests of competition and, of the Scottish steel industry? Has not the Secretary of State for Scotland already suggested that that may be a course to be considered? My party has been advocating it for the past two or three years and it has growing support within Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The best guarantee of a successful steel industry has been privatisation. Before it was privatised, it was losing about £3 million a day; it is now making more than £500 million profit a year. On Ravenscraig, the hon. Gentleman knows that the British Steel prospectus stated that, subject to market conditions, there would continue to be a need for production at Ravenscraig until 1994. The chairman of British Steel has recently reaffirmed that. British Steel also gave the assurance that if it did not need Ravenscraig at some future date it would be prepared to sell it to another buyer. That assurance stands and I wish Ravenscraig well.

Q2. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 22 February 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the fourth quarter of last year exports rose by no less than 23 per cent. compared with the same period in 1988? Given the additional good news that Japanese investors are to create 400 new jobs in Barnsley and that German investors are to create 300 new jobs in Birmingham, is not there every reason to be optimistic about the prospects of British manufacturing?

The Prime Minister: I agree that British manufacturing industry can take justifiable pride in its success. Its production is at an all-time record this year and its investment is at an all-time record over and above the previous record set the year before. Growth has been good. Growth has been strongest in the highest technology industries. Production of electronic goods has increased by 50 per cent. since 1978, aerospace production has doubled and the computer industry has grown faster than that in any other country except Japan. That success has come about under Conservative economic policies. Japan and Germany know that and are anxious to put more investment here.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister ready to recognise that her high mortgage rate policies and her poll tax are bound to push up the rate of inflation?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, our top priority is to get inflation down. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is aware that the best way to do that in the longer term must be to make the price of money more expensive. If the right hon. Gentleman does not know that, I am very surprised.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister talks about combating inflation, but she is causing it. Is not it

absolutely clear that because of high interest rates, high mortgage rates and high poll tax levels, the level of inflation now faced by the British people is mainly made in Downing street?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman rightly grumbles about an inflation level of 7·7 per cent., but under the Labour Government it was 26·7 per cent. —an all-time high this century. Our record is far, far better than anything that the Labour party would ever produce.

Mr. Kinnock: This time last year, when inflation was at 7·8 per cent., the Prime Minister said that it was "proceeding towards zero". Now it is 7·7 per cent. Is that what she calls "proceeding"?

The Prime Minister: It is because we have growth that is faster than we had thought that it is taking longer to turn round. Nevertheless, we have a record number of home owners and a high level of mortgage payers, 99 per cent. of whom are managing to pay their mortgages and know the fundamental truth that those who put their money in bricks and mortar have, in the longer run, done better than those who put their savings in building societies.

Q3. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: Has my right hon. Friend seen the new policy platform adopted by the Communist party of the Soviet Union, which extols the virtues of markets, stresses the importance of competition, and calls for the scrapping of indiscriminate subsidies and for the selling of shares in state enterprises, all of which are opposed by the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not certain that what goes on in the Soviet Union is the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Hamilton: I am coming to the point of my question, Mr. Speaker. Is not it ironic that the Government of the Soviet Union, who are adopting the policies of Her Majesty's Government, are edging that country towards a free enterprise future, which is opposed by Labour Members whose minds are still sunk in the Socialist attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s?

The Prime Minister: As usual, my hon. Friend makes his point effectively. Those who have lived under Socialism know that it produces only poverty and oppression and they turn away from that to Conservative policies, as they are doing in eastern Europe.

Mr. Turner: Is the Prime Minister aware that for Wolverhampton to get down to the poll tax level projected by the Government it would need to cut £28 million from its spending, which is equivalent to the whole of our social services budget and almost the whole of our leisure services budget? Will she tell the people of Wolverhampton why they have to pay an additional surcharge of £47, which has nothing to do with their services but has been imposed by her Government? The people of Wolverhampton want to know, and they want that surcharge taken away.

The Prime Minister: If the local authority is finding it difficult to reduce its spending by £28 million, does it not realise—I doubt whether it does—that it is doing the worst possible thing by taking that money out of the pockets of its residents because that is what it is doing if it is setting a community charge that is higher than it need be?

Q4. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fishburn: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is the Government's intention, once the community charge is in place, to ensure that private landlords who currently charge their tenants rent and rates combined should lower their charges by the amount of the rates and not just pocket the difference?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. I hope that private landlords will lower their charges when they know that they do not have to pay rates and thus act in accordance with the terms of their tenancy agreements. Various remedies are available for tenants whose landlords do not agree to such a reduction. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is setting those remedies out in a leaflet which will be widely available.

Mr. Winnick: Can the Prime Minister explain why, despite all the money and propaganda spent on it, the poll tax is the most detested and hated tax introduced for centuries? If she disputes what I say, could we have a referendum on the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: First, a rating revaluation of domestic properties, which some of us have been through before, would have been infinitely more detested than the community charge. The community charge will have more generous rebates than the rate rebate system ever gave and also a transitional relief scheme which does not depend on means testing. I understand why the Opposition do not like the community charge. It is because it will reveal that the highest spending councils are Labour councils. Labour has an even worse remedy in the roof tax, which would put a local tax on capital values regardless of whether the person living in the house owned it and would add to it a test of income tax.

Q5. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the United Kingdom agriculture industry grows some 75 per cent. of our indigenous foodstuffs and at the same time contributes, through exports, some £1,600 million to the balance of payments and the balance of trade? Will she recognise that, and help to sustain the confidence of that vibrant industry by maintaining pressure on the European Community to dismantle the green pound?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to my hon. Friend and pay tribute to the farmers who have put up production greatly and have also put up productivity. They have saved us a great deal on the balance of payments. We are very

much aware of the difficulties caused by the green pound. We are seeking a substantial devaluation of the green pound in the current price negotiations.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Prime Minister considered the possibility suggested by some of her Back Benchers of reducing the poll tax by taking out of it education and perhaps teachers' salaries, fire services, the police or a combination of any of the three? Will she rule that out before the next election?

The Prime Minister: The revenue support grant already pays for a substantial part of education, teachers' salaries, polytechnics and, indeed, every part of education. The business rate already pays for another substantial part of education. Therefore, if we were to take education out and run it centrally—which I believe would be totally wrong. It is much better to do as we are doing and to take education away from the local authorities and put it out to the people so that they can run it themselves. That is true devolution. If education were taken out, a substantial part of the revenue support grant would have to come out with it, as well as some of the business rate.

Q6. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dover: What encouragement can my right hon. Friend give to the people of Chorley who sensibly voted in the Conservative-controlled Chorley borough council, which is spending exactly in line with Government spending forecasts, but faces sky high community charges because of the high spending of the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council?

The Prime Minister: I hear what my hon. Friend says about Lancashire. There is no justification for extravagance on the part of any authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it perfectly clear that where there is excessive spending he will not hesitate to charge-cap the authority.

Mr. Fraser: If the Prime Minister is right to suggest that the poll tax is another Government success, will she confirm that there will not be any poll tax capping between now and the end of March?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, not all authorities have set their budgets. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to consider the criteria for charge-capping when all the budgets have been set. The matter will have to be considered carefully for each authority. Naturally, that will take time and my right hon. Friend will do it as soon as he can.

Q7. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the last Stalinist regime in Europe has found a new role model and has renamed itself the Albanian Labour party? Will my right hon. Friend take time to send a message of support to the people of Albania in the hope that, some day, they will be relieved of the burden of Socialism in the same way as the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point very well. I hope that the Albanian Labour party will be unable to inflict upon the people of its country the sort of damage that Socialist parties here inflicted upon ours.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Q8. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has had with *(a)* Chancellor Kohl and *(b)* other European Community state leaders concerning the location of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The Prime Minister: The Government believe that London is the natural choice for the home of the bank. I have made that clear to all my Community colleagues.

Dr. Godman: Despite the undoubted banking expertise and skills to be found in the United Kingdom, in both London and Edinburgh, it is extremely unlikely that the bank will be sited in London. Should not the Government show some magnanimity and argue the case for the bank to be sited in an eastern European capital such as Prague?

Mr. Tony Banks: Or Newham.

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. London is the largest centre for international banking in Europe and it houses more international banks than any other major European nation. Foreign banks enjoy more than 80 per cent. of the United Kingdom's international business and 520 foreign banks are represented in London. We have the largest equity market in Europe. I could go on to give many, many qualifications and justifications as to why the bank should be sited in London. London is quite the best position for that particular bank.

Beach Pollution (Sussex)

3.31 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the problem of drums of potassium cyanide washed up on Sussex beaches.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The first canister of potassium cyanide on Brighton beaches was reported to the Sussex police at 11.5 am on 21 February. The coastguard was informed immediately and, together with the police, they instituted a full-scale search, which located a second canister on the beach an hour later. The police then called in the fire brigade to deal with the chemicals and the beach was promptly closed off to the public by the council. The beach remains closed.

Thanks to the prompt action of the police, the fire brigade and the local authority officers, a total of six canisters of potassium cyanide and several canisters of other dangerous chemicals are now in safe storage in Newhaven. The council is arranging for their disposal.

Local officials are searching the coastline in case further canisters are washed up. We still do not know from which ship the chemicals came or how they came to be in the sea, but our inquiries are under way.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that potassium cyanide is a deadly human poison and that, potentially, this is a highly dangerous situation for those in the vicinity of those containers? Does he agree that such incidents are causing increasing concern and that the plain fact is that the waters around our coast are in an appalling state, made worse by such problems as this, but also because the Government continue to allow the dumping of industrial waste at sea?

Can the Minister tell the House whether the containers were labelled in line with international regulations for dangerous goods? What action is taken after the sinking of any ship known to be carrying hazardous materials? Recently there have been several incidents when the Government have been aware of hazardous materials on ships that have sunk. What action have the Government taken in those cases to trace chemicals, such as those that we are discussing today?

Surely this incident proves that the Government are wrong to reject proposals for a European Community directive on vessels carrying dangerous goods entering or leaving Community ports. Will the Government think again about tightening such controls before a major catastrophe occurs?

Mr. McLoughlin: This is undoubtedly a very serious situation. Indeed, as the hon. Lady says, the chemicals washed ashore are of the most serious kind and are particularly dangerous. I hope that everybody will urge those who today, tomorrow and over the coming weekend make their way on to beaches to keep a close watch for any chemicals that may appear.

It is wholly wrong of the Opposition to try to make this issue part of the dirty water syndrome, about which we have heard so much from Labour Members. It is absolute and total rubbish. Between 200 and 300 ships a day use the Dover straits. It is imperative that the masters of those vessels operate under the international agreements. If any such cargoes are lost, they should report the fact immediately. That is the requirement.

A major conference of states bordering the North sea will take place in two weeks' time. The question of the carriage of dangerous goods of this kind will be discussed, and we shall see whether anything further can be done to ensure that the IMO rules are fully enforced.

My answer to the hon. Lady's question about the EC directive is that had she read the *Official Report* of the debate on 25 January of this year, she would be aware that serious concerns were expressed about whether what was proposed by the EC was practicable. It would require setting the standards for more than 4,000 ships, and we were not sure whether what was proposed was the best way forward.

I assure the hon. Lady that, as in the past, Her Majesty's Government will take whatever action is necessary, through our marine pollution control unit, to deal with problems of this kind when they arise. I would point out to her, for example, the action that was taken by the Secretary of State when the Perintis was sunk and chemicals were recovered.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Is my hon. Friend aware that, according to information that I have received, the total number of canisters recovered has now reached 12? Is there not some evidence to show that these canisters were washed off a ship at sea in recent bad weather? They have clear markings on them and I understand that the labels and batch numbers have now been identified.

Will the Minister give careful consideration to ensuring that the regulations requiring ships' masters to report immediately the loss of any dangerous canisters are enforced and that any ship's master who fails to report such a loss is subject to very severe penalties? Is he satisfied that the liaison between his Department, local authorities and the marine pollution control unit is working effectively?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making those points, because I appreciate that this problem is of great concern to him and his constituents. Anybody who is convicted of not reporting incidents of this kind, and should be subject to the most severe penalties available under the law. This is a very serious matter; that is certainly the view of the Government, and the penalties are there for the courts to enforce.

There has been very good liaison between the local authorities and the marine pollution control unit. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend, who is right to say that more canisters have been washed ashore. As I said, dangerous chemicals other than potassium are involved.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is the Minister aware that there is concern about the way in which incidents of this kind are handled and about which Department is responsible? Will he confirm that initially, the local authorities were left to tackle it and that subsequently the Department of Transport was called in? When and under what circumstances is his Department responsible, and when does it become the responsibility of the Department of the Environment?

Does the Minister accept that we need clear international regulations to identify all toxic cargos of this

kind and that the trade in toxic materials must be restricted much more rigidly, particularly the trade in toxic waste, which should be limited to the absolute minimum?

Mr. McLoughlin: This incident has nothing to do with toxic waste. The chemicals involved are in canister sizes suitable for laboratory use. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) pointed out, they are fully labelled, in accordance with international regulations. That is an important point.

There is no confusion over the question of responsibility. The responsibility for beaches is clearly that of the local authorities. But the Department of Transport and its marine pollution control unit stands ready to help any local authorities that may experience particular problems in this area. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Department is only too willing to give any help that it can, through the coastguard or the marine pollution control unit.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): While I appreciate the action that is being taken, about which my hon. Friend has told the House, has he consulted his right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the potential danger of pollution of the valuable fish stocks on the Sussex coast? Rather than just relying on people walking up and down the seashores looking for canisters, would it not be possible to call in the many Army helicopters that are available and are based quite close to the coast?

Mr. McLoughlin: There has been helicopter assistance and, as I said, if local authorities were to ask for extra help for the coastguard, the Department of Transport would be only too happy to oblige. I assure my hon. Friend that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been fully informed about the situation. We shall take, and I am sure that it will take, any necessary action.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I propose to give priority to those Members who have direct constituency interests in this matter.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): As the containers are clearly labelled and this highly dangerous chemical is not widely used, would not it be easy to trace from which ship the containers have escaped? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the penalties for not notifying a loss of highly dangerous chemicals at sea are sufficient? Is he aware that it is possible in the courts of some nations to prosecute for a dereliction of duty of the kind that has taken place?

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope that my hon. Friend is correct and, bearing in mind the clearness with which this consignment was marked, that it will be easy to find out its origins. I am convinced that penalties are quite tight. It will be up to the court to make a decision when the case comes to court. Over the past few weeks there have been violent storms in this part of the country and it may be that in some cases ships' masters may not know that cargo has been lost.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, despite the fact that the Perintis was not loaded or destined for a port in this country, my hon. Friend's Department received the manifest of that ship within a matter of hours? Is it not a fact that my hon. Friend has implemented every suggestion that has been put forward by hon. Members from both sides of the House to try to control the incident? Does he believe that there is a case for co-operation between us and the French so that we know the manifest of every ship that goes through the Dover straits?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend makes an important point: the Dover straits is an exceptionally busy piece of waterway. Therefore, it is vital to have total co-operation with the French authorities, and I am satisfied that we do. We work closely with them when such an incident occurs. As regards the Perintis, I agree that we took the necessary action in recovering those canisters.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my hon. Friend share with me an appreciation of the job done by the local police, fire services, his Department and the local authority? Will he reassure the House that any additional costs that the local authority may have to bear, which could lead to an increased community charge, will not lead to the local authority being capped for raising the community charge? That point is extremely important to my constituents. While he may have doubts about whether the European Community directive is the best way to control shipping and cargoes in the crowded Channel, will the Government swiftly bring forward counter-proposals for consultation with the EC partners?

Mr. McLoughlin: As I said, there is to be a major conference attended by states bordering the North sea in two weeks' time when this incident will be discussed. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the local authorities and the local people involved. I understand that the cost of mounting these operations for the local authorities will be minimal, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister is right to pay tribute to the public services and to commend the thousands of people who are prepared to be vigilant in this matter, and he may be right to refer to the next international conference, but is he aware that, during the past few years, there has been international conference after international conference, one of which I chaired last year in which Conservative Members were involved, and it is about time that we had far less concern for attending conferences and more for ensuring that there are proper regulations? Are not the regulations governing the movement of toxic waste in Britain, around our coasts and in our waters utterly and deplorably inadequate?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not prepared to put the British shipping industry at a disadvantage, and I am constantly urged not to do so by Opposition Members. Therefore, it is no good Opposition Members asking us to ignore international agreements and we have no intention of doing so. The best way to proceed is by international agreement and I know of no more immediate action that we could take than the conference that is due to be held in two weeks' time.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Standing Committee considering the Environmental Protection Bill which is sitting upstairs seems finally to have reached the conclusion that the direction of wind at sea is the determinant factor in

[Mr. Robert Adley]

deciding which of the Government Departments in which some of these problems are dealt with has ultimate responsibility? Does he agree that that is not entirely satisfactory, and will he consider, in consultation with Ministers at the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Defence, and anybody else who is necessary, the proposition that ultimately the owners rather than the carriers of these products should be held responsible, which would ensure that they did not put some of their products on ships that do not know where they are going or what they are carrying, and lose their cargo?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is jumping to a number of conclusions, which at the moment it would be wrong to draw. There is strong co-operation between all Departments when an incident of this seriousness takes place.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the Minister recognise that the present regulations are grossly inadequate and that there is plenty of evidence to support that point of view? Is he aware that, in several incidents around British coasts, and one in particular on Merseyside, containers of hazardous substances were eventually driven ashore, but there was no co-ordination between the emergency services because they were not informed? Is not it time that the Government recognised that such materials should be monitored while they are on board and that the emergency services should be kept informed when something happens, so that it can be dealt with? To rely on local people around the coast to look for each lost cargo is nonsense.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are strong regulations in force, but they cannot encompass every situation that might arise. We have taken strong action in a number of cases where ships have gone down or have lost their cargo and their cargoes have been recovered as a result of the efficient operation of the Department's marine pollution control unit. That is important, and it is the best way to proceed.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will my hon. Friend the Minister—who has put up a very good performance in replying to the private notice question—reiterate that it was not a matter of dumping toxic chemicals at sea but a maritime accident? In the light of that, is not it opportunistic and cynical of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to exploit that accident and to attack the Government's excellent environmental record?

Mr. McLoughlin: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. It is not a matter of dumping chemicals at sea. Anyone who dumped such chemicals at sea would be guilty of a very serious crime and would deserve the full weight of the law coming down upon them.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Minister described the canisters as containing potassium cyanide. The police have warned that a whiff of the fumes could kill, but potassium cyanide is a solid and gives off no vapour. Did the canisters contain only potassium cyanide or a combination of chemicals? What are the quantities involved? How many containers are there? Is one talking about tonnes or only of kilograms of what is a very toxic chemical?

Mr. McLoughlin: We are talking about canisters of the particular chemicals concerned. One is talking of sizes of 1 kg or 500 ml—that kind of size. It is important to stress that we are not talking about large drums, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman gave me an opportunity to clarify that point.

A number of different chemicals have been washed up. Potasium cyanide is one, but there are others. The British public, and the people living in the particular areas concerned, are well advised to take the advice of the police not to touch or tamper with any of the chemicals but, if they come across them, to report them immediately to the relevant authorities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry for not being able to call all the right hon. and hon. Members who wish to speak.

Business of the House

3.51 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY—Remaining stages of the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill.

Motions on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) and (Construction Board) Orders.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for Consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill [*Lords*].

Motion to take note of the annual report of the European Court of Auditors for 1988 and related EC document on action against fraud. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 1 MARCH—St. David's day—There will be a debate on Welsh affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 2 MARCH—Private Members' Bills

MONDAY 5 MARCH—Opposition day (10th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject for debate to be announced.

[Tuesday 27 February
Relevant European Community documents
(a) Unnumbered Court of Auditors report for 1988
(b) 4582/90 Fight against Fraud
(c) Unnumbered Anti-fraud Policy
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 11-ix (1989-90), para 1
(b) HC 11-x (1989-90), para 2
(c) HC 11-iv (1989-90), para 6]

Dr. Cunningham: I am sure that the debate on Welsh affairs that is to take place on St. David's day will be warmly welcomed.

Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House what proposals he has for allowing the House to debate and deal with the recent report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests? Has he had a chance to consider how we may deal with that matter? Is he in a position to say anything about it today?

Has the Leader of the House noticed that yesterday the Minister for Social Security was once again found guilty by the High Court of acting unlawfully in respect of the social fund? May we be given next week either an oral statement or time for a debate on the High Court's decision? Are we to be told the Government's intentions, given that, as of now, Ministers persist with an unlawful activity and are denying many thousands of people facing severe financial hardship their legal entitlement to benefit? May we have an assurance from the Leader of the House that the Government will not, as they have done in the past, introduce retrospective legislation to render lawful their hitherto unlawful actions?

Has the Leader of the House had a chance to consider the events yesterday involving the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment who said, referring to an hon. Member:

"he has registered there for the standard community charge" —[*Official Report*, 21 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 916.]

The hon. Gentleman made a definitive statement. The regulations approved by the House on confidentiality for the administration and enforcement of the community charge—the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989—stipulate in paragraph 11(5)(c) on page 7 that the extracts of the poll tax register available for public inspection

"shall not identify whether the community charge which arises by virtue of any residence, property or dwelling is a personal, standard or collective community charge."

Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the Minister came to the House yesterday with confidential information on a Member of the House which he was not entitled to have. There can be no doubt about it. He made a definitive statement saying that he had that information, and it is beyond doubt that he must have had it to make a statement.

On the same day, one Minister has been found to be acting unlawfully in the High Court, and another Minister has breached regulations laid down by Parliament. Should not both Ministers come to the House as soon as possible to answer for their activities?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The first and substantial part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks was a question about the recent report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. As the House fully appreciates, that is an important matter for the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) as well as for the House in general. I hope to be in a position to make a reasonably early announcement about my proposals for a debate on that subject, but, in the meantime, I am obviously consulting widely within the House about the appropriate form of motion to be tabled for debate. I shall advise the House of my conclusions as soon as I sensibly can.

The hon. Member made a point about the social fund. Obviously, I shall give consideration to his request for a statement, but I see no need for one. There was nothing in the recent court judgment on the social fund that called into question the basic aims and operations of the fund. As I understand it, the court recognised the clear intention of Parliament that the scheme should be subject to strict monetary limits. The court found that the strong form of wording was not appropriate to guidance. Since the basic legal framework is not in question, the Government do not anticipate any sudden change in the pattern of awards.

On the subject of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), it will be within the recollection of the House that he has made much of his residence in Coventry. The community charge register is a matter of public record—[*Interruption.*] Allow me to finish, please. It is a matter of public record and it is manifest from the public record that the hon. Gentleman is registered for the community charge in Wandsworth. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment inferred that it was his second home—[*Interruption.*] It is not an unreasonable inference. Moreover, my hon. Friend has written a letter in reply to the letter which he received from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) setting out the foundations for that inference. If it is incorrect, of course it can be corrected; but so far nothing has been said to suggest that it is incorrect.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement to the House clarifying the law relating to councillors—including Labour councillors in London—who have said that they will not register for the community charge, or will not pay it, and then proceed to vote on council motions relating to the settlement of the charge? Is that lawful?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot answer that question, but I will bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I hope that all hon. Members, as well as all councillors in all parties, will take every action that they should take to pay the community charge for which they are liable.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Leader of the House will have heard the answer given a few minutes ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) by the Prime Minister about the steel industry in Scotland. Does he accept that, in view of the temporary closures already suffered by Ravenscraig since privatisation, considerable concern is felt by Scottish Members on both sides of the House? They fear that British Steel has no interest in keeping the plant going at a high level if it is likely to be declared redundant and taken over by a competitor. For that reason, we consider that there is an urgent need to debate the alternative proposition—the creation of a Scottish steel company in the near future.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, which fortifies that made by his hon. Friend. It goes a long way to support what was said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—that the privatisation of the steel industry has played an important part in offering better prospects for it. Commercial decisions are a matter for British Steel and not for the Government.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Has my right hon. and learned Friend had an opportunity to study early-day motion 545?

[That this House congratulates the Paisley Central Labour Party for their condemnation of the roof tax; notes that the roof tax has been rejected by all shades of responsible Scottish opinion; that the Labour Party's proposals for England and Wales are radically different from those for Scotland; that the roof tax has all the unfair and unjust features of the wholly discredited domestic rating system with many additional injustices and anomalies; and calls upon the Labour Party to accept the views of Paisley Central and drop those unwelcome proposals.]

Is he aware of today's press reports that a senior and distinguished figure in the Labour movement, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), is to make a speech describing the Labour party's roof tax proposals as "a charade" and "a dreadful mess"? Is he also aware that those proposals appear to differ radically north and south of the border, and can he offer any prospect of an early debate so that the Labour party can withdraw its unjust, unfair and unwanted plans?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has made an important point. If the reports are correct, it is significant that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is to join the wisdom of the Paisley, Central Labour party in recognising the disastrous effect that the introduction of a roof tax would have on people in Scotland. I do not know whether it is possible for us to debate the subject; perhaps the Opposition will give us an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), may I press the Leader of the House for a statement or a debate on the Data Protection Act 1984 and the poll tax—particularly practice notes 4 and 6 and section 8 of note 3?

Is the Leader of the House aware that, when the Secretary of State for the Environment said yesterday that my poll tax details in Wandsworth were in the public domain, he spoke far truer than the thought? When the BBC telephoned Wandsworth council this morning, it was told that anyone could check the details of the poll tax register by telephone; yet, 40 minutes ago, the Department of the Environment told me that the only way in which people could check the register was to go physically to the finance reception department at Wandsworth town hall.

This is not about me; it is a matter of principle. It could as easily apply to a battered wife seeking refuge in Wandsworth from a violent husband. It is not just a case of confidential information being given out: Wandsworth is giving out such information willy-nilly on the telephone.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is excited about a wide range of matters, but the central point at issue is whether my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment could reasonably infer, in order to make it known to the House, that the hon. Gentleman's Wandsworth home was his second home. The fact of his having a Wandsworth home is legitimately a matter of public knowledge. My hon. Friend has written a letter to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), saying that, if any of the inferences were incorrect, he would naturally wish for them to be corrected at the earliest possible opportunity. The only question remaining is whether my hon. Friend was right to infer that the hon. Gentleman's home in Wandsworth was a second home.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Earlier this afternoon my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—under the Svengalian, mesmerising influence of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—seemed to rule out any possible changes in the methods of financing education before the next general election. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members would like to share the status of the hon. Member for Bolsover and to seek the ear of the Prime Minister in an attempt to persuade her that there is a good case for the financing of education by the Exchequer? Could he arrange a debate on the subject in the near future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my right hon. Friend's interest in the matter, but I cannot undertake to arrange a debate upon it merely in response to his request. However, I can assure him that he will never need to emulate the style or the personality of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in order to secure the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the case of Sub-Lieutenant Simon Rowland, who suffered brain damage after heat stroke that went unnoticed by his instructor, is not an isolated

case? During the last 10 years, 663 service men have been injured and 12 have been killed by heat stroke, but there has not been a single prosecution. May we have a debate, therefore, next week on the need for the automatic courts martial of officers involved in training when service men are seriously injured or killed? Could there be an independent scrutiny of the cases during the past 10 years where there have been no prosecutions? May we also debate the need for the dismissal from the Royal Navy of Sub-Lieutenant Rowland's instructor?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot immediately offer the prospect of a debate on that topic, as requested by the right hon. Gentleman. However, I can assure him that the recommendations of the board of inquiry into the Rowland case are being implemented. Instructors in survival training are being given more first-aid training, and staff are being issued with portable phones in order to improve reaction times. Course syllabuses and casualty evacuation procedures are being reviewed, and medical advice is given to all personnel on the prevention of heat stress.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen early-day motion 562 on the Order Paper?

[That this House seeks an assurance that Her Majesty's Government will not remove the ban on the irradiation of food until many unresolved safety issues have been addressed, in particular its effects on packaging, pesticides and food additives, and that it will not introduce irradiation without a practical and reliable set of tests that can detect irradiation and the dosage in all foodstuffs; and welcomes the National Federation of Women's Institutes and Consumers' Association lobby on 22nd February highlighting consumer fears of irradiation and requesting that Her Majesty's Government guarantees time to both Houses to debate this issue prior to the introduction of regulations.]

Better still, has he seen the 500 charming and persuasive ladies in the mass lobby on behalf of the National Federation of Women's Institutes who have come to support the early-day motion? May I go and tell them that, if not next week, at some time the House will have an opportunity to debate food irradiation? Before we do so, the House ought to be given access to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's information about the safety of irradiated food.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend does not need me to remind him that food irradiation has been thoroughly researched and that the process has been pronounced safe by international, Community and United Kingdom independent expert committees. However, the subject has aroused widespread interest. My hon. Friend recognises, I think, that there will be an opportunity to debate the process when the Food Safety Bill is considered. In that context, I shall draw his request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Itchen (Mr. Chope), had written to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) to say that, if he had misled the House, he would withdraw what he said. Should not the Under-Secretary of State come to the House and make a statement?

Several years ago, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt) said something to me across the Floor of the House that was challenged. The following day he came to the House and honourably made a statement withdrawing the accusation. Surely the straightforward course of action would be for the Under-Secretary of State to make a statement. He deliberately misused information that he was not entitled to use. Therefore, he should clear up the matter at the earliest possible opportunity.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The facts remain fundamentally simple. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has made it plain that his residence is in Coventry. It is a matter of public record that he is registered for the community charge in Wandsworth. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary therefore inferred that his Wandsworth home was his second home. The fact that that home was on the public register led my hon. Friend to conclude that he had not sought anonymity from the community charge registration officer. I repeat again that, if, in the correspondence that has already taken place between my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman, either of those inferences is incorrect, naturally I would wish to have them corrected at the earliest opportunity. That remains the position, that is the record and those are the facts as presented by my hon. Friend.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that various county councils are lodging their structure growth plans. Is he also aware that the advent of the M40 is generating tremendous pressure for extra housing in the middle of England, particularly in mid-Warwickshire? I suspect that it is happening in other parts of the country as well. In those circumstances, there are enormous pressures on the green belt, which Conservative Members have always regarded as sacrosanct. Does he agree that there will be some advantage in due course in having a debate on the preservation of the green belt?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my constituency demonstrates many of the same anxieties about the importance of the green belt, I understand why my hon. Friend raises that issue. I cannot promise him a debate, but I shall certainly bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that, since the Government entered a reservation on behalf of Hong Kong and allowed 670 tonnes of elephant ivory to come on to the world market, the Kenyan wildlife director, Richard Leakey, has announced that poaching has risen sharply in Kenya, where conservation of the elephant is under very strict control, so it must be worse in other African countries? Is he not now convinced that it was a total mistake on the part of the Government to allow that Hong Kong ivory on to the world market? Will he allow the House to have not an Adjournment debate but an Executive debate and a vote so that we can discover whether the House wishes the Government to reverse that reservation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman, who takes a tenacious interest in that topic, knows that Hong Kong is not a market for poached ivory, because there is already a total ban on imports of ivory. The strict controls there

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

include licensing for possession of quantities over 5 kg and monitoring movements of ivory between licensed holders. If there is any evidence of Hong Kong complicity in poaching, and in particular if Dr. Leakey can produce evidence of complicity by Hong Kong traders in illegal trading in ivory, we shall investigate it.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Rather than discussing the European Court of Auditors, does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be even more topical to discuss yesterday's decision by the European Court of Human Rights which means that hundreds of thousands of people living near Heathrow who suffer from the noise of 900 flights every day cannot sue for nuisance and have no legal remedy? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I am concerned about the welfare and peace of mind not only of my constituents in Twickenham but of residents of neighbouring boroughs such as Wandsworth, including the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a matter of importance for him and his constituents. He may not appreciate that the Patronage Secretary and I represent constituencies that are contiguous to another London airport, Gatwick, so we share his concern. However, I cannot promise the prospect of an early debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I for the third time ask for a debate on wages in the Refreshment Department of the House of Commons? Is the Leader of the House aware that I have a letter dated 20 June 1989 from the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee, the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving), saying that there are some people in that Department who are underpaid? He admits that they are underpaid. May we have a debate on the matter, because it seems that the Committee is taking no action and some action should be taken?

In the light of what my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House said, there has been a breach of regulations in the case of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may ask only one question at business questions, in fairness to the other hon. Members.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What action will be taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman should raise, in such detail as he wishes, the wages of staff in the Refreshment Department of the House in correspondence with either the Chairman of the Sub-Committee or with myself, as Chairman of the Services Committee, rather than raising it, as he has done several times, on the Floor of the House. Let him set it out in an orderly fashion in correspondence, and it will be studied.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): In supporting the request made a little earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), may I draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to early-day motion 571 on educational funding?

[That this House believes that following the Government's education reforms, particularly the move towards local management for schools, there is now a changing role for local education authorities and a compelling case for education funds to be provided directly from central Government.]

It has been signed by more than 50 Conservative Members. Will he find time for a debate on the need to transfer the total cost of education from local government to central Government to make the community charge, which is right in principle, sensible in practice?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of the fact that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members would like the matter to be debated, but I am unable to promise the prospect of a debate. The Government have no plans at present to change the way in which education is funded.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 429 on New Consensus in Ireland?

[That this House gives its full support to the broad-based Irish group New Consensus which aims to challenge at every opportunity apathy and ambivalence about the right to human life in Northern Ireland, to promote the equal right of all citizens to the democratic control of their destiny, to defend the principles of mutual respect and civil liberty as the basis for democratic, non-sectarian social activity in Ireland, North and South, and to reject all forms of paramilitary activities; and further supports the initiative of New Consensus in organising a dignified picket of the Sinn Fein annual conference in Dublin on the weekend of 3rd and 4th February, to call upon the Irish Republican Army to stop its murder campaign and to reject the claim that they act in the name of the people of Ireland.]

What inference does he draw from it? New Consensus has been established to oppose any ambivalence or apathy to the right to life in Northern Ireland. Its representatives have been in the House today. Might it be a good opportunity for us to debate democracy and civil liberties in Northern Ireland and Ireland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not familiar with all the aims and ambitions of New Consensus. In so far as it draws attention to the evils of terrorist violence and seeks to counter the actions of the Provisonal IRA and Sinn Fein, the Government welcome its activities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: A number of hon. Members are rising who were not rising previously. In view of the great pressure on the following debate, in which I shall have to place a 10-minute limit on speeches, questions will continue until half-past four, when we must move on.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is there not a need for an early debate on local government finance, so that we can congratulate the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on doing what everyone in this country is entitled to do—order their tax affairs to their best advantage? If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about living in Wandsworth and a Militant force coming round to kneecap him, perhaps we could do a swap. I live in the London borough of Lewisham, which has a high community charge. I should be happy to move to Wandsworth and let the hon. Gentleman have my secret address in Lewisham.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Far be it from me to intervene in the somewhat hazardous domestic arrangements suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Government will be aware of the Gardner report on leukaemia clusters and the comments that have been made in the wake of it. One thing is sure: a massive financial investment in both civil and military installations is required. The Government's watchdog, the National Radiological Protection Board, has asked the Department of Health to undertake a study of the medical records of more than 100,000 people who have been exposed to radiation since 1946. Will the Leader of the House ask the Minister to make a statement on this issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give such an undertaking, but I shall bring the question to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Further to the question about my constituent, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), will my right hon. and learned Friend grant the request for a debate? It would enable us to explain that Wandsworth borough council may reveal who has registered for the community charge, but it will never give out a private address and never say whether it is a community or standard charge. A debate would give the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East the opportunity to say whether his main home is in Wandsworth or Coventry. It might also offer Opposition Members the opportunity to explain why so many of them live in Wandsworth, with its benefits of low community charge and high services. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will accede to that request.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has done so well in representing the interests of his constituents and of Wandsworth council that I hardly need to offer him the benefit of a full debate.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the leader of the House aware that the British film industry is the best and finest in the world? Is he aware also that an all-party group visited Pinewood last week to find out about the problems in the industry? It is going downhill, and has been for a considerable time. Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate so that we can consider seriously what help can be given to the industry? Incidentally, I am waiting for a contract. I hope that the Leader of the House will do something about the problem.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The persuasive clarity of the hon. Gentleman's advocacy of the subject commends it to me more than many that have been mentioned this afternoon.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): In the light of the unfortunate and unseemly scenes on the Floor of the House at Question Time yesterday and immediately after, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it might be wise for us to have a further debate on procedure so that we can establish when points of order should and should not be taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fancy that the House has had its fill of debates on procedure for a week or two.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the question of having a debate about the poll tax and in particular its——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Where is the hon. Gentleman's second home?

Mr. Skinner: It is in highly rated Lambeth—and I am only a lodger.

Will the Leader of the House consider having a debate about the transfer to central Government of teachers' salaries, education as a whole, fire, police and so on—a plea voiced by his hon. Friends? The Leader of the House is well known for using coded language to explain his differences with the Prime Minister. He could take part in that debate and tell us exactly what he feels. I warn him, however, not to become too semi-detached.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always grateful for warnings from the hon. Gentleman, even when I think that they are wholly unnecessary.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us feel that the agony of the poll tax could have been spared us had the burden of education been transferred from the rates long ago? Is he aware that many of us believe that the case is stronger than ever now for that burden to be transferred to central Government? May I add my plea to those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and others that we debate the matter very soon?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that a number of my hon. Friends have an interest in discussing the subject. I must tell my hon. Friend of the general rule that the transfer of a burden from one place to another does not always result in it becoming any more comfortable.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Despite his cool and legalistic interpretation of the High Court judgment yesterday concerning the administration of the social fund, is the Leader of the House aware that that decision had profound implications for many scores of thousands of people who are in receipt of income supplement? May I ask for an early statement by the Secretary of State for Social Security on the matter? Such a statement, among other things, should point out what advice or directives have been sent to local offices of the DSS to enable people to reapply for grants and loans which were denied them under the disgraceful administration of the fund.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have already told the House, the court judgment did not call into question the basic aims and operation of the fund. I have explained why, for that reason, we do not regard a statement as necessary. I also told the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that I would consider the request and bring the point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, but I give no undertaking in respect of it.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): May I again draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to early-day motion 571?

[That this House believes that following the Government's education reforms, particularly the move towards local management for schools, there is now a changing role for local education authorities and a compelling case for education funds to be provided directly from central Government.]

It has now been signed by 57 of my hon. Friends of all varieties. I am very much looking forward to the signature

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) being added to the list. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give serious consideration to an early debate on education, so that the educational case for making the transfer of funding to the centre may be fully put and debated in the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's representation of an additional reason for discussion of that motion. I shall give consideration to it, but I cannot give any undertaking on the prospects for a debate.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Can the Leader of the House explain why, within 24 hours of the severe weather hitting the south of England some time ago, the Department of the Environment volunteered an oral statement on a Friday morning, when, a full four weeks and more after similar severe weather hit Scotland, the Scottish Office has not made an oral statement? Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early oral statement from the Scottish Office and, in particular, one that will allow my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and myself to point out the deep sense of grievance felt in the Highland region because the damage done in Strathspey and Inverness-shire, in our respective constituencies, has not been acknowledged financially by the Scottish Office?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was offered in response to a private notice question. That is a difference of some importance. On the substance of the matter, all I can do is to draw the hon. Gentleman's points to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider organising another debate on South Africa to give the Opposition spokesmen the opportunity to explain why they try to present Britain as uniquely soft on sanctions when imports from South Africa to Socialist France have increased threefold since 1985? Does that not show a great deal of hypocrisy, and not only on the other side of the Channel?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises an important point. However, he will recall that the subject has been the subject of two statements from the Dispatch Box and one debate in the past 10 days.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Can my right hon. and learned Friend give a reassurance that the Government will be in a position to ratify the United Nations convention on drug misuse and trafficking before the special demand reduction conference takes place at the beginning of April? Can he tell the House whether necessary legislation will be brought before it to do so?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give a firm undertaking in that respect. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that the Government are using their best endeavours to do so. The position will depend on the progress of legislation now before Parliament.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend allow an early debate on the arrogance of those small-minded councillors, whoever and wherever they may be, whose selfish obsession with programmes for which the public does not wish to pay has blinded them to the savage financial impact that their empire building will have on those who are least able to pay?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure of the need for an early debate on that matter. We hope that the increasingly effective impact of the community charge will bring that message home to voters as well.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an early debate on the deplorable state of education in certain parts of London? Is he aware that, in 1988, only 29 pupils obtained A-level German in the 12 inner-London boroughs and that only 137 obtained A-level French? Is that not a scandal, which underlines how the Labour party's education policies have failed the people of London? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the best results come from Conservative-controlled boroughs in London and the worst from Labour-controlled boroughs?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance of that point. My hon. Friend will, of course, be aware that the disappearance of the Inner London education authority shortly will fortify the message that he is trying to get across.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many hon. Members of all parties—excluding, alas, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)—have taken part in recordings for "Songs of Praise" from St. Margaret's next Sunday? Does he consider that the interest in "Songs of Praise" means that the House is now ready for a full debate on school assemblies and on Christian-centred religious education in schools?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance of the subject raised by my hon. Friend, but I am not sure that the performance of the House on that occasion is necessarily the best argument in its favour.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider having a debate on freeing the remainder of the ports of the United Kingdom? I am thinking of the trust ports, some of which are having great difficulty in operating commercially, because everything has to be done through a private Bill passed through the two Houses. Would it not be a good idea to have a debate on trying to finish what we started, which was privatisation of the ports in the United Kingdom?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend understands that it is not appropriate for me to comment on private business. However, on the principle that he has raised, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is considering whether to introduce legislation to enable port trusts to be converted into companies. No decisions on that matter have yet been taken.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Points of Order

4.33 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At column 836 of *Hansard* an allegation was made against the Army. I have spoken——

Mr. Speaker: On what date?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am raising this at the first opportunity, as you know, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) this morning on the telephone to tell him what I proposed to raise. He was content with what I wish to say. *Hansard* shows that an allegation was made, that a vehicle

"carrying such a device was travelling through the centre of a major city in Britain"

and, according to the hon. Gentleman,

"fell off the back of the lorry."—[*Official Report*, 20 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 836.]

The hon. Gentleman has made a retraction to the national press, which I am delighted to see. However, *Hansard* is a record of what has happened in this place, so I must ask how a retraction of those words, which I am sure were uttered in good faith but which turned out to be wholly misplaced, can be effected in *Hansard*?

Mr. Speaker: This matter arose on Tuesday and was raised again on a point of order yesterday. Although the hon. Gentleman may not have been present, the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) was present here, but I do not think that a retraction was called for at the time.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The retraction by the hon. Gentleman who raised this matter does not appear because he was not involved. I am asking how an allegation which he has now said was wholly wrong can be put right by him. I could not raise the matter yesterday for reasons of which you are aware, Mr. Speaker, and I have taken the first proper opportunity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It may be the first opportunity for the hon. Gentleman, but I regret that he was not here yesterday when the matter could have been raised and when the hon. Gentleman involved could have responded. The hon. Gentleman cannot pursue the matter now. The hon. Member for Leicester, East came to see me last night to inform me that he was leaving for India today.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The top of page 119 of "Erskine May" states:

"The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt."

We do not know whether the statement made by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) earlier this week was deliberately misleading, but we do know that it was misleading. It should be possible for the hon. Gentleman to come to the House to tell us about the statement that he made which put a police operation at risk. We are all concerned about terrorism in this country and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. He cannot raise the matter now. It should have been raised at the proper time. This happened on Tuesday.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, from time to time the opportunity arises for hon. Members of all parties to earn an honest crust outside this place. I have an opportunity to get myself a fiver. It arises from an offer made in *Private Eye*. If someone can find out who is circulating copies of a Central Office publication on the National Health Service, called "Our Ace of Hearts", using House of Commons stationery, which is something upon which you, Mr. Speaker, have remarked in the past, which is being circulated in West Sussex, *Private Eye* will pay a fiver. I should like you to order an inquiry so that we can find out who——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Banks: —and I shall share the fiver with you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is some time since I have seen that admirable publication. I do not know anything about that matter.

East-West Relations

[Relevant document: un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 15th December 1989 on the Community-USSR Agreement on Trade and on Commercial and Economic Co-operation]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Mr. Speaker: Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. I propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock. I appeal to right hon. and hon. Members who may be called before that time to bear that limit in mind. Furthermore, I hope that the House will think it fair if today I give priority to those right hon. and hon. Members who were not called when we last debated this subject, on 1 December, even though they may be Privy Councillors.

4.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We are debating the future shape of our continent: the impetus towards democracy in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union; the emergence in the centre of Europe of a united Germany; and the reduction, on an unprecedented scale, of the armed forces that for decades have opposed one another across a divided Europe. All those developments we can welcome. All those developments will need a mass of continuing work.

It seems that a lot is going on. Last week, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I had talks in London with the Polish Prime Minister and the French and German Foreign Ministers. President Havel of Czechoslovakia will visit Britain next month. Next week, I go to Hungary. In April, I shall visit the Soviet Union for talks with Soviet leaders. Those are just a few of the array of visits and meetings now in progress. The airways of Europe and the Atlantic are thronged with travelling Ministers. At first, all the visits and discussions seemed somewhat formless. That was my first impression a few weeks ago but now I begin to see new patterns of consultation and sensible understandings emerging.

The first phase of smashing statues and hunting secret policemen in eastern Europe is almost over. The more difficult task of building democratic institutions and creating free market economies is beginning. As that happens, we enter a completely new phase of East-West relations. Until now, the challenge for the West was to manage a relationship between adversaries. The overriding need was to avert war——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on a little.

After that overriding need, we had to seek progress with arms control and greater respect for human rights. Much of our effort was directed to limiting the damage of the cold war, exposing the abuse of human rights and countering the disruptive influence of the Soviet Union worldwide. That traditional effort required perseverance and sometimes courage. We did not need to look beyond political alliances, political systems and certainties. Now, many countries, including the Soviet Union, are being transformed.

We shall still need steadiness and courage, but we must welcome fresh ideas and original thought. That is undoubtedly the new mood in Britain, the rest of Europe and across the Atlantic. That came across sharply in the remarkable series of meetings in Ottawa last week. It turned out to be a diplomatic festival as well as a formal conference. The Foreign Ministers of NATO and Warsaw pact countries were there to discuss an open skies regime. In practice, our talks ranged far more widely. It was less a case of open skies than open house. It was an extraordinary experience to talk and listen to the Polish, Czech or Hungarian Foreign Ministers and hear, for the first time in nearly half a century, genuinely national points of view emerge.

I came away with a strong sense that the Soviet Union is no longer sure of its moorings. The Warsaw pact is no longer biddable. Democracy is starting to encroach. Soviet foreign policy is much more sensitive than before. I have the impression that, perhaps for this reason, it at present contains more questions than answers. I admire the Soviet leadership for riding the tide of events, but the pace and strength of the tide will increase over the next few months.

The dominating issue at Ottawa was German unification. The western allies and, as the House knows, successive British Governments, have always supported the principle of German unification, to be brought about as the result of the freely expressed choice of the peoples of the two Germanies. We can be glad, as friends of the new and democratic Germany, that the years of painful division are coming to an end.

Momentum toward unification has built up fast and it is now likely to happen sooner rather than later. The political momentum is largely due to the continuing flow of people from the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic and the desire of those who stay behind to share in the prosperity of their fellow Germans in the West. There is also, as we can all understand, an emotional momentum, which, in a way, is the most powerful of all.

Other, equally important realities can now be taken into account. German unification, of course, closely affects other countries—her immediate neighbours, her partners and allies in the Community and in NATO and the four powers that retain rights and responsibilities in Germany. There are, therefore, external aspects to the German question and alongside self-determination goes the need for joint determination of those external issues.

Before the Ottawa meeting, we felt that the external aspects were not always adequately heeded as the West German Government grappled with the rush of events in the GDR. Until last week we lacked a framework for discussing the external aspects of German unification. We were not alone in our concern as others were worried that we seemed to be in a scramble towards unification without the framework for handling the external aspects, including membership of NATO by a united Germany, the implications of that for the territory of what would be the former GDR because of the Soviet troops there, the status of Berlin and the final settlement of borders, as well as the implications of unification for the EC.

Our message was not one of obstruction, but that we risked muddle and instability if the issues were not addressed in some orderly way. Many felt those anxieties and told us about them and we were probably foremost in spelling them out. Because of that, a notion grew up, particularly in parts of the German press, that we were in

some way going back on our traditional support for the principle of unification. I hope that that notion has now been dispelled to the comfort of us all.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Foreign Secretary has referred to the possible effects of the DDR on the EC. He will be aware that he was reported in the press a couple of weeks ago as saying that the DDR must wait in the queue behind Austria and Turkey. Surely that was not a realistic thing to say.

Mr. Hurd: I was talking then about the suggestion made by President Delors that an independent GDR might apply for membership of the Community. I agree that his statement and my comments upon it have been overtaken by events.

When I visited Washington on 29 January, I stressed to the President and to the Secretary of State that a framework was needed, but we did not discuss in detail what form it should take. By the time I went to Ottawa at the beginning of last week, our thoughts had become more precise. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I were clear that, at Ottawa, I should press as hard as possible for a meeting or meetings of the six—the four former occupying powers and the two Germanies. Other external aspects need to be discussed in the EC, in NATO and with Poland, but a six-power meeting seemed to be the first step.

When I got to Ottawa, I found that I was knocking on an open door, because the minds of our allies had moved precisely in the same direction; only the Soviet Union was reticent but, in Ottawa, that reticence was overcome within 24 hours. We believe that a forum of the six offers some obvious advantages. It brings together those most immediately concerned, the two Germanies and the four countries that have a unique standing in terms of legal rights and responsibilities in Germany.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): My right hon. Friend has touched on the status of Berlin and many people would be interested to know exactly what is British Government thinking on it; after all, we have a garrison there. Is that likely to be reduced in the near future? How does my right hon. Friend see things developing in that regard?

Mr. Hurd: It might save time if I made some progress, but I shall give way later to those who may be dissatisfied by the inadequacy of my remarks.

We have therefore achieved our aim—a channel that can guide the discussion in the future. We welcome that achievement and plenty of hard work lies ahead. We are now optimistic, however, that German unification can be achieved in a manner that fits a pattern of European stability and security acceptable to all. I cannot help adding that now that that framework is beginning to take shape, everyone is saying how important it is.

Everyone is happy to climb aboard now, but an analysis of the importance of discussing the external aspects of German unity was regarded as unrealistic foot-dragging when the Prime Minister and I spoke about that a few weeks ago. Such analyses were two a penny around the table at Dublin on Tuesday. I want to express my appreciation of the way in which the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Genscher, has stressed throughout, in private and in public, the importance of consultation and the particular role of the four powers.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): The right hon. Gentleman has just mentioned the contribution of Mr. Genscher. He will recall that Mr. Genscher told the press at the Dublin meeting that he regarded the Helsinki organisation, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, as the most important framework for dealing with those problems. He signed the declaration by the Community Foreign Ministers that said the CSCE was a fundamental element. The right hon. Gentleman did not mention the Helsinki arrangements. Why not?

Mr. Hurd: I have been speaking for about eight minutes and I have a particularly exhaustive account of the CSCE process, which I shall give in about 10 minutes. Once again, I learn the lesson that I should make some progress.

It is not just on procedure that we have begun to make progress; there is a coming together of ideas on substance as well. There is the concept of a united Germany in NATO. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) would agree that that is important to the West. It is also important for the security of Europe as a whole, as a number of east European countries now, for the first time, recognise. A neutral Germany, outside existing security arrangements in Europe, would weaken stability, and we believe that the Federal Government was right to reject that option. American and other foreign troops and their nuclear weapons will need to remain in Germany in significant numbers as a stabilising element in European security. There is a growing consensus on that point.

We need to take account of Soviet concern, and that means finding special arrangements for the territory of what is now the GDR, including, perhaps, the continued presence of Soviet troops for a transitional period. It is too soon to be precise about details and I do not think it sensible for the Government to try to be precise about them. The principles, however, are becoming clear. I believe that the Soviet Union will come to accept that its own interest in stability will be served by having Germany as a member of the defensive western Alliance, but with the special arrangements I have mentioned, especially as arms control reduces the level of forces on both sides in Europe.

The second important consideration is the eastern border of a united Germany. No one with any sense of history can be surprised by the Polish emphasis on this subject, which was stressed to us by Prime Minister Mazowiecki last week. The German Government have made it clear that the substance of their position is not in doubt. I have heard Mr. Genscher say several times that a united Germany will comprise the territory of the Federal Republic, the GDR and Berlin—not more, not less. Nevertheless we believe that there should be a formal and binding agreement to settle this matter once and for all. A treaty is the obvious solution and Poland, of course, will need to be closely involved in the discussion.

In answer to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), we need to consider seriously within the Community the implications of an enlarged Germany. The economy of the GDR is clearly ill suited to Community life. It is massively state-aided, it offends every EC environmental directive and its industrial and manufacturing standards are, to put it mildly, not those of the single market. The Germans will therefore need derogation from Community law, and we shall all need some transitional arrangements. That is why the Irish Government, as the President of the Commission, have

[Mr. Hurd]

proposed a special Community summit to discuss this, after proper preparation, towards the end of April. We welcome that initiative. The European Commission agreed in Dublin, at my suggestion, that detailed work should begin now in preparation for that meeting.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In relation to the Oder-Neisse line, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the need for Germany to seek unity, and I am in favour of that. But a possible future powder keg might be the lot of the German minority living in the territory, in Silesia and around Stettin, to the east of the Oder-Neisse line.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the sooner Poland is drawn into the European Community the better, because that would ensure that the human rights of the ethnic minorities in Poland—and perhaps in Czechoslovakia, too—could be maintained, remembering that that was a source of some problems in the days before 1939?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed it was. The Helsinki Final Act covers human rights and the question of borders, so it is important as a safeguard for both parts of the problem.

Fourthly, there is the question of Berlin. The western allies have defended freedom in their sectors of Berlin during the long period when the city and Germany itself was divided. Now that the Berlin wall is coming down and unification is in prospect, we do not want needlessly to perpetuate the occupation regime. It has served a particular and worthwhile purpose during a particular period in Berlin's history.

The allies will consult the Russians about the future status of the city, and the two Germanys should be associated with the rather more formal process of four-power consultation.

I am particularly anxious that, in all these matters, we should work closely with the French. We have long had a virtual identity of interest in many of these matters. I hope that we can work for a virtual identity of view.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend has spoken of the economic background of East Germany. We are well aware of the massive wealth of West Germany. Obviously, East Germany will be put back on its feet. May we have an assurance that there is sufficient money in West Germany to put the east European economy back on its feet and that the British taxpayer will not be required, through European funding, to put into effect a greater Germany, which will then have the economic effect of putting some of our own companies and people out of business?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend will have seen and read how the German Government, industry and the Bundesbank are already engaged preparing a massive infusion of help into the GDR. The question of the access of the eastern part of a united Germany to Community funds—how exactly that would work out, transition arrangements for goods and, as I mentioned, derogations to the law—is all detailed work which is just beginning in the Commission in Brussels and which will come to a head at the European Council at the end of April. It is a big series of dossiers, as they say in Brussels, and it is too soon to be clear what the outcome will be.

The second important outcome of the Ottawa meeting was the agreement to hold a CSCE summit later this year, at which—this is important—an agreement on conventional force reductions in Europe would be signed and which would establish a framework for future European co-operation.

The background is known to the House. For years, our negotiators struggled to secure, in the Helsinki process, a common standard of human rights. It was a long-drawn-out business under several Governments, painstaking and painful. The Governments of Eastern Europe were in the end brought to sign up to a set of standards by which their own people could apply a test, and we have all been able to make good use of that Final Act.

People such as President Havel and Doina Cornea would have been lost to view—they might have disappeared for ever—if we had not had a standard that could be waved on their behalf, a mechanism by which we and others could keep pressing for their freedom and rights.

All that effort has been proved worth while. It has been vindicated. The new Governments of eastern Europe, many of whose individual members benefited personally from that process, want to build on it for the future. We agree and believe that the process can now play a greater role than ever before in strengthening peace and stability in Europe. It has the right membership and the right broad agenda.

We need to make human rights, democracy and the rule of law as secure and as permanent as we can throughout Europe, and to achieve that we need an underlying framework of stability to support and nourish the wider growth of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, because all history shows that the survival of those things is fragile and sometimes at risk. The CSCE process is there to hand. We believe that it should be adapted and strengthened for that purpose.

I see the CSCE rather like a motorway which at present carries a good deal of the traffic of East-West relations, but that traffic has been moving uncertainly in the past. The political work of the CSCE will become more important in future. If this motorway for carrying the traffic of East-West relations is to fulfil its potential and carry the additional traffic, we must widen it. We must increase the number of lanes and find other ways of keeping the traffic flowing. So we shall look for practical new elements with which we can strengthen the CSCE's contribution to European security.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the existing instrument of the Council of Europe has a useful part to play in the road-building programme that he has outlined?

Mr. Hurd: The Council of Europe provides, particularly in the European convention on human rights, a mechanism—a rather more formal standard—which will be important as the east European countries develop. That is why they are showing such interest in the Council of Europe, and I welcome the fact that our representatives there have supported them in their efforts to become more closely associated with the work of the council.

Returning to the subject of the CSCE, last year, we and the United States launched a proposal in this context of

free elections and made another about respect for the rule of law. In Ottawa, I advanced another British proposal which, so as not to bore the House, I simply mention.

The cold war had many undesirable effects, but one which was perhaps neutral was to freeze many of the old nationalist emotions and tensions which for centuries were flashpoints in Europe. Now that the cold war is melting and the ice is thawing, there is a risk—we can see it in every newspaper—particularly in central and eastern Europe, that national reawakening will be accompanied by some of the uglier effects of nationalism as the old rivalries reassert themselves.

In the West, we have made a reasonable job of overcoming such rivalries in freedom, but Communism—the enforced and artificial uniformity of Communism—denied that chance to our eastern neighbours. The CSCE could provide a means of resolving disputes between its members to defuse tension and avert the threat of conflict, alongside, of course, the established machinery of the United Nations.

The process should not get bogged down in machinery. It would perhaps be reasonably easy to get agreement on a piece of conciliation machinery and then find that most countries spend their time finding excuses for not using it. We need to encourage the countries of Europe to talk and think collectively and more often about some of these issues—such as minority rights and the protection of minorities—which may be at the heart of existing or future disputes between and within countries.

The third important agreement to come out of the two and a half days in Ottawa was perhaps in some ways the most surprising. It was the agreement reached between the United States and the Soviet Union on the reduction of their stationed forces within Europe. Alongside that was a consensus between the alliances that the negotiations going on in Vienna should press ahead as quickly as possible so that we can reach an agreement this year.

We shall work hard to achieve that outcome. Problems remain. We have not solved the problem of aircraft or the problem, which always dogs the negotiations, of effective verification, but I came away from Ottawa with the feeling that the political will was there to achieve that result.

As many hon. Members have said, we need to look beyond the Vienna negotiations to the future needs of European security. Future arms control measures will be part of that, as will the political aspects of security, which I have already mentioned. In Ottawa, I suggested that we should set this work in hand, and we shall follow up the proposals in NATO and the CSCE.

Mr. Heffer: I agree that we cannot settle matters in Europe overnight, and it will take some time. However, in future, could not we introduce the concept of a wide neutral zone in Europe that is non-nuclear, with both American and Russian troops withdrawn? It is an old concept that was suggested many years ago by Mr. Gaitskell and others in the Labour party. As we think to the future, is not this the way that we should go?

Mr. Hurd: That is a concept of which we shall certainly hear more, but I do not think that it makes best use of our opportunities. The separation of conventional and nuclear, which lies at the heart of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, is a bit old hat. I would rather do what we have suggested, which is not try to copy exactly the CFE 1 talks on conventional forces in Europe, but to look at what the needs of European security will be in 1991-92 and begin to work out what further arms-control collective negotiations are needed to meet those needs.

All those developments raise the question of the future of our own Atlantic Alliance. We need not be dominated by thoughts of symmetry and what is happening in the Warsaw pact. The implications for the pact of democracy among its members will certainly be profound. It will either be transformed or fade away. But that is for its members to decide. They will decide, and are deciding now, what its future should be.

NATO will change, too. It will be affected by the changes in eastern Europe and will need to adapt. However, it is different; it has proper foundations in the consent of Governments and peoples. Therefore, whatever happens to the Warsaw pact, NATO will endure. We need to distinguish as rigorously as we can between those attributes of NATO that will remain important in future and other aspects that should change in response to events. Our security needs will change, but the need for security will not.

Among the permanent characteristics I would list—some hon. Members will have different lists—NATO's present membership, the presence of significant stationed forces, including those of the United States, Canada and Britain, on the continent, a sensible mix of nuclear and conventional forces and an integrated command structure. Those essentials taken together would mean that we would continue to have a strong European defence. For us they include, among other things, the retention of the independent nuclear deterrent.

As for change, the Alliance will become more deeply involved in the management of change in Europe, in the dialogue with the East, in arms control and its verification, in consultation about security problems outside—as well as inside—Europe and in developing the new ideas that I mentioned for the 1990s, such as minimum deterrence. An Alliance that can change with the times still has a lot of offer for the security of its members. It offers a sure link between Europe and north America. I hope that we can have a consensus in the House about the importance of that. It offers a sound framework for co-operation in defence and arms control and the cheapest insurance policy against the uncertainties and possible turbulance of the 1990s.

The long-term security and stability of Europe can best be maintained if what is happening now—the democratic renewal in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe—remains on track. There may well be reverses and upheavals, but I do not think that they are likely to bring back the cold war. However, they could send tremors of danger through the whole of our continent.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in that context and in the context of the peace treaty governing the reunification of Germany, there is an attractive logic in considering eventually a formal agreement between NATO and the Warsaw pact, within the umbrella of other international agreements?

Mr. Hurd: That is one possibility, but it assumes the survival of the Warsaw pact. We should not argue that we need the Warsaw pact—that is a matter for its members. If they decide to keep it, my hon. Friend's suggestion will fall to be considered, but we should not say, "We need the Warsaw pact."

[Mr. Hurd]

I am nearing the end of my speech, because I know that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. I was talking about the process of democratic renewal in eastern Europe. We must provide what practical support we can for that. Hon. Members will be familiar with much of the detail, which was covered during the debate in December. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State with particular responsibility for these matters may have something to say about this.

I stress the key role in the process of the European Community. The Community's response to events in the East has been fast and effective. The Commision, at the request of the United States and others, co-ordinates the work of the wider group of 24 western countries. We, the Twelve, are sending aid of many kinds. We have launched the idea of a European development bank, whose emphasis on helping the private sector owes much to our urging.

We are acting to develop trade and co-operation agreements with the eastern countries and, as a British initiative before Christmas, we looked for closer forms of co-operation between the Community and those countries in the longer term. We want to enable those emerging democracies to develop their economies and align themselves more closely with the Community as reform proceeds.

I hope that the process will eventually lead to full membership of the Community. That is for the future, and a matter for those countries, as well as the Community.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale) *rose——*

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way, for perhaps the last time.

Mr. Jopling: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one other step that it is essential to take now in our relations with the emerging countries of eastern Europe in order to assist them, is to try to dissuade them from building up economic, military or political boundaries between themselves? That could only give rise to the nationalistic tendencies about which he spoke earlier.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree. I was encouraged by the talks that I had for the first time with individual eastern Foreign Ministers in Canada. They were well aware of the danger there. Democracies heed public opinion. They are all engaged in election campaigns in one way and another. My right hon. Friend's point is sound, and it is in the minds of those in the eastern European countries.

I hope that the process of gradually creating and enriching association agreements between the countries of eastern Europe and the Community will eventually lead to full membership. That will be a matter for them, as well as the Community. The Community already provides a stable political, economic and legal framework for European development. Their relationship with the Community will enable those countries to cope better with the conomic and political travail through which they will pass during the next few years. It will be hard for almost all of them. We have provided bilateral help. That well-targeted help is well documented and I shall not list it today. It is increasing all the time and is increasingly effective.

I wish to make a new announcement today. We want to look, on an all-party basis, at what help Britain might give to political parties in eastern Europe and elsewhere. We shall shortly be in touch with others in the House to see whether we can reach some understanding about the way in which we, as a country, could do that.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe) *rose——*

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Duffy: I thought that the House would want to know that some right hon. and hon. Members, notably the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), have already taken on such a task on behalf of NATO parliamentarians, in consultation with Mr. Primakov, chairman of the supreme Soviet, as long ago as last June. I am glad to say that that intention is prospering and on-going. I was glad to hear what the Foreign Secretary said, and perhaps we can come together on this.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing me up to date on that. We shall ensure that, as far as possible, these efforts are brought together.

Hon. Members will agree that we must encourage those countries in every way possible in the amazing task that they have set themselves. In their societies they are transforming the nature of the relationship between the state and the individual. That sounds easy as a general statement, but it is extraordinarily difficult in practice day by day.

I have touched on the three main efforts in which the British Government are engaged—the move towards German unification and our interests in the external aspects of that, the development of the European security framework and support for reform in eastern Europe. All those tasks stem from events of which the House was glad —the breaking down of walls and the freeing of peoples.

Lech Walesa told me when he was here before Christmas that he and his fellow amateurs, as he put it, had done their bit by proving to us professionals that the impossible was possible. He added—this was the thrust of it—that the rest was up to the professionals. We professionals—parliamentarians and diplomats, business men and bankers, journalists and broadcasters—must show the skill and imagination to follow up in a worthy way the work of, for example, the shipyard workers in Gdansk, the crowds in Wenceslaus square, and those who, through the years, defied the Berlin wall.

5.10 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I welcome the Foreign Secretary back to this country after his unsuccessful visit to Dublin for the Council of Ministers meeting where he found himself, yet again, out-voted, out-argued and out on a limb.

There are in this important issue some matters of considerable importance, and our relationship with the United States, as the Foreign Secretary has rightly said, is of crucial importance. Therefore, why was it falsely said in Dublin that there was American support for the Prime Minister's policy on sanctions for South Africa? Was it President Bush's repudiation yesterday of that claim which makes the Government too scared to tell the House, other than through a written answer, that they will now lift the investment sanction pressure on South Africa?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is a day out of date. He had better find out what has been said today in Washington about that.

Mr. Robertson: The House will be delighted to know. The House would have been delighted to know yesterday what was being said. This morning's *Financial Times* says:

"In Washington, a senior administration official stressed that the White House did not endorse Britain's intention to lift the voluntary ban on investment in South Africa".

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many of us came here today under the happy impression that we were to talk about foreign affairs subjects other than South Africa. Is the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This is an Adjournment debate and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is still on his preamble.

Mr. Robertson: I well understand the embarrassment of Conservative Members when they discover that relations with one of our closest allies are in such a state of disrepair.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, I will not give way. I am well aware of the time constraint on all of us.

We unreservedly welcome the debate. At this time, when history is being made every day, it is right that the House should have time to look at the momentous events going on around us—events which will yet determine the kind of world that we shall inhabit for generations to come. After all, we know that Britain will be intimately affected by events on the other side of the continent and well beyond that as well.

The Foreign Secretary forcefully made the point that we are at a veritable hinge of history and the people of Britain have a right to expect that their politicians will try to achieve a consensus on what is happening and on what role Britain should play.

Remarkably, the Foreign Secretary said that we should think collectively in Europe. That is a remarkable claim, but one to which we would subscribe. In most countries, in the East and in the West, an attempt is being made in the dramatically improved climate of relations to achieve a community view of what the future holds.

These times involve the collapse of the cold war and with it the collapse of the Warsaw pact as a military alliance in anything other than name. That has created unprecedented opportunities for the new and less risky European security order. There are also the grave and perhaps crippling crises within the Soviet Union—in the economy, in the ruling Communist party and in the republics that seem set to secede from the union.

There is no doubt that, as Mr. Gorbachev was the trigger for the remarkable process that we are enjoying, his personal and policy survival is of considerable consequence to us all.

There has been the economic collapse of the former Communist satellite states in eastern Europe, where four decades of sterile, incompetent, corrupt bureaucracy have left rising expectations which, if denied, may spark instability or worse. Then there is the question of the new unification of the two German states, a question which seems to mesmerise the world and one on which the Foreign Secretary rightly concentrated.

That is a more than full agenda, and for any Government with vision or any sense of destiny, the need for national consensus on the future would be self-evident. A consensus at home and the building of future influence abroad should be our collective priority.

But if, as is the bitter reality, we have no consensus, but instead conflict at home and isolation abroad, it is solely the result of that unique egocentric short-sightedness that our Prime Minister has made her own special hallmark. We were out-voted and marginalised again this week in the EC over sanctions, just as we were on the social charter and on monetary union in December, and it looks as though we shall be in conflict again over the role of the new European bank for development and reconstruction, perversely, at exactly the same time that the Government have the brass neck to claim that that bank should be placed in Britain.

Mr. Cormack: Will the hon. Gentleman remember that we would not be in this position today had it not been for the foresight, vision and co-operation of Ernest Bevin and Winston Churchill in days when the Labour Government were doing things of which the Conservative party thoroughly disapproved on the domestic front, but it realised that there were greater things to come together on? Would it not be a good thing if the hon. Gentleman emulated the example of that great Labour statesman now?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman should listen not only to Opposition Members but to many of his colleagues. Of course we want a consensus. We should like to return to the vision of Ernest Bevin, when the creation of NATO and a unified Europe stood at a more difficult time than today. If anybody is guilty of breaking such consensus, shattering it before it could even be contemplated, it is the lady in No. 10 Downing street today.

We are divided even from the Americans on South Africa. As I said, as we gallop alone to relieve the pressures that have brought reform in that country. We are shunned in the Commonwealth and out on a limb on nuclear modernisation in NATO. As the world moves into a new era, the Government's stewardship of foreign policy has brought us to a new low in international influence. Never was that more glaringly on display than in the handling of the German issue.

For more than 40 years, we in Britain have stood by the objective of uniting the two artificially divided German states. Therefore, we should now rejoice that the brave people of East Germany have liberated and democratised their oppressed land, and that the German people can now choose to live together in peace and freedom.

But at a time when delicacy was required, the Prime Minister offered only meddling obstruction. At a time when vision was required, the Prime Minister offered only a crude rehash of the past. At a time when generosity and imagination were required, the Prime Minister offered only bleak prejudice.

Mr. Heffer: Is my hon. Friend aware that at least some Opposition Members were not keen about the language that the Prime Minister used about German unification, but some of us who had a certain experience at one time of our lives as young fellows, have never quite forgotten that experience, and we have a worry about this matter? That is why the Labour party split after the war on the

[Mr. Heffer]

question of German rearmament. Some of us feel very strongly about that matter, although in principle, we are in favour of German reunification.

If my hon. Friend reads *Le Monde*, he will know that the French are very concerned—all the French. My hon. Friend must not imagine that he speaks for the whole of the Labour party, as I saw him claim to do on television the other day. We want unification, but we want to be certain that there are safeguards, so that we never again see the situation that arose before.

Mr. Robertson: I always listen with great care and attention to those of my elders who have wider and longer experience than myself. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) speaks with great passion, as do other of my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I have read carefully the words of President Mitterrand, whose experience is as long and distinguished as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Walton. As my hon. Friend listens to the rest of my speech, he will come to realise that the distinction I draw is one of the tone and the repercussions of that tone, rather than of any under-estimation of the concerns that he and many others in Europe genuinely feel.

It is an act of diplomatic vandalism for the Prime Minister to campaign with the insensitivity that she has, and thereby alienate and irritate our closest European ally and our most important European trading partner. Last week, I was told by German members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg that our Prime Minister stimulates and encourages the very forces of Right-wing German nationalism that she warns about by insisting—in her own special, grudging, carping tone—that, of all the Europeans, only the Germans are to be denied self-determination.

We must ask ourselves why the Prime Minister seems immune to criticism from the continent and even from this House. Why is it necessary for Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell to cut her newspapers so forensically that she can ignore the criticism that is coming? Last weekend, *The Sunday Times*, which is not known for its loyal support of the Labour party, commented:

> "Britain's future role in the world is more uncertain than at any time since the end of the second world war . . .No wonder Britain is set to play only a marginal role in the reshaping of Europe, an increasingly irrelevant voice that nobody bothers to listen to. That is certainly isolation, but there is nothing splendid about it."

An editorial in *The Economist*, which is usually well to the right of the politics of Ronald Reagan, stated:

> "There is fog in the Channel, and once more the continent is cut off. This time, however, the fog is being generated in Downing Street and threatens to cut off not just Britain's partners in the European Community but the new governments of Eastern Europe, all of black Africa and even America. In short, Britain is in danger of becoming an irrelevance on the world stage, largely because its foreign policy emanates from the gut of its prime minister, Mrs. Thatcher."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Walton said, there are concerns inherent in the unification of the two Germanies, and they are shared by many cleverer minds than that of the Prime Minister. Poland's western frontier is of vital significance and it must be guaranteed absolutely. I agree entirely with the Foreign Secretary's view that there should be a treaty in that respect. The prospective neighbours of a united Germany are apprehensive and nervous about the perhaps natural introversion of their large next-door neighbour. Instability in central and eastern Europe poses dangers to us all.

Nevertheless, it is a counter-productive insult to continue to rattle old skeletons in the face of two Germanies, as the Prime Minister has repeatedly done over the past few weeks. To invite any comparisons between Hitler's third reich and the threat it posed to Poland and to other neighbouring countries with the Federal Republic of Germany—a nation with strongly rooted, robust and developed democratic institutions, many of them created by this country after the war, and which has no conceivable territorial ambitions—displays a perverse lack of tact, or just an absence of reality. A newly united Germany will pose a challenge to the rest of Europe, but it will be economic, not military. As I said in December's debate, perhaps we should beware of the second Japan, not the fourth reich.

When the costly and painful unification is complete —perhaps five years is a generous estimate of the time that that will take to accomplish—and despite the formidable problems of unifying currencies, harmonising benefits and pensions, and tackling appalling pollution problems, we will have in our midst in Europe an economic super-power that could easily distort the balance between the Community's member states. The Prime Minister would serve this nation better by facing up to that challenge instead of abrasively campaigning to lose our friends and allies.

The framework to develop relations with Europe will be found within the European Community—with nation states both inside and outside its present membership. It will be within the Community that economic and political balance can be ensured and strengthened. It is the Community which will be able to tackle the huge aid project for recovering the crucial stability of newly democratised countries. Only the Community can provide the institutions that can bind together diverse states and provide the pooling of sovereignty that alone will guarantee that no nation or economic force becomes disproportionately powerful.

Given Britain's isolation among our Community partners, what hope is there that we will be on the inside track of the new Europe? As a party politician, I suppose that I should rejoice in the incompetence of the present Government, the divisions among Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers, and the yawning chasm between Downing street and the Foreign Office. But I do not. I care enough about my country and the future of my children and their generation to feel only despair at the way that Britain is avoidably losing out.

In security, amazing opportunities are opening before us. The agreements reached in Ottawa that the Foreign Secretary outlined show what is possible when political will is there. But the disintegration of the Warsaw pact demands a reassessment of NATO's role and its current military strategy. It is interesting that the doctrine of flexible response was not among the components listed by the Foreign Secretary as the most valuable to be retained within NATO. Obsessional debates about neutralism are becoming meaningless, given that the bulk of Soviet troops will be leaving eastern Europe and that only one alliance is left facing a radically weakened, if still well-armed, Soviet Union.

The 35-nation CSCE group meeting to which the Foreign Secretary referred offers a real chance to bridge

the now almost irrelevant divide in Europe. We must grasp that chance. I stand full square with the Foreign Secretary on that. The group must not degenerate into a talking shop but should set about creating institutions that will provide a new security framework for our continent.

I listened sympathetically to the Foreign Secretary's suggestion that the potential border problems, ethnic grudges and nationalisms that have been unleashed by the new process might be considered by the group. In the new security and political atmosphere that now exists, we must seek to avoid crude triumphalism and vain, unconvincing attempts to grab credit for what has happened. That would be not only wholly inappropriate as the euphoria dies away and the problems pile up, but deeply patronising.

The people of Poland, many of whom I met when I visited that country three weeks ago, displayed an astonishing sophistication last year in achieving what they wanted from their elections, despite the complex problems and obstacles put in their way under the system offered. I welcome the Foreign Secretary's initiative in bringing together the political parties of this country, to see whether we can give financial aid to political parties abroad. There is no doubt that the German system of foundations allied to political parties has played a major role in boosting German influence abroad and helping developing countries.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I know of the hon. Member's commitment to this cause. However, could he draw the attention of his colleagues in the European Parliament to this matter? The European Democratic group has twice tried to set up a fund, which it wants to call the European democracy fund, to do exactly that, but the Socialist group, including the hon. Gentleman's colleagues in the European Parliament, has twice blocked it.

Mr. Robertson: I was in the European Parliament last week when the debate took place and the decision was taken. A number of distinctions have to be drawn. First, there is already aid to political parties in the European Parliament, and the Socialist group has made a gesture of levying its members and adding to that levy to help the promotion of the political process in eastern Europe. Secondly, some political parties represented in the European Parliament might have an affinity with organisations abroad which should perhaps not be the beneficiaries of public money. I understand that the various parties in the European Parliament continue to talk about the issue. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have a deep interest in the subject, and I intend to pursue it irrespective of what anyone outside the House intends to do.

The people of eastern Europe are in the process of rejecting many of the easy stereotypes on offer from the Right and also perhaps from the Left in the West. The Czechoslovakian Prime Minister was quoted last week as saying that there would be no Thatcherite revolution in that country. *The Daily Telegraph* quoted him as saying that

"there would be a privatisation programme, but it would be pursued slowly."

By saying that, he was perhaps rejecting all the ideologies that are being peddled today, and that may be the key to their future.

As we face the new dawn in East-West relations, I hope that Britain, in spite of our Prime Minister's gross lack of judgment, will be able to play a major role in building a secure future. Certainly, the Labour party believes in the importance of multilateral processes, in the forging of friendships and alliances and in consensus for the benefit of all and not the ego of one. When the Labour party comes to office, that will be our guiding principle.

Britain has some unique and irreplaceable assets. For example, the British Council, which already has an organisation in place in eastern Europe, has allowed Britain, almost alone, to channel immediate technical, scientific and educational help to those countries. The council's over-stretched staff are already providing practical assistance and English language courses where there is an urgent need.

The BBC world service has played a remarkable, perhaps even an historic, role in the liberation of eastern Europe. From every country reports have come about how the objective, fair and truthful news from the world service has sustained and informed millions of people, and kept hope alive amid years of oppression. Surely, it is therefore now time for the Government to recognise that huge achievement and to provide the trivial sums that would give life to world service television.

Britain has the assets and, in spite of the Government we have a proud record of rising to a challenge. The British people deserve the chance to participate in the bounty that the present situation presents. Dare we hope that our Government can eventually, even belatedly, rise to the expectations of their own people?

5.33 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): We are grateful to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary for giving us such a wide-ranging and comprehensive review of the present situation, however quickly it may be changing. I hope to be able to comply in two ways with Mr. Speaker's request that we should make brief interventions in the debate. I admit straight away that I do not propose to be as comprehensive as my right hon. Friend; and I do not wish to state views on the disarmament process which is going on, because I think that there is a better chance of success now, and my right hon. Friend has the matter completely in hand.

On the question of the future of NATO, I must confess that I do not understand some of the language now being used on both sides of the Atlantic. It is said that NATO must change from a military function into a political framework. I confess that I do not know what help a political framework in NATO would be. I do not see what purpose it would serve, because we already have a political framework. Therefore, I think that we should drop the idea that NATO is just going to become a political organisation. We shall still require a united defence in Europe. We had better concentrate on that.

I was slightly disturbed when my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said that that would enable NATO to look after defence in other parts of the world—although he did cast that remark away lightly. I strongly object to that. NATO has a European purpose which will continue, although perhaps in a more limited form, but I could not support a NATO in Europe which regarded itself as the policeman of the rest of the world. Nor do I think that that would be acceptable to what were formerly the colonial

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territories. They would regard the European powers in a new form as trying to dominate their independence in other parts of the world.

I have no desire to see Europe try to sort out what is happening in Colombia with drug runners, or what is happening in South Africa, or anywhere else in the world. I think that South Africa is of relevance, not just for the reason that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) mentioned, but because we have opted out of the views of our partners in the European Community, and the views of the Americans on the other side of the Atlantic. The important thing is the consequence that that will have for our relations with those two groups when dealing with the new situation in Europe.

I hope that I can be brief about the new situation in Europe, because it seems to me that all sorts of objections —or if not objections, strange constructions and interpretations—are being put on the situation unnecessarily. I hope that I will not be thought arrogant in any way if I say that what is required seems to me obvious —as obvious as it is to the eastern European countries.

First, German reunification is inevitable and the eastern European countries recognise it. The hon. Member for Hamilton said that this was a new dawn. It is certainly an era of hope. Therefore, when we say yes, but only with careful consideration, a great deal of reservation and several conferences, those countries will say, "There you are—the British once again are trying to slow the whole thing down or prevent it from happening." The Foreign Secretary knows as much about the subject as any hon. Member—certainly since 1965, when he was my private secretary. He understands these attitudes and that they are unfortunate. We need to say, "Yes, we share your hope and we are going to work out how to help you." That may seem to be only a slight difference, but it will be vital for their attitude towards us.

German reunification is inevitable and we have always recognised that. Sometimes we said that we believed in it because we thought that it would never happen. If that was the case, it is now going to happen, and we must accept it. What are the problems? It is up to the two Germanies to settle how they come together. It is not up to us as occupying powers, or interfering busybodies from outside.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary mentioned the formula of four plus two. I understood that, at the recent conference, it was changed to two plus four. That is important. The two refers to the two Germanies, who will work out how they come together. Then the four powers will discuss with them the implications of unification for the four-powers. As far as the three powers are concerned, we have long recognised that, when the two Germanies come together, that is their affair and we no longer have an interest from that point of view. Moscow has also come to recognise that situation in the past few days. Therefore, the two Germanies will settle what they are going to do, and the four powers will acknowledge that. That is not difficult and there is no problem about it. It will not take long.

I heard the Czech Prime Minister say the other day that he had asked for the withdrawal of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. Mr. Gorbachev's reply was that he would certainly consider it, but, of course, it would be a lengthy operation and might take more than a year if he decided to do it. The Czech Prime Minister said, "I replied to him, 'Well, it only took a day to put them in, so why should it take longer than a day to take them out?'" That is a very practical approach.

The East German Prime Minister, Mr. Modrow, has said, "We have little time: do get on and allow us to achieve our purpose." Why is there so little time? Why is Chancellor Kohl saying, even before the general election, that various things, one of which I shall discuss in a moment, must be done? The reason is that they have fears.

What is Chancellor Kohl's fear? Every month, 70,000 East Germans are still crossing his border. West Germany has done a magnificent job in accommodating East Germans since they started to come in through Hungary, but an extra 70,000 each month pose a problem. A second problem is that both Chancellor Kohl and the East German Foreign Minister are worried about the state of the East German economy, which they believe may collapse at any moment. In that case their problems will be infinitely greater: there is no time to be lost.

What is the third fear? The possibility that there may still be a hard core of Communists in eastern Germany who will attempt to reverse the process cannot be overlooked. There is no time to be lost: they must get on with it, and that is what they will try to do directly after the election. I see no problem, and no need for lengthy investigations.

It is interesting to note that Chancellor Kohl has proposed the introduction of a unified currency as soon as possible, preferably before the election. I heard him make a very well balanced speech the other day. Having completed the economic part, he looked up, smiled and said, "So, you see, I think that I can say without fear of contradiction that Ludwig Erhard has triumphed over Karl Marx." That was a very revealing statement.

What the Chancellor said took me back to 1948, when Erhard—whom I knew well, both as Finance Minister and as Chancellor—reformed the German currency. He said, "Our marks are useless: we shall revalue them. If we take 10 for one, we shall have the dynamic to create the new Germany." It worked. East Germany—which now has an anomaly of four marks to one and a black market of 10 to one—must reform its currency in a similar way to obtain the same dynamic that Erhard produced for western Germany. I do not see why we should query that, or why it should pose any problem for the Community.

In a moving intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—who has now left the Chamber—asked for a guarantee tha the British taxpayer would never be involved. What does that mean? Despite all our protestations that we want freedom for the eastern Empire—that we want it to have its own way, to be successful and to enjoy a higher standard of living—the only issue that appears to concern my hon. Friend is the need for the British taxpayer not to become involved.

Of course western Germany will provide the larger part of what is necessary; indeed, it is already doing so. Already German business men from the big firms are roaring around eastern Germany, establishing their plants and distribution systems and offering capital. Perhaps we should mention that to one or two British business men; after all, East Germany is not all that far away.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary says that we should have discussions about the possibility of our parliamentary parties' taking part in political activities in the east European countries, and showing them how to proceed. They are already doing that. The Socialist parties

are roaring around those countries. All that we have to do is persuade the Conservatives in this country to do the same. The Conservatives in France are already doing it, as are those in the European Parliament. I see no need to make a great fuss; let us get on with trying to persuade those countries that, when elections take place in less than a month's time, they should vote for the party that we support. Opposition Members can do the same.

We have no problem with regard to the European Community, because of the special provision in the treaties that East Germany should always be given preference. It has been given preference, and will continue to receive it. That leads automatically to union, and there is no need for long arguments about it. As for the other eastern European countries, we must recognise—perhaps, as a Back Bencher, I can say this more easily than others can—that, after 40 years of Communist domination and repression from Moscow, they have no experience of government or administration: they do not know how to run an organisation. They talk of a market economy, but they have no idea how to produce one. When we ask, "Where will your investment come from? You have no savings, because under Moscow you were not allowed any. How will you create a market economy?", they do not know the answer.

That is a frightening feature of the present developments, and we must help in every way that we can. The east European countries welcome management studies, and we ought to help with investment as much as we can. The Community is already organising that, and we should play a large part; we should assist those countries to develop their economies in a way that will enable them eventually to become members of the European Community.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I hope that it will reassure my right hon. Friend to know that the Adam Smith Institute is working very hard to ensure that the economies of eastern Europe fully understand the benefits to be derived from a liberal market economy.

Mr. Heath: Nothing that has happened at the Adam Smith Institute has given me any reassurance at all. If, after 10 years, it is thought desirable for the emerging eastern European countries also to enjoy interest rates of 15 per cent., mortgage rates of 15·5 per cent., balance-of-payments deficits of £20 billion and inflation rates of 8 per cent., very well: let the Adam Smith Institute go and tell them, and we shall jolly soon see that they are taking no notice. The problem with the eastern European countries is considerable.

Let me say a word about the Soviet position, which seems all too often to be overlooked. What we are discussing depends to a large extent on Mr. Gorbachev's retaining his present position—or, if someone else replaces him, on that person's following the same policies. We are entitled to have doubts about that. Indeed, any Government would be very unwise to ignore the possibility of a change—an attempt to return to an earlier system.

What has happened to Mr. Gorbachev? He set out to improve the Soviet economy to such an extent that the Soviets would welcome him and his supporters as their saviours—a laudable ambition. I am convinced—in fact, Mr. Gromyko has told me—that he believed that no change in the political organisation would be required. Once people were properly fed and housed, they would say, "This is a good political organisation." However, the economic situation has worsened in the five years of Mr. Gorbachev's regime; the result has been the emerging demand for political rights in the Baltic states, the eastern European countries, the southern states of Azerbaijan and Russia itself. There is increasing evidence that support for Mr. Gorbachev is waning considerably.

I talked the other day to some Russians from Leningrad. When I asked them for their comments on this country, they replied that Mr. Gorbachev seemed to be infinitely more popular abroad than at home. I said, "That does happen to politicians from time to time." We must recognise that all our plans to help depend on Mr. Gorbachev's position being maintained, and on the retention of the present Soviet policy line.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the forces of reaction in the Soviet Union would be strengthened—thus undermining Mr. Gorbachev's position—by the lack of a flexible response from NATO and from this country? The more aggressive our defence posture, the more likely are the generals and other reactionary forces in the USSR to reassert themselves.

Mr. Heath: If by "flexible" the hon. Gentleman means a balanced arrangement for disarmament, I agree with him. That is what the Foreign Secretary has said. That must be the basis of any negotiations between the two sides. However, we must also recognise that those whom we describe as diehards in the soviet Union are concerned about the break-up of the Soviet empire. When he started along this path, did Mr. Gorbachev deliberately intend to break up the Soviet empire? It is difficult to believe that he did. In that case, will anyone who does not hold the same view intervene and say, "This has got to stop"?

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Does my right hon. Friend agree that West Germany recognised the need immediately to satisfy some part of the consumer demand in the Soviet Union in order to reinforce Mr. Gorbachev's position? It made a grant and transferred food immediately so that the people of the Soviet Union would recognise the benefits of perestroika. Ought we not to press our Government to follow the German lead?

Mr. Heath: Chancellor Kohl has said that he will not accept neutrality. That is absolutely right. We should back him. That would mean having German forces and NATO forces, if he requires them, in a united Germany. I do not believe that it is a realistic or workable proposition that there should be NATO forces in what is now the western part of Germany and Soviet forces in the eastern part, once there is a united Germany. No Government could operate under such conditions.

I deplore the comparison that is made between the present Germany and the past Germany of the 1930s. Much as I admire the chief rabbi, I cannot support his statement that Jewish people from this country should be present at all the negotiations. The Jewish people here do not form a country; Israel has no status in this connection. Germany believes—as does Japan and many other countries—that in the modern world it is not military power which is of the utmost importance. Japan has become very successful through the exercise of economic power. We wish that we had greater economic power.

[Mr. Heath]

West Germany realises that, given time for the recapitalisation of East Germany, a united country of 80 million people will be the most powerful country, economically, in the Community.

I was glad to hear the Foreign Secretary's reference to France. We want a balance in the Community. The obvious balance is this country and France. That was recognised long ago by General de Gaulle and President Pompidou. It is still recognised today. However, we must take a positive line and work for it. If we persist in making provisos about this and that in the Community, the French will not accept it. There is the closest relationship between Paris and Bonn. Everything is done by consultation between Paris and Bonn. They work out their policy together, including their defence policy.

As for Poland and Czechoslovakia, we agreed long ago —with Chancellor Brandt of Germany taking a large part in the negotiations—that the frontiers would never be the pre-war frontiers; they would be the post-war frontiers. That is now accepted by Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Foreign Secretary was right to emphasise that the ethnic German groups in those countries would like to be within the boundaries of a united Germany. The welcome that Chancellor Kohl received from the Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia demonstrates that fact.

Similar problems have been solved in many parts of Europe. The Foreign Secretary mentioned some. Italy is another case. It has had similar problems, but they have been resolved through peaceful negotiation. We could do the same. As the standard of living improves in those countries, national and ethnic differences will be greatly reduced. I see no real problem over that. With agreement over the Polish-Czechoslovakian boundaries, another obstacle is removed.

We must hasten the completion of the Community arrangements as fast as possible. That is what Germany wants. Those who say that we must slow up and wait for the eastern European countries to get ready to join us are wrong. It took Spain and Portugal 10 years, after General Franco and President Salazar went, before they were in a position to negotiate with the Community. Their economic position was infinitely stronger than that of the eastern European countries today. Whatever one thought of General Franco—and I never thought very much of him —during his period in office, the middle class grew and became extremely well trained. The banking system was well organised; so was the industrial system. That enabled Spain, after 10 years of democratic government, to join the Community. It will take the eastern European countries at least 10 years to reach the point at which they can become members.

Our job is fully to develop the Community as quickly as possible; the eastern European countries recognise that that is in their interest. Then we should be able to give them more help. They will be granted associate member status and then, if they want it, full membership. That is the biggest safeguard of all for those who are worried about the place that a new, united Germany would have inside Europe and inside the Community. That is where we must put our trust. We have a major part to play in that process.

5.55 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). It is a somewhat sentimental occasion for me. We first became politically involved with each other more than half a century ago—then, as now, holding very different political views—because we were fighting a Conservative Prime Minister who believed in appeasing Nazi Germany. Today, more than half a century later, we are united in fighting a Conservative Prime Minister who is obstructing the creation of a unified, democratic Germany. I also congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on a more recent anniversary, which he celebrated yesterday —the 40th anniversary of his entry into Parliament—and on the magnanimity that he showed in allowing the Prime Minister to attend the celebrations.

I was very interested, if I may say so without offence, in much that the Foreign Secretary had to say. Some of it will bear careful reading. I was particularly interested when he advocated minimum deterrence and a follow-up to the current negotiations for a conventional forces in Europe agreement. I only hope that he took more trouble to clear those passages with the Prime Minister than he did with his recent speech on turning tanks into tractors, of which I thoroughly approve.

I very much agree with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup who feels alarm and stupefaction at the Foreign Secretary's idea that NATO, having lost its enemy in Europe, should look for enemies in other parts of the world and try to expand its geographical influence. I do not think that the Foreign Secretary will find many takers for that idea in the Community—least of all, incidentally, in a united Germany.

I intend to concentrate on two issues—first, the implications of what is going on in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for the present level of defence spending in Britain and NATO, and secondly, the implications for our security and that of the West of those same events. We all agree that, whether or not we foresaw the nature of what was going to happen, we were taken by surprise by the extraordinary acceleration of the speed at which it happened. The Foreign Secretary has had to admit that the remarks that he made a few weeks ago are totally irrelevant as he speaks to us today. No one was prepared and the nature of the change was far more fundamental than we recognised.

The end of the cold war and the impact of glasnost on the western part of the Communist world has released pressures that had been bottled up for 40 years—in the case of the Soviet Union for 70 years. The explosive force of those pressures has produced change at a rate that it is very difficult to follow and which, as the Foreign Secretary admitted, could lead to many dangers as well as to many opportunities. We have to ask ourselves whether any of the possible dangers—they are not all certain dangers, by any means, yet—are grounds for maintaining the present level of defence spending, or the present structure of western defence in NATO. I would suggest not.

The worst that could happen in the Soviet Union would be that the midsummer Congress of the Communist party produces the rejection of central control by the Communist parties in most of the Soviet Republics and perhaps produces a split into three of the Communist party of Russia itself—one under Gorbachev, a Left-wing

or radical party under Yeltsin and another under Ligachev or Gidaspov which is more conservative. That is all perfectly possible.

One possible explanation of Gorbachev's haste to develop new powers as President of the Soviet Union is that he wants to detach himself from the Communist party altogether and to detach the state from the Communist party to run a more normal system which would have much more in common with the West. that is bound to have implications for the unity of the Soviet Union. It seems almost certain now that the three Baltic republics whose incorporation has been recognised by the Soviet Government to have been illegal will be independent by the end of this year. Georgia and the Central Asian Republic may wish to follow shortly afterwards.

There is much speculation as to whether Gorbachev or his successor, if there is one, would seek to stop that process by the use of force. I remember Arbatov, who was one of his advisers, telling a body in Harvard last year that he would react to demands for secession in the same way as Abraham Lincoln did in the United States. But Mr. Arbatov forgot that the American civil war cost the United States more deaths than all the wars that followed, including Vietnam, at a time when the United States had only one seventh of the population it has today. The American civil war took place on the other side of the world, where there were no neighbouring countries capable of intervening.

It would be very different if there were a civil war particularly in central Asia. The counter-productive effect of military intervention in stimulating nationalism in Georgia and Azerbaijan is already a great warning. I doubt very much whether any Soviet regime under Gorbachev or any successor would follow that path. If it did, the result would be to destroy the Soviet Union as a force in world politics for at least a generation. It is certainly most unlikely, under any hypothesis that I can imagine, to produce a military threat to western Europe or to Britain. It would remove the very possibility of a military threat from that source.

Nevertheless, there are real dangers in eastern Europe. The liberation of the peoples of eastern Europe threatens the new balkanisation of eastern Europe. Yet we all know —this is one reason why the first world war broke out— that it is impossible to draw boundaries for nation states in eastern Europe without including powerful minorities in each state which, if persecuted, will rebel against it. We see signs of that already in Yugoslavia with the Albanians, the Serbs and the Croats, and there were many signs recently in Romania with the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania. I very much hope that that process will not develop, but I fear that the economic catastrophe facing some of the new regimes could produce some terrifying political forces and developments.

Even if the worst came to the worst, however, those developments could not sensibly be met by British defence spending or NATO intervention. The Foreign Secretary's idea that we should try to develop instruments inside the Helsinki arrangements to enable that body to be used for conflict resolution in eastern Europe is excellent. There could be quite a useful role for the Helsinki instrument in mediating between Greece and Turkey, as eastern Europe is not alone in having such national conflicts.

Those developments are not likely to present a threat to the West such as the Warsaw pact from the days of Stalin to the days of Brezhnev undoubtedly presented in capability, although there is still an argument about how far it presented that threat in intention. I cannot understand the Government's reluctance to recognise that the need for drastic cuts in British defence spending is on us and there is no room for manoeuvre. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary regularly talks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who desperately needs to save money somewhere to use it for productive purposes in restoring our ruined and eroding social and economic infrastructure, not to mention helping the countries of eastern Europe. Economic aid to eastern Europe would do far more for our security than building up NATO.

With regard to German unification, on which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup spent some time, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that German unification is inevitable in the very near future and that there is nothing that anybody outside can or should do to prevent it. In less than a month from now, there will be a new Parliament and a new Government in East Germany, and its first decision may well be to reconstitute the three federal Lander in East Germany, which may simultaneously declare themselves part of the Federal Republic, as they are empowered to do under a constitution that we as the victorious allies endorsed. If that does not happen, the people of East Germany may continue to vote with their feet, producing unification by migration rather than by political decision, so we should not worry about that as a threat.

There will be some enormously difficult problems for the Germans, and later for other countries, but I agree with the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup that the threat of a united Germany—if it is a threat—will be economic, not military, and that the daftest thing that we could do would be to restrict Germany's armed forces and thus allow it to have the same glorious freedom from defence burdens in competing with us from which Japan has derived so much benefit in the past 40 years.

Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I have spent many months in Germany since the last war. I cannot speak for East Germany, but West Germany today is by far the least nationalistic of all the larger European powers. It is far less nationalistic than Britain under the present Prime Minister; it is far less nationalistic than France under President Mitterrand, never mind President de Gaulle; and far less nationalistic in many respects even than Italy. The one thing that could revive nationalism in Germany would be an attempt by the former occupying powers to continue acting as occupying powers. That is the danger that the Prime Minister's recent behaviour has aroused.

I know that the Foreign Secretary agrees with me, because he has tried his best to soften the asperities of some of the nonsense that she has talked, but that has not stopped some of the British tabloid press following her lead. That is followed by the German tabloid press, and before we know where we are we have conjured up the very dangers that we were trying to prevent.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman recoil, like others, from the rather offensive suggestion that the German people were guilty of crimes against humanity in the second world war? All that, vis-a-vis the Nazis and the wrongdoers, was dealt with through the Nuremberg trials process. The German people

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

were not guilty, and were never adjudged to be so; moreover, 87 per cent. of the current German population were born after the war or were youngsters at the time.

Mr. Healey: Conservative voters were not responsible for what the Government are doing. But it is idle and dangerous to ignore the fact that Germans performed the most awful atrocities during the last world war, and that is not forgotten.

The obscenity of Nazism is a disease which could be caught in any country, if the conditions are right. If I may say so as a declining person—[HON. MEMBERS: "Never!"] Thank you very much—I was inviting that response. The appeal of Communism in Europe just before and after the war was that capitalism in Europe had produced Hitler, Mussolini and the second world war. That was a powerful factor in the appeal of Communism in western Europe, France and Italy and in eastern Europe but, thank God, everything has changed since then. We must not forget that the evils that we fought in Germany in the last world war were present in many countries but, thank God, the conditions that allowed them to take over did not exist.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall) *rose*——

Mr. Healey: With respect, I must get on.

It will be vital to maintain stability and security in the new Europe. The dangers are very real. None of the cold war structures is appropriate. NATO's original military role disappeared with its enemies. No one now believes that there is a threat from the Warsaw pact—as the Secretary of State said, it no longer exists—nor is there a threat from the Soviet Union. The bloc mentality, which is an essential part of NATO, has no role in our approach to the new world.

We need a new security system. What sort of security system should it be? It cannot be based on NATO in its present form. The American role in NATO will soon be unacceptable to the Americans as well as to the Russians, and there are already signs of that in Congress. Even the American Secretary of State, Mr. Baker—the Foreign Secretary's colleague—said the other day that perhaps a united Germany should have some associated membership of NATO. That is what he said, but as the Foreign Secretary knows, when he got back he was compelled by the chinovniks and apparatchiks to withdraw it. From time to time, the Foreign Secretary has been compelled by higher forces to withdraw things. Nevertheless, Secretary Baker meant what he said when he uttered those words, just as the Foreign Secretary meant what he said when he said that we should be turning tanks into tractors. I give him credit for sincerity in his first thoughts.

In its present form, NATO is not appropriate. It is difficult to shake off the bloc mentality. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, people as disparate as Mr. Bush and Secretary-General Worner have been saying recently that it must adopt a political role if it does not have a military role. The question is what political role.

Mr. Hurd: The key point that the right hon. Gentleman is skirting around in his fascinating analysis is the presence of United States troops in Europe. The President of the United States, Mr. Baker and German politicians from the three main parties, and ourselves, for what that is worth, are united in saying that it is important for European security that there should be significant United States forces in Europe. They are an essential component of the defence side of NATO, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and I believe should be preserved. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe in that?

Mr. Healey: I believe that United States troops need to be here under the NATO umbrella. The right hon. Gentleman must admit that many Germans, in opposition and in government, do not want American forces in Germany. No one I know in Germany wants American nuclear weapons in Germany to drop on East Germans, on Lech Walesa or on Vaclav Havel. Yet the Government are still yammering away about replacing Lance by a weapon with a range which would enable it to hit not only Germans but Germany's eastern neighbours. Can idiocy be carried any further than that?

With respect to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the European Community cannot provide a framework. The plain fact is that it is dominated by West Germany. The best proof of that is the fact that, when the Bundesbank raised interest rates last October, although Britain is not a member of the exchange rate mechanism the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to raise interest rates 40 minutes later in the middle of the Tory party conference, having spent £2,000 million of our reserves trying to avoid that decision. Germany will be the decisive factor in the European Community so long as the Community is restricted to its present membership.

I accept the points that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup made about the difficulties of bringing all the east European democracies into the Community as soon as they ask, but there is no reason why Austria should not join today. Ireland, as a neutral country, has joined and if, as is more than likely, the next Swedish Government decides to join—Swedish industry and finance have already voted with their funds to join the Community—another neutral country can do so.

Neutrality is a buzz word which has lost all its meaning. A country can be neutral only if there are two alliances or blocs to be neutral between. German neutrality is as irrelevant as Swiss, Swedish or Austrian neutrality in the new world into which we are moving. The Community must expand north and east of its present frontiers as fast as possible to take in the Scandinavian countries as soon as they want to join—none of the problems to which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred apply to them—and countries such as Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. The Community should make it plain that that is its intention. That would offer a framework in which a united Germany could occupy a more comfortable position than in the limited framework of the west European community.

I do not believe that the European Community will ever form a suitable security structure to contain Germany. Various attempts are being made to do that—I tried to do so a little through the Western European Union when I was Secretary of State for Defence 20 years ago—but the plain fact is that the disagreements on strategic matters between the major European powers—particularly between Germany, Britain and France—exclude that.

The Foreign Secretary misled the House about the four-power arrangement—it is two plus four, not four plus two. The only role of the four-power meeting will be to

liquidate its residual responsibilities in Berlin and to reaffirm frontiers which have already been embodied in treaties. It is an unsuitable body to deal with major problems, because it excludes all Germany's eastern neighbours, particularly Poland and Czechoslovakia, which for historical and other reasons are deeply concerned about Germany's place in the new Europe.

The only conceivable structure that could be developed for the new European security system, as Mr. Genscher said a few days ago in Dublin and with which the Foreign Secretary appeared to agree when he signed the declaration, is the Helsinki conference on security and co-operation in Europe framework. We are far from ready for it yet, but Mr. Genscher was right in saying that it was the most important framework, and the Foreign Secretary was right to join his colleagues in saying that it was fundamental. I was glad that the Dublin meeting agreed that there should be a working committee in midsummer to prepare for the summit of the CSCE, and it has already been suggested that it should accept responsibility for national conflict resolution.

As to the problems facing us now, I agree that they are not insoluble, but many of them will have solutions in which we can play little part. At the moment, it is impossible to devise a solution for many of them because the position is changing so fast. Many countries are marching together to confront the challenges. It is extremely depressing that, instead of Britain being in the lead in that march our Prime Minister seems to be locked in a time warp. I find it difficult to understand how she can go around talking of how we have won victory in the cold war and saying, "It is all due to me, the British Prime Minister," and the next moment saying, "Absolutely nothing in the world has changed—we must go on exactly as we have done for the last 40 years." The Minister of State, of course, is far too intelligent not to recognise the contradictions in that extraordinary posture, but I do not ask him to agree with me.

A couple of days ago, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) referred to the Prime Minister's paranoid isolationism. There seems to be an odd element of mental disturbance. Like all his predecessors, the Foreign Secretary, who is very able and experienced, has to spend most of his time battling with No. 10 instead of dealing with the problems. The only difference between the present incumbent and his predecessors is that the right hon. Gentleman seems to be on librium. The Secretary of State for Defence knows that the services are crying out for him to get down to a drastic review of what is going on. Meanwhile, people are voting with their feet against the present set-up, and natural wastage is being overtaken by the fall in re-engagements.

While the rest of Europe is marching to confront the new challenges, the Prime Minister is shuffling along in the gutter in the opposite direction, like an old bag lady, muttering imprecations at anyone who catches her eye. It is not a noble role. She has managed to produce an extraordinary degree of unanimity against her in the press. I follow the newspapers; occasionally I write for them myself. Last Sunday, I was fascinated to find that the editorials in *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times* and the *Sunday Telegraph* were all bashing the Prime Minister. She is the only person in the world who could get Peregrine Worsthorne, Andrew Neil and Donald Trelford in the same bed at the same time. All I can say is, "Eat your heart out, Pamella Bordes."

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup will recall that the Prime Minister deposed him as a result of what the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) called a peasants' revolt. As the poll tax has produced a peasants' revolt, might not the time have come for another peasants' revolt by Conservative Members? There are signs that the revolting peasants are revolting over the poll tax, but that affects only their seats in Parliament. What the Prime Minister is doing to Britain's foreign and defence policy affects Britain's role and future in the world. So I say to the peasants on the Government Benches, "Go to it."

6.24 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The first four fifths of the speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) were fabulously interesting and drew on his enormous experience. The last fifth has to be described as vintage Healey; it made enjoyable listening but added not one jot to the sum of human wisdom or to the progress of the debate.

The House will have enjoyed the buoyant optimism of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) about what is happening in eastern Europe. I think we all share that optimism. There is a reason for the sense of elation which my right hon. Friend must feel, with his distinguished war record. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and many others who fought in that terrible war must understandably feel tremendous elation that we are at last seeing the achievement of what they thought they were fighting for—the emergence of a free Europe of republics and kingdoms working together in democratic structures. At last that is in sight, having come at a speed which few people dreamed of.

The main point of my intervention is that there are also considerable dangers ahead. In fact, the 1990s in many ways will be more dangerous for our security than the 1980s. I do not mean that one does not welcome the chaos and fluidity that followed the end of the cold war, but there are enormous threats, none the easier for not being identified as threats. We are not clear where they all come from. They are there. If we dismiss them and say that keeping up our guard is nostalgic, we could all pay a terrible price.

I do not deny for a moment, nor did my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, that we need to adapt our collective defence structures and, incidentally, our territorial defence structures, in the 1990s. It would be ridiculous if we were like the French general staff in the 1930s, assuming that the collective defence structures of a previous era, aimed against the enemies of a previous era, are suitable for the 1990s; clearly they are not. We should put fully aside the Maginot mentality which might lead people to assume that we need do nothing except reinforce the defence structures of the past.

There are serious new dangers to which we should be fully alert before we begin to talk about spending the peace dividend or gaily dismantling the defence budget or the fundamental political support which defence spending needs and which has been won by serious statesmen over many years. It is easy to throw all that away, but it would be dangerous to do so.

What are the dangers that one darkly talks about? Let me be the first to admit that one cannot see every detail.

[Mr. David Howell]

Nationalism and tribalism lurk in countries whose names we have forgotten or which have not appeared on maps for the last 70 years; suddenly their aspirations are appearing again. There are all those dangers, which can be very bloody.

There are bigger dangers. First, there is Russia. I mean Russia and not the Soviet Union. It is still an enormous European country stretching back into Asia, with a population of hundreds of millions but possibly shorn of many of the autonomous republics, the trans-Caucasian and Baltic republics which it has built into an empire. Such a country may emerge as a great liberal democracy but the historical record is not good on that score. It has never known democracy.

A great deal of bitterness is building up. The position is getting worse and worse, even with the economic reforms. The Russians and the Moscow economic planners have repeatedly agreed on what they ought to do and repeatedly shied away from doing it. As a result, there is endless piecemeal reform which is making things worse rather than better for perestroika. There are enormous difficulties in that great uncertain republic which has its bitternesses and its own nationalisms. We would be crazy not to understand the great dangers that lie there and not to design our own defence structures and our preparedness for any evils and threats that might come from there.

Coming nearer home—and it is very near home, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup reminded us—there is the question of Germany and the need to see that the amazing events in East Germany are handled in a stabilising and orderly way and do not destabilise not merely the eastern European, but the western European system as well, which brings us up to our own doorstep. My right hon. Friend is right to say that these matters can all be handled quickly and efficiently, but it will also be extremely difficult. Many, including myself in recent months, have under-estimated the extreme dangers and potential instabilities if the matter is not handled quickly.

As Chancellor Kohl, to his credit, spotted early on, there is and remains a threat that the whole East German economy could dive into a vortex of chaos, with desertions and migrations on a scale even bigger than the present 70,000 or 80,000 a month. One can imagine that 1 million or more might try to move across in a day if panic set in and there would be a black hole which could be full of dangers. People say that the East Germans can survive and that they need not worry if there are no dentists in Leipzig. Someone told me that one of the worries was that no parking fines were being collected in East Berlin—although I said that that was not necessarily a reason for leaving the country.

There are more serious worries. One can imagine a total collapse of East German society which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup reminded us, has no leaders of experience among the present leadership. Even those who are likely to be elected on 18 March have no experience of running an open, free-market economy and a free society. The question of Germany must be handled swiftly, and I believe that it will be.

It is fascinating to see that the governor of the Bundesbank who, only three weeks ago, was saying that the idea of monetary union was fantastic, has suddenly discovered—perhaps it is unfair to say "suddenly"—that it is a perfectly manageable affair, provided that it is done rapidly. He and other Germans whom I see do not want a Government to be elected in East Berlin on 18 March who then call a national assembly and enter into protracted negotiations with West Germany about the kind of federation that should emerge a few years hence.

The bankers want to see something very different and far quicker. They want the three lander, under article 23, simply to submerge themselves in the Bundesrepublik, so that the entire East German state becomes a deutschmark area, with the Bundesrepublik having total control and responsibility for the circulation of currency, the legal system, the tax system, the social system and, in fact, the entire national structure of East Germany. The German Democratic Republic then, in effect, vanishes and ceases to exist separately.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are parallels between what happened in Germany in 1945-48 and what may happen in the very near future in eastern Germany? In that period, the point at which Germans discovered that they had a real currency which could buy real goods and had a real value was the point at which their economic miracle began. When that is perceived in East Germany and when the currency is unified, can buy real goods and has a real value, the East Germans, too, will enjoy their parallel economic miracle.

Mr. Howell: I very much hope so. One is always a little wary of historical parallels. I think that it was Balfour who said that history did not repeat itself, but historians repeated each other. My hon. Friend may be right to say that an economic miracle will come in East Germany. It may be achieved if there is a rapid merging of the three lander into the Bundesrepublik under article 23 of the constitution. That must be recognised as the best outcome.

In this nation, we must be as helpful as we can. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East that there is nothing that we can do. We can be extremely supportive. In the past, our reputation in the Federal Republic has been high, as the right hon. Gentleman is the first to know because he played a part in that. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, it was British minds and energy which set up that fabulous success of the Federal Republic. As our views are still listened to, we have a role to play in seeing that the merging of East Germany and the Federal Republic into the new Bundesrepublik—or Deutscherepublik, or whatever it will be called—is handled in an orderly way. We should not be missing on the day when our voice and support are needed.

The second danger in relation to German unification which we have to address is the question of security and defence. It was interesting that, when the Polish Prime Minister, Mr. Mazowiecki, came to see the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs last week—or perhaps the week before—his main message to us as Members of Parliament was that Poland would never wish to see what he called a "neutral" Germany. We can argue about what the word "neutral" now means. However, Mr. Mazowiecki was very concerned about the removal of the allied military presence from western Germany or the emergence of a neutral large German state, which one of

his aides likened to a ship in a harbour in a storm which had lost its anchor and was banging about knocking everything else in sight.

The Poles have a point there. We should recognise the Polish worries, which we were—eventually—right to do in the past. They are usually valid worries. We should do all that we can to see that a more dangerous kind of independent neutrality does not unleash itself in Germany. Perhaps it will not. Perhaps the nation is so anaesthetised against its horrific past that all those fears are unworthy. However, the fear is there and that is why I understand the concern at Ottawa of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and of the former occupying powers about the two German states—which will shortly be one, perhaps as soon as September, some people say. I understand the desire to create a framework or procedure within which the future security position can be discussed.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, the idea of a united Germany with two thirds in one alliance and a little bit in the other seems absurd. When we said to the Polish Prime Minister that it seemed odd that one might drive through Germany and come across a notice that said, "You are now leaving the protection of NATO and moving into a NATO-free zone," he said that it might seem odd, but we should be innovative and face the fact that there could be a prolonged transition period in which we saw a Soviet military presence—perhaps attenuated—in what is now East Germany and the military presence of the allied powers in the other parts of Germany. He said that the Poles would feel much happier if we could live with that innovation.

We must be ready to accept wholly novel solutions to a wholly novel situation. If one considers it further, one realises that unless one is resigned to seeing a neutral Germany or a Germany from which Americans and perhaps all foreign troops have been removed, one is left with very odd solutions for the time being. Perhaps we shall have to live with them, peculiar and unthinkable as they seem at first.

In the 1990s, the dangers could be different from—but as great as, more varied and, therefore, more frightening than—those we faced in the final stages of the cold war in the 1980s. I want to deal with the approach of the United Kingdom to these matters and its interest in them. In recent months—perhaps in recent years—a certain surprise has crept into the press that the British do not seem to be as fond of the idea of a united state of western Europe or as committed to one particular view of a greater Europe as they should be, and as some people hope that they are.

The surprise is not justified because, as many of us have remarked, it has always been a tradition on this island to be concerned to prevent any idea prevailing of a greater Europe dominated by any one country. We never liked the idea in the past of a greater Germany dominating. We never liked the Bonapartism of the French and we have kept a wary eye on any Soviet Russian imperial ambitions in the past. I do not see any great change in the pattern of the habits and instincts of this island at a basic level.

We are right to want to see a Europe that is not dominated by the grander ideas of the French, which President Mitterrand occasionally puts forward. We certainly do not want European domination by Germany—not that I think that there is any political instinct to achieve that domination in Germany today—and we certainly do not want domination by the looming power of a Russia which might be stripped of its colonies but which would still be very big.

The British approach to this enormously fluid scene is one in which we have clearly preserved the traditional national instinct. Of course we seek to exercise our sovereignty in common—I believe that that is the right way of putting it—with others in a whole variety of areas in which it makes economic and in many cases political sense to do so. However, we must remember that the treaty of Rome was rooted in nation states, not in the idea that there should be a total submerging of the practical and manageable structures—the nations—into a larger and more anomalous body.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Leaving aside any possibility of total submergence, is not the traditional concept that the right hon. Gentleman has outlined—that Britain believes in a balance of power on the continent and intervenes from time to time when one power, be it a Napoleon or a Hitler, becomes too grand—now wholly irrelevant in the light of our current power and possibilities? Is not that part of the reason why our partners on the continent are so suspicious of whether we are in or out of the new developments in Europe?

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman does not understand how the statesmanship of the balance of power was carried through and implemented in the past. Far from involving detachment and isolation—although occasionally we were guilty of that with catastrophic results that we can all remember or read about in the history books—it involved the most intimate detail and continuous involvement in the structures and processes of European political exchange and dialogue. I strongly believe that that must continue today. I share the views of those who express concern that we might become too detached and isolated, with the same kind of results as in the past. The hon. Gentleman's analogy and comparison are not valid.

I should like to address the question that has been raised by some people, which is whether we should now speed up the integration of the western European Economic Community—the EC, which used to be the EEC—in response to and as a counterpoint to what is happening in eastern Europe. I certainly do not believe in slowing down and in going to the other extreme, about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was concerned.

However, I wonder about some of the more intense speeches made by Monsieur Delors and others about speeding up, intensifying, deepening, furthering and accelerating and all the rest of it. If one reads some of those speeches, which are all about the need for the political will to do this and the political will to do that, one realises that they sound a bit like a 1990s version of Nietzsche. That chills me and is not something that we should welcome.

I make no bones about being a bit of an evolutionist in relation to the European Community and European integration. The European Community has been a fabulous creation. I see it much more as a magnet than as a block. I do not hold with those who say that it should be exclusive. Austria and other countries have a perfectly reasonable case to make about joining. Indeed, the European Community is proving a magnet to and possibly a cause of much that is happening in eastern Europe.

[Mr. Howell]

However, let us not get delusions of grandeur and believe that, for all its success, the European Community is the only answer or that it is a club that we keep others out of and that we should strengthen and deepen in every conceivable way and in which we should go faster than we are already going towards achieving the single European market. Perhaps, in a few years' time, our somewhat grand hauteur about the poverty of eastern Europe will have to be replaced by a recognition that they are highly dynamic countries that will want to work together among themselves. Indeed, Mr. Havel and others, including Mr. Mazowiecki, have already indicated strongly, as have their Ministers, that, although they have no time for the ridiculous COMECON, they would like to see some regional grouping in eastern Europe, with money flowing between the trading nations, which could look the European Community in the face and possibly do business with it, rather than one country after another being picked off.

Perhaps something like the old European Payments Union, which was a clever idea that worked extremely well, might do nicely in helping those countries to develop a modern capitalist trading system in eastern Europe. It might help them to maintain their European vigour and dignity without getting too lost in endless negotiations with the EC which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has reminded us, might take years and years and years.

Those are the ways in which I hope that our foreign policy might develop. Above all, I ask my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to do what he is trying to do and to participate in all these things fully and continuously. Britain should not be the sort of friend who comes along afterwards and says, "Good idea." We should be the friend and support who strengthens and encourages our allies as they take these critical decisions. By our allies I mean, for instance, the leaders in Bonn who are having to handle the most difficult crisis that has faced the Federal Republic since its inception, and who need all the support, encouragement and new ideas that we could conceivably offer them at this stage.

My hope is that we remain closely involved. If we do not, not only will we suffer from detachment and isolation as our financial industries and banks are bought up and as the whole centre of action moves to the continent—that is already happening, because London is now closing down as a financial centre—but Europe itself might lose one of its vital ingredients, which has been, through history, the wisdom, participation and common sense of this House and this nation. We, too, have been Europeans, and Europe needs us as much as we need it.

6.46 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) finished on an uncharacteristically nationalist note. However, I very much agree that the pace of change is so fast and, many think, so unpredictable that it is difficult to devise settled policies and views.

I shall concentrate on four issues to the exclusion of others, including force reductions and the position of the United States, important though they are. Three of the issues have inevitably been canvassed and dealt with by hon. Members already, but my first point has not. To a large extent, it has been neglected throughout the argument, although it was touched on by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

A couple of weeks ago today I had the opportunity of asking the Prime Minister a question. I asked her whether she agreed that the same logic that had led the West—not just Europe or, within it, the United Kingdom—to assist countries such as Poland and Hungary and would in turn be directed to other satellite countries should lead us to facing up to the huge problem of assisting the Soviet Union itself. Her reply was cautious. I might even say that she was timid, although that is not an adjective that I would normally apply to the Prime Minister.

This is one area in which we should not be timid. I should like to commend to the House, and especially to the Government and to Ministers, a visionary article that was published in the *Financial Times* on 6 December 1989 by Anatole Kaletsky. I refer to a couple of passages that put their finger on something that has still not been recognised, although the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup touched on it en passant. The article stated:

"as the world celebrates the outward signs of liberation in eastern Europe, it is in danger of forgetting the deeper causes and consequences of the events in Budapest, Berlin and Prague . . .

It would be the ultimate historic irony if an outdated preoccupation with German unity and instability in central Europe should now distract attention from the infinitely more important issue of Gorbachev's attempts to reconstruct the Soviet Union and bring it closer to the liberal West. If Gorbachev and perestroika fail, the turmoil in the Soviet Union will be a far greater threat to world prosperity and peace than any conceivable development in Germany or central Europe."

He went on to say, as several hon. Members have said, that if Gorbachev could feed, clothe and heat Russia through the winter, the people might tolerate him for another year. If he managed to produce consumer goods such as cars, video recorders, or even soap and blue jeans, he might last longer. But can he do it in the present circumstances?

The author went on to quote an estimate—these things are very much estimates; when one talks in billions one wonders how it is all worked out—by an Hungarian-American financier called Soros, who

"suggested that $25 billion a year of Western aid would be required to stabilise the Soviet economy and avert hyper-inflation in the two years ahead."

I shall quote two further passages from that article:

"The first reaction of many Western readers will be to throw up their hands in horror"

at such a proposal.

"The Soros proposal is equivalent to the entire US foreign aid budget and more than double the annual disbursement of the World Bank . . . But . . . The cost of helping Russia must be set against the cost of defending the world against her; $25 billion is a very modest figure when compared with the US defence budget of $300 billion, to say nothing of the sums squandered on armaments by other countries."

We should all give serious consideration, not just to tinkering around saying, "We shall have the odd joint venture here and take a few chaps from there for managerial courses."

In the West, we must consider that, if there is to be a dramatic drop in defence spending, it will be because of what Mr. Gorbachev has undertaken. He could be overthrown and there could be recidivism. There could be someone unpredictable with his hand on the Soviet Union's nuclear trigger. We can help prevent that and we should give it the most serious consideration.

My second point will be much briefer because several hon. Members have already talked about German reunification. Like other right hon. and hon. Members, I believe that reunification will take place, de facto, though not de jure, by the end of the year. We must remember that other changes will occur when the elections take place on 18 March. The polls forecast that there will be a Social Democratic, eastern European, East German-type victory.

Whether the victor will rush tumultuously into Helmut Kohl's arms directly after the election is a question for consideration. There may be some delay, but in practice rather than in law the DDR will join the Federal Republic and therefore, will join the European Community. One could argue that, because of her preferential trading arrangements with the Federal Republic, the DDR is already an unofficial associate member of the EC.

There are many fears about reunification. Some hon. Members have talked about a fourth reich. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) talked about instability in the case of a break-up of the DDR. He spoke of it as something to be feared. That was not the sort of instability of which the Prime Minister spoke when she addressed the Jewish Board of Deputies. She spoke about a different instability caused by a powerful German state.

With all respect, for the Prime Minister to talk about instability is a bit rich, because the United Kingdom has been one of the main factors of instability in the European Community in the last decade. The talk of fourth reichs and the like is an insult to the impecable democratic record of the Federal Republic. It has constructively and courageously advocated ostpolitik. Its internal society is open and tolerant.

As a Liberal, I acknowledge the Foreign Secretary's tribute to the work done by the German Liberal Hans-Dietrich Genscher. One could pick many other German politicians from both sides of the political spectrum. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) talked about Mr. Erhard, but Adenauer and Schmidt and others have all played a constructive role in European politics which was not a nationalist role. It is not to be forgotten that they were far-seeing.

One cannot have it both ways. If it is argued that the reunification of Germany produces an enormously worrying concentration of economic and political power, the answer—I disagree with the right hon. Member for Guildford—is to accelerate the process of economic and monetary union, thus firmly anchoring Germany in the Community and building up supranationalism to overcome the institutionalised nationalism which in the past we have been used to in Europe and which, perhaps, we are getting over. The Government's hesitancy in respect of monetary union is deeply flawed.

As borders become less significant after 1992, the next generation, and even more so the generation after that, will wonder what all the fuss was about. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East spoke about that, although he did not put it in exactly that way. We must remember that an adult male who was 20 at the end of the war is now on a pension. The world has moved on and we must recognise it.

It is difficult to sort out defence matters, and I shall not try to do so. It is all rather confused. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East was dead right: "neutral" is a word which now has quite a different meaning. It is hard to imagine Germany as neutral in any sense. It must play its part in the European Community and express opinions. It has to present attitudes. As a major state in an integrated European Community, it cannot have its decision-making power taken away.

One may say that the Warsaw pact as a military alliance no longer exists. Hon. Members may have noticed that the Hungarians have said that they would like to join NATO. I do not know why they want to join or what the purpose would be. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East was right that we must get away from the old business of blocs. That has changed. Where he was wrong, or at least where he went ahead a little fast, was in talking of the expansion of the Community.

I wonder whether the European Community does not have an optimum size. Can it go on like Topsy getting bigger and bigger? It will be difficult to administer and regulate. If the Community develops any effective coherent foreign policy, it will have to have a defence policy, too. One cannot separate the two. It is absurd nonsense to say that we shall have a foreign policy but no defence policy. The two things come together.

Several hon. Members made points about minorities, which are a big problem. Borders may exist but, for instance, the Oder-Neisse line is not sacrosanct. Why should it be—any more than the Saar was a sacrosanct part of France when it was transferred in 1956 by plebiscite? On the Polish side of the line, there are no Germans left. There are no Germans any more in what was Konigsburg and is now Kaliningrad. However, there are minorities spattered all over Hungary, Romania and other countries. They require some safeguards.

I doubt whether simply changing borders would be sufficient, because such people live in inconvenient places and groups. Some sort of assurance is needed if there is to be a final treaty. It has been suggested that that could be done through the Council of Europe and an extension of the powers of the European Court from only human rights issues to minority rights issues of education, culture and protection. I do not know whether that would be the solution, but it is probably the way to do it.

The know-how funds are proceeding well. There are criticisms that there is bureaucracy and there are delays, but the Minister will agree that the thing has to shake down. Money is coming through from the United States and the Community as a whole in pure investment terms too.

People have talked about helping the democracies. Hon. Members should note that every one of the countries turning to democracy and away from authoritarianism has chosen proportional voting systems rather than our system. That is a fact. They want consensus government. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on the Labour Front Bench was wearing an allegedly consensual robe of emollience. It did not sound very emollient to me. Eastern European countries want a bit of peace and co-operation, and that is something which we should develop.

I am sorry that I have spoken longer than I intended, but it is difficult for us to stop one another speaking about such important things. I agree that we are being given an historic opportunity—probably the best Europe has ever had—for prosperous development in freedom. We should not be over-cautious, but should be anxious to get in there to help that process.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Mr. Speaker has limited speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm to 10 minutes.

7 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): You force me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to speak faster than usual.

First I should like to praise my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) on their remarkable speeches. However, I am afraid that they omitted to mention the way in which the leaderships of eastern Europe perceive our Prime Minister. They believe that my right hon. Friend is a good Prime Minister, they respect her and they want her to play a leading role in the negotiations that will take place between the West and eastern Europe.

This debate is jolly dangerous to everyone in the House in the sense that no one predicted the events of 1989, but here we are trying to predict those of 1990. When the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, went to eastern Europe, we visited three Karl Marx institutes—in Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia—and in each one they were preaching the free-market economy and Thatcherism. Such small rumblings should not have gone unnoticed by those in the West who call themselves experts in this subject.

Without doubt we all give generous and warm acclaim to the self-liberation and birth of new democracies in eastern European countries. Now we must go beyond congratulations and act with alacrity and vision. One eastern European ambassador in London said to me only today that eastern Europe needs deeds now, not words, if it is to survive to achieve democracy.

In the work in which I have been engaged in the Select Committee and in which I participate on behalf of the British-Soviet parliamentary group, it has become apparent that it is easy to generalise and to miss the essential fact that each eastern European country is different. Certain problems, however, are common to all those countries, and the West, particularly the United Kingdom, should help quickly to overcome them.

The easiest problems to solve are, unfortunately, long-term and not immediate ones, such as helping with management training, improving distribution methods to get goods to the shops from the farms and the revision of COCOM. That organisation is irrelevant, but in Paris it is still grinding on with a four-year revision of its work. All the eastern European countries demonstrate their need for convertible currencies and we also need to help to provide some solution for the terrible debt problems faced by countries such as Poland and Hungary. It is awful to observe that the one country without any debt problem is the one that had the bloodiest revolution—Romania.

The West can give help to overcome the short-term problems, but we must act fast. The West Germans have set the pace and I believe that we should give instant credit to countries such as the Soviet Union to enable them to buy food from us. A story has gone round to suggest that the Foreign Office has said that we cannot do that without the permision of the European Community. That is nonsense. I hope that the Minister will kill that story when he replies and make it clear that we will be only too willing to help the Soviet Union to get the food that it urgently needs.

We could also help in an instant by ensuring that visas for east European business men are granted without delay. The only espionage in which such people will indulge now will be industrial and it is up to the host company to deal with that—it is not a job for the Foreign Office or the Home Office to investigate such people's reputations.

We could also encourage industry to give manufacturing licences for the basic commodities needed in the Soviet Union. Electric kettles are needed more than anything else. There must be British companies which could dump electric kettles on the Soviet Union and get plant started up now. It is extremely galling to hear from the Soviet ambassador that the South Koreans have found their way into a redundant defence company in Uzbekistan and are now licensing that company to make video and cassette recorders. The development of such manufacturing would not only help the Soviet Union to get into business quickly by translating its defence industry into consumer products, but help to soak up the surplus money sloshing around all the east European economies.

The prime problem faced by eastern Europe, which must be solved with similar alacrity to that adopted by the West, is bureaucracy. If anything will defeat Mr. Gorbachev the pragmatist, it is the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union, much of which is unwilling to do anything to change or to remove old privileges. That bureacracy is also unable to take on management tasks in the economy; since the advent of Communism in 1917, the Soviet Union has had a command economy in which management was not required.

It took us a long time to appreciate that Mr. Gorbachev is a man who says what he means and means what he says. On the two occasions when I have had the privilege to meet him, it has taken a long time to get used to the fact that he is a man who tells one the truth. Some people outside the House may say that that is one politician's judgment of another and that I may not be the best judge, but I believe that we must listen to him carefully. When he says that he is under threat, we must remember our alliance with him and that he is the man who has done most, on either side of the iron curtain, to damp down the fires of the cold war and to remove the Berlin wall.

I accept, however, that he has been extremely cunning in dumping all the problems of the economies of eastern Europe on to the West. We now have the responsibility to try to straighten them out. Mr. Gorbachev, however, still faces the eternal problem of his army—the 400,000 elite of the Red Army now stranded on a political island in East Germany. I do not know how he will get them out, but the economic problem of defence is the fundamental feature which beat him when he tried to preserve Communism.

There is a lot of work going on in the EC, but Britain should be more actively engaged in helping. My Committee returned from Brussels today and we are aware of three parallel policies in the EC—negotiations with the European Free Trade Association, the 1992 process and the aid programmes to the East. In 1989, the EC gave £200 million and it is now mapping out plans to give £600 million. Without being cynical, that aid presents many opportunities for British business as we attempt to solve the short-term and medium-term problems of eastern Europe.

Undoubtedly, with the implosion of imperialism in the Soviet Union, other types of alliance will form. Finland is already looking across the Baltic to Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia as a possible new trading area—one which

would also encompass the northern area of Poland. Without doubt, we must accept that anything is possible but that deeds count more strongly than words.

I am not the least bit scared by German reunification. I remember, as a young boy, the horrors of the war, but there is no need to look back—we must look forward to helping Germany unite. I appreciate the problems associated with a neutral Germany—it must participate in all our European affairs. We must remember that, in 1989, West Germany took in 864,000 refugees. That is a social burden on West Germany and it is not right or proper for us to say that, so long as the British taxpayer does not have to pay for reunification, it does not matter.

We stand on the frontier of a new life of freedom which, for the first time in our lives, will be shared right across Europe. It is unexpected and therefore all the more wonderful. Above all, we in this country have a duty to help all those people in the east of the continent who have won their freedom, often with the blood of their brothers and sisters, after 50 years of terror.

7.10 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I agree with the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) about the crucial role that Mr. Gorbachev has played in unleashing these events. It is not all due to him, for there have been a whole series of other events as well, but his achievement has been very great indeed and, as most people believe, we are faced with a great historic opportunity—the greatest opportunity the world has confronted since 1945—and we are concerned to make sure that we make the best use of it, with Britain playing a leading part.

Part of our criticism of our Prime Minister, who has had a few remarks addressed to her by my hon. Friends, is that sometimes she does not seem to appreciate the scale of events. But then, in the next breath, she seems to say that she has been responsible for all the wonderful things that have happened. I have no doubt that, if the second coming happened during her period in office, she would immediately claim that it was all due to the operation to her housing policy of no room at the inn, and continue to go on pressing her claim of being responsible for all today's momentous achievements.

As I say, a few others, in addition to Mr. Gorbachev, have played a part in the affairs of Europe. When the Berlin wall came down, no man in Europe had a better right to rejoice than Willy Brandt, in view of the part he played as major of Berlin and the manner in which he kept the cause of democracy alive in Berlin and in Germany throughout his life. President Havel must take great credit for events in Czechoslovakia in recent times. All those who talk about German rearmament and unity should read carefully reports in the United States about what he has said on that subject. He is trying to instruct us in these matters.

Our Prime Minister should have a little humility. I was horrified to read the speech that she made to the Board of Deputies of British Jews recently. I read every word of it. I am amazed at the deductions that she fails to draw from the position on nuclear armaments and the whole nuclear situation. The right hon. Lady just repeats the old formula about our sticking by our nuclear deterrent. She spoke of a few other countries that would soon have nuclear weapons, and she did not seem terribly concerned about that.

The right hon. Lady does not seem to know, even now, that we are signatories of the non-proliferation treaty and that, if we are to abide by that treaty, we are committed to trying to get rid of nuclear weapons altogether. If we refuse to go ahead with that, not merely shall we be in breach of our solemn undertakings—anyone who reads the document will see that what I am saying is the truth—but we shall be helping to unleash the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries, some of which she mentioned in her speech to the board of deputies.

This is surely a moment when we should return to the question of how we are to get rid of nuclear weapons altogether, particularly as we have the scientific means of doing that, being the means of inspection. There is no greater advocate of nuclear disarmament in the full sense of commitment to the non-proliferation treaty—the Soviet Union is also committed to that treaty—than Mr. Gorbachev. One of the best ways for us to react to the statesmanship that he has shown in these matters would be to respond on that subject. Instead of doing that, the right hon. Lady turns her back on it and does not show any interest in it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) gave an account of some of the new structures that will be needed to deal with this great new situation and he spoke of how to make the best use of them. There is one institution that I believe we should reconsider for the kind of framework in which we wish to see the new Europe—indeed, the new world—rebuilt. In addition to the institutions to which my right hon. Friend referred, this is the moment when we should be stressing our allegiance to the United Nations charter. We should restore the United Nations to a more central place in our diplomacy and dealing with the new situation.

If Conservative Members think that such an appeal is idealistic and confined to Labour Members, I ask them to read again the last speech made in the House of Commons by Winston Churchill. He pleaded for the restoration of the authority of the United Nations and said that the moment had come when that could be achieved.

I have previously quoted in the House from that speech by Churchill. He made it at a most significant moment in the history of Parliament. Not only was it his last speech here, but he said that he was impressed and oppressed by the dangers of the nuclear arms race which he saw before him. He thought that a bigger effort should have been made to restore decent relations with the Soviet Union. That was just after the death of Stalin, and he said that he had been stopped—"bitched up" was the phrase he used; he used it not in the House but elsewhere—by the Foreign Office, but I will not now go into that.

I ask the House, indeed the whole country, to take note of what Winston Churchill said in 1953 at what was then an historic moment, like the one we face now. Speaking of the initiative that he had wanted to take with the Soviet Union, he said:

> "It might have meant a real UNO, with Russia working with the rest for the good of Europe. We would have promised them that no more atomic bombs would be made, no more research into their manufacture. Those already made would be locked away. They would have had at their disposal much of the money now spent on armaments to provide better

[Mr. Michael Foot]

conditions for the Russian people. I trust the opportunity may not slip away".—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c.231.]

That was Churchill's view of the prospects and possibilities in 1953, but it did slip away and the chance of detente was lost.

I am not saying that that was all due to actions here or the impositions or chains that were placed on Churchill. Partly, no doubt, it was due to what the Russians did. Churchill underlined the need for a different attitude. He saw the possibilities that existed at the time. Now we have a new chance to do it.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington) *rose*—

Mr. Foot: I will not give way. I have in total only 10 minutes in which to speak.

The fear of many of us at this moment of great opportunity for the whole world—this is not merely an argument across the parties—is that the Prime Minister is restoring in the Cabinet the very conditions that have led to so many catastrophes before. The right hon. Lady has torn up the idea of proper Cabinet government. That is why we got into the Falklands war—that was the conclusion reached by the committee that looked into it. Time and again the Prime Minister has strayed from the proper idea of settling matters as Cabinet government decisions. I do not say that because I respect all the other Members of the Cabinet, although they are better than she is.

I do not believe that the original decision that we would break with the other countries of Europe over sanctions on South Africa was taken in the Cabinet. It was taken by the right hon. Lady, and all the others followed behind. It has been a miserable affair that they should have followed her in that way.

Similar dangers for us lie in Europe as we come to deal with the present situation. More and more people in Britain, and certainly in the House, are losing confidence in the way in which the Prime Minister deals with issues. We thought a few months ago that proper Cabinet government was being restored in Britain, but we have seen in recent weeks that it has been torn away. We can see how damaging that can be because it removes any possibility of putting before the Cabinet the proper consideration of all the present issues.

At no time would it be more dangerous for the Prime Minister to have such power and use it in such a way than at this moment, when we have the best opportunities for our country, as well as Europe, that we have had for generations. That is why I urge the Government to listen to what we say in this debate.

7.20 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I agree with the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that we live in exciting and challenging times. The people of the eastern European countries, the Baltic republics and Russia are throwing off the shackles of Marxism and Socialism, which have been shown to be manifest failures. That is what is exciting and we must rise to the challenges presented to us. In the whirligig of the unique time facing us, we must find policies, but they are extremely difficult to determine.

We must avoid the traps either of reacting too quickly to situations which may turn out to be bubbles which burst at a touch or of missing opportunities by reacting too slowly. It has been my fear so far that the Government have not yet got the policy right and steered a correct course between those two types of rapids and rocks on which the policy could founder. I was delighted with what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary offered the House this afternoon. He gave a clear indication that Government policy is now on the right course.

There are three issues on which we should focus. The first, on which there should not be change, is the crucial importance of the European Community. Its role has always been vital. Most Conservative Members, though not all, have recognised that. We live in a tri-polar world. Happily and hopefully we are talking not about war, but about the economic and commercial realities that face us in the tri-polar world of Japan and the Asian states, North America, and western Europe. It is crucial that we continue to play our role in the development of the European Community.

One danger that we face is that there are voices on both sides of the House and in all parts of the media from time to time, seeking to use the opportunity of the developments in eastern Europe to suggest that the European Community is not as important as it was. They suggest that more means better and we should relax our moves towards a single European market, 1992 and European monetary union. I am quite certain that that is wrong. I am certain that a major contribution that we must make in the interests of this country's citizens, the stability of western Europe and Europe as a whole, is to ensure that the move towards the European Community continues. That will offer the sort of opportunities for which many in eastern Europe are looking.

Secondly, how wrong the right hon. Members for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) were to suggest that there should be drastic cuts now in this country's defence forces. That should not happen too quickly. The military realities have not changed sufficiently. There is a tendency in the West to be bemused by Mr. Gorbachev. Much though we respect and admire his political agility and some of his objectives, we should not forget that Gorbachev remains, he would say, a Soviet patriot. Some of the non-Russian states of the Soviet Union might challenge that, but he is certainly a Russian patriot and he would claim to remain a Leninist, with the techniques and tactics inherent in that creed.

There are great dangers in suggesting that our interests are necessarily identical with those of Mr. Gorbachev. The responsibility of western Governments remains the preservation of western security. That is where our responsibility lies, not necessarily in the survival of Mr. Gorbachev. In all that he has done, his list of failures must be seen as considerable by any Russian, let alone non-Russian, member of the Soviet Union. I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary stressed the dangers of seeking to equate or to see some symmetry between NATO and the Warsaw pact when clearly there is none; NATO, as a willing and voluntary combination of nation states, is totally different in nature from the Warsaw pact. Changes must come, but gradually, in the light of reality, not the wishful thinking that we have heard from the Opposition Members.

Thirdly, we need to change our attitude towards the two Germanies and modify our fears about their

unification. We all recognise that fears still exist. That point has been made many times in the debate. However, insufficient credit has been given to the remarkable transformation of Germany since the war and the way in which democracy has taken deep and genuine root in that country.

We should recognise the historical reality that democracies do not become aggressive. There are very few historical examples of that. History also teaches us that past enemies can become firm allies in the future. Our relation with France, if it teaches us nothing else, should teach us that. We are in grave danger of exaggerating the spectre of a unified Germany. The two Germanies, unified, will have a great deal of work to do to make the union work. The East German economy represents only 8 per cent. of the gross national product of West Germany. Stimulating and bringing East Germany up to the European Community standard will absorb West Germany's investment surplus. One estimate is that it will take about 10 years to achieve that, and I believe it.

It is also important to consider the population. Germany is the largest of the European countries, but it is not a super power. Compared with Japan, it is not even an economic power. The population of a combined Germany would be about 80 million, but the population of both Germanies is declining and by the turn of the century it will be about 76 million, as against a forecast combined population of France and the United Kingdom of 115 million. That puts the matter in perspective.

I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary state clearly that one way forward in the future must be closer collaboration between France and the United Kingdom. Every European to whom I speak in the European Community cries out for Britain to play a positive role, and to continue to play a more positive role, in the functioning of Europe. There is no time now to get embroiled in the mysteries of the exchange rate mechanism and the social charter. The thrust must come from us. We must not be put of by phoney challenges to sovereignty. Sovereignty and national identity are important, but no Frenchman, Italian or Dutchman considers himself threatened by the unity that is developing in Europe.

I do not know what sort of union it will be—no one can know that—but the work of building the European Community is vital and must go on. We have a crucial contribution to make to the development of Europe and a response to make to the extraordinary and stimulating events in the eastern European countries. They would recognise that contribution. It would benefit them and give them an objective to which to aspire and a bloc with which to trade. It would also operate as a force for the free market and be yet one more demonstration, if that were needed, that Socialism, Marxism and Leninism are bankrupt philosophies and that it is the free-market principles for which we stand that offer peace and prosperity.

7.29 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I have just spent four days in a two-star hotel in Romania—an anti-junket—and it is about Romania that I want to talk in this important debate.

I could not, in the 10 minutes available to me, describe the grotesque, bizarre and unbelievable character of the Ceausescu regime in Romania, the legacy of which I saw in those four days. Words simply fail me.

Some hon. Members may have read Malcolm Bradbury's marvellous satire "Rates of Exchange". It is said that he used Romania as the model for the people's republic in that book. If he did, he was not required to tax his imagination in the writing of it. It will be remembered that that mythical people's republic, Slaka, a net exporter of beets and brown suits and a net importer of everything else, where ballet and opera were good but footwear scarce mostly going for export, is a pretty good pen portrait of the grimness of Romania.

The first important point that I want to emphasise is the need to appreciate that those Romanian Christmas days that shook the world do not mark the end of the revolutionary upheavals in Romania. There remains in that country a deep and dangerous polarisation. The National Salvationist Front Government, which includes the leaders who came to the fore during the revolution, other intellectuals and technocrats, and key military officers who distinguished themselves in that fierce fighting, are, I found, trying hard to stabilise the situation in Romania. They have called an election for a constituent assembly for 21 May. They are doing their best and deserve our support.

There are forces at work in Romania, some of whom took part in the revolution and others who did not, who evidently do not want to wait for the elections but rather to continue the politics of the street. Some hon. Members may have seen pictures of the events that I witnessed last Sunday in the Piazza Victoreie in the centre of Bucharest when a mob invaded and ransacked the Government's headquarters. It was not a pretty sight. I talked to many leading members of the Government and I remain impressed by their determination to keep the country stable and to reach those elections.

The Foreign Secretary talked about some of the uglies that are coming out from underneath the stones as a result of the revolutionary upheavals in central and eastern Europe. One that is very present and important in Romania is the spectre that haunted Europe long before Communism haunted Europe, and that is anti-semitism.

I had long discussions with the representatives of the Jewish community in Bucharest. In 1939, there were 800,000 Jews in Romania, and at the end of the war there were 400,000. The pogroms remain vivid and lurid in the minds of the Jewish community. The so-called Christianism and nationalism of some of the historical parties and forces in Romania that are now coming to the fore are giving real cause for concern to the remaining 20,000 members of the Jewish community. They told me that they regard the Iliescu National Salvation Front Government as sometimes the only thing that stands between them and the return of pogroms to the streets of Bucharest.

I wish that I had more time to develop that point, but I hope that the Minister is listening, because much western support is now going to those Christian nationalist forces. The Jewish community is worried, for example, about some of the broadcasts on the Romania service of the BBC, the earlier praise for which I identify with. But the Romania service seems to be giving some cause for concern; I leave that with the Minister for him to think about.

[Mr. George Galloway]

The most dramatic matter that I want to deal with in the few minutes available to me is the catastrophe of AIDS, on the brink of which Romania finds itself. Some hon. Members will have seen pictures and read articles in recent weeks about the situation there which has resulted from transfusions of infected blood into poor, malnourished and orphaned children in Romania. Because the Ceausescu regime could not feed those children, it injected them with 25 ml of blood at a time in an attempt to nourish them. Massive amounts of that blood now turn out to have been infected with HIV and the children of Romania are, in large numbers, falling prey to that infection.

I talked to a French child AIDS expert, Dr. Christian Courpotin from Trusseau hospital in Paris and Dr. Ion Petrascu, who have been doing some limited testing, and the results are staggering. In just a few weeks they have definitely shown 1,000 little children to be HIV-positive and, from their current testing, a likely figure of 2,000 children, with evidence now emerging of vertical transmission of the disease with devastating results. They have not even started testing the adults from whom the blood injected into the children came.

To put the problem into perspective, the tiny Black sea port of Constanta has more child AIDS victims than the entire metropolis of Paris. That is only one of the few sites where testing has taken place.

I visited the Victor Babes hospital in Bucharest. I have seen some appalling sights in my life, I have walked through the killing fields of the famines of Ethiopia and the Sudan, but I have never seen a more distressing scene than ward D1 of that hospital, where 80 tiny babies, stricken with AIDS, are lying waiting to die. Because the nurses do not know or understand, they are dressed as if they were on a space mission. They are terrified of the babies, scarcely touching them, never mind giving them a cuddle.

Those children have no parents. They have had no human love or kindness. They are simply lying there waiting to die. There is not a teddy bear in the hospital. The lucky few have a balloon in their cots. Instead of nappies, rags are wrapped around them 10 to 15 times a day by terrified nurses.

I like to hope that the British Government and the western community can make a specific response to the problems of AIDS children in Romania, because I can assure the Minister that there is an impending catastrophe. Britain has donated 2 million syringes to Romania to help combat the problem, but they have not yet arrived. Plenty of people asked me about them when I was there. That was a welcome response from the Government, but I hope that they will look at the matter again. I hope that the private sector and the public will look again to see how we can respond. To see 13-month old children who look 70 just lying there waiting to die was very distressing indeed.

The situation in Romania is still unfolding. It is clear that the earthquake of 22 December was not the final one. There is a political fault line in Romania. We do not know, and it is not our business, what the Romanians' final political decision will be, but it is important for us in the West to respond positively to the Romanian Government's appeals for help on the economy and in the health sector and to intervene with caution in their internal politics in the way that I have been describing.

We should extend the hand of friendship to Romania. It is an important country with an innovative, bright and enthusiastic population. We can make a good friend there. We have made a fair start, but I hope that the British Government will try to do better still.

7.39 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I wish to speak mainly about balance—the balance of argument and the balance of power in Europe. We have seen momentous changes, largely based on an understanding by the people of eastern Europe in particular, but also of the USSR, of the need for freedom of choice and to give full weight to the importance of that and to self-determination. At the same time, I detected in some of the speeches today a rather mean, third-rate appreciation of the importance that the Prime Minister attaches to those matters, without which many of the achievements that have proliferated throughout eastern Europe recently, and which are appreciated in the United States and elsewhere in the world, would not have occurred.

It does not take much imagination to appreciate that German reunification will give rise to much argument and dispute. I welcome German reunification as someone whose father was killed in the last world war and who was awarded the military cross for action in Normandy. As I remarked in a previous debate, I now regard the Germans as friends and colleagues. Nevertheless, I make the point that it is important for the Germans to understand the sensitivities on our side of the argument. It is inappropriate to make snide remarks about our Prime Minister or about anyone who takes a perfectly sensible, balanced view of the future of Europe, and to argue that they are adopting a negative, narrow, nationalistic approach. That is neither true, fair, nor balanced.

I invoke a German in my argument. Are the remarks of Mr. Günther Grass to be dismissed? He advised caution. He said much more, and those who wish to read his article in *The Times* are welcome to do so. The Germans that I have met fully appreciate, perhaps better than some right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken today and in previous similar debates, that Germany should be more sensitive in its approach.

In the context of the wider Europe, to concentrate on the one aspect of institutional changes and the development of a federal Europe is itself not necessarily in the interests of Germany. We should give consideration to a freer, more liberal, looser association with other countries, not only in our own interests but in those of Germany itself. The enormous economic power and engine that Germany now has at its disposal could prove a disadvantage to that country if it led to envy, jealousy and all the other characteristics which led people to fear Germany in the past. It is for such reasons that I believe that we should not go down the path of creating a German-dominated federal system.

I was interested to hear the balance struck in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and the emphasis that he placed on the word "involvement". I am on record as encouraging Members of Parliament to emphasise that word in relation to Europe. We need to be involved because we need to understand, but in understanding we do not have to be subsumed. We must keep that at the forefront of our thinking at this volatile and difficult time.

In the context of the thrust and drive towards the markets of eastern Europe, it would be as well if the countries of the East themselves would apportion the investment made in them by other countries as equally as possible, and not just rely on the impetus and initiative already taken by Germany. It is essential to achieve a balance in eastern Europe as well as in western Europe.

My other point arises out of an article in *The Times* on 14 February by Helmut Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing. It was depressing and disappointing because it seemed to assume that the future of the European Community depends on a Franco-German axis. Nothing will be more divisive than if countries congregate in the context of the developments desired—by Jacques Delors and the Commission, among others—and create a combination of the economic strength of East and West Germany, which, combined with their voting strength on the basis of Franco-German unity and other alliances that they could develop, would cause serious concern to the other members of the Community. I do not regard that as very communautaire.

We must strive for a reciprocal, mutual balance. That is the key. At the same time, we must provide a bulwark against over-domination by any one country by associations between ourselves and Hungary—of the kind that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs tried to achieve on his great visit to that country—Czechoslovakia and Poland, and even with Yugoslavia, Turkey and EFTA countries. That would offer a natural balance in economic terms to the strength and power that will otherwise be concentrated in a reunified Germany moving towards the East and dominating its markets.

It is equally important to remember our connections with the United States. Some complain that we have been moving away from a special relationship with the United States, and opinion polls suggest that the Americans believe that Germany will dominate the new Europe and that they will have to look to Germany rather than to the allies of previous decades. For decades, if not for generations, we have had a relationship with the United States whereby it sent its people over here to help us for the prime reason that we shared common values and interests of a kind for which the people of eastern Europe are striving and which we must help them to achieve.

It is a matter of the greatest importance for us to ensure that we do not allow the other members of the European Community to divorce themselves from the United States. We are living in a global village and we have a mutual interest not only in fair and free trade but in security. We must do all that we can to ensure that the Community plays an integral part in the developing and evolving world that we shall inhabit by the year 2000, but without in any way relinquishing our right, based upon self-determination within the Community, to make major decisions of our own.

Finally, it is important that the German people should be aware of the sensitivities that the question of Poland arouses and to understand that it is not just a question of borders. It is also about feelings. We must ensure that the Germans understand that the balance of power and the balance of opinion belong to all sides in the Community.

7.49 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The transformation of East-West relations presents opportunities for the 1990s, but whether this decade will witness such a momentous shift depends upon a multitude of factors. The critical and most unpredictable one is the evolution of policy in the Soviet Union. Before I touch on that, I wish to pose other questions which, I submit, need to form the framework of our debate tonight. What role will our Alliance continue to play? What can we now expect of the Warsaw treaty organisation? To what degree is the framework operated in Vienna for the CFE—negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe—still valid? What is our concept of a future Europe and, in particular of a future Germany?

First, as democratic values overcome the legacy of Yalta in Europe, does NATO still have a role or has the Alliance already accomplished its mission? Although article V, the "core" of the North Atlantic treaty, commits the parties to regard an attack on one as an attack that involves every other member, the raison d'etre of the western Alliance does not depend on an existing, identifiable military threat. Article II of the North Atlantic treaty clearly speaks of non-military roles, by obliging the parties to

"contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being".

Is not that a valid political role, which some hon. Members were questioning earlier?

NATO will remain necessary and desirable for well into the future. Its basic purpose of defending and furthering western values endures, as does its permanent worth as the only forum in which the 16 like-minded north American and European democracies can discuss political and economic as well as military dimensions of security policy.

Secondly, one of the ironies of the times is that, just when the WTO is being increasingly described as militarily and politically less important to its member states, a discussion is growing about the stabilising role of the Warsaw pact. Although the traditional Soviet objective of dissolving both alliances has not been formally abandoned, during his historic 19 December 1989 visit to NATO headquarters in Belgium, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze stated:

"We believe the Warsaw Treaty and NATO at this crucial stage in the European process can play an important stabilising role in stabilising Europe."

I agree that the future of the two alliances in Europe must remain a matter for speculation. As we have head tonight, the CSCE is increasingly cited as a model for the Europe of the future, with each Government engaged in a broad range of discussions as independent nations. At present, NATO and the WTO, as well as the neutral and non-aligned countries, negotiate as three caucuses in CSCE. However, assuming that in the future the CSCE framework will evolve into a Europe without opposing alliances, does any hon. Member present believe that that would prove more stable than the current situation? Would the absence of alliance structures, perhaps not aggravate irridentist and nationalist tendencies and make future Sarajevo cataclysms more likely? We must take the

[Mr. A. E. P. Duffy]

longest view. How does this justify abandoning any notion of geopolitical balance as the various permutations of Europe 2000 are contemplated?

Thirdly, the briefings that I have been fortunate enough to receive from CFE delegations in Vienna, as recently as December, left me in no doubt that a conventional arms limitation agreement is possible some time in 1990 and if we could get aircraft off the table, we could get agreement by this summer, as the Minister knows. A number of important issues remain to be resolved. None are considered insuperable. There is ample good will on both sides, but more push from the other side. However, it is only the complexities that deter our side.

One eastern representative remarked:

"whatever happens politically in Europe, even if the alliances disappear, the military potentials remain".

A treaty and, we hope, further treaties that formally reduce and constrain those forces are vital necessities.

The precise budgetary consequences of eventual conventional arms cuts—the peace dividend which excites all of us—must as yet remain unclear. In a first-phase CFE agreement, we could expect cuts for NATO of only between 10 and 15 per cent., and then only in certain weapons categories. It is likely that the benefits accruing will be offset by the cost of destroying and verifying treaty compliance—and that has not been considered sufficiently by hon. Members. Finally, what is our concept for a future Europe and, in particular for a future Germany? How will both countries interact on the evolution of policy on the Soviet Union?

In my present role as president of the North Atlantic Assembly, I presided over three days of talks last week in Brussels with the NATO Secretary General, Dr. Worner, with his council of NATO ambassadors and with a delegation from the Supreme Soviet, led by Ambassador Valentin Falin—the former ambassador in Bonn for seven years and currently chairman of the international committee of the Central Committee, a close adviser to Mr. Gorbachev, and the very Russian who is experienced in western Europe and European politics. He was accompanied by Marshal Akromeyev, of whom we have all read and perhaps some of us have met, as well as General Lobov, Chief of Staff of the Warsaw treaty organisation, whom I have met three times in the past year. There were also joint meetings with those newly elected Soviet parliamentarians and a representative body of senior NATO parliamentarians, including right hon. and hon. Members of the House.

Those meetings were the first between NATO and the WTO at military and parliamentary levels. They illustrated the extent and depth of Soviet misperceptions about our alliance. Marshal Akromeyev told me that, until five years ago, he was convinced that we would invade eastern Europe. If such misperceptions can be held by Marshal Akromeyev, Ambassador Falin and General Lobov what are ordinary Russian people thinking about us? Akromeyev has still to be persuaded that even now NATO is not an offensive Alliance. Lobov still believes that it is Alliance policy to preserve the wealth of the West and to keep the USSR poor.

There was a pervading feeling on the part of the Soviet delegation that they will be excluded, not so much from settlement as from an evolving European house. Incidentally, they want a US presence. They were explicit that German unification should not adversely affect US security. Ambassador Falin—although I do not believe that he is necessarily representative—is opposed to unification. He believes that Moscow maintains latent rights in East Germany, and that the German Democratic Republic must carry out its duties to the Warsaw pact, even after the March elections. He reiterated last week in Brussels, in a radio interview, that a united Germany could not carry on being part of NATO. He dwelt on the wartime destruction. There is not time for me now for me to go into the details that he gave, especially of destruction in Byelorussia. It was much more severe than German wartime damage and, he put it forward as an important factor in continuing Soviet economic difficulties.

There were no specifics from the Russians as to settlement, but repeated expressions of fear about German unification. They are not alone. Some of Germany's European neighbours, as I meet them in the NATO parliamentary network—as do other hon. Members, all the time—consider the prospect of a powerful united German state with more unease then hope. None is questioning German unity, but how is it to be secured? Nor do they question the two-plus-four framework agreed last week in Ottawa, but they are looking for firm safeguards as well as reassurance to the USSR.

7.59 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I must confess that I do not share the nostalgia for stability felt by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy). I never thought that I would live long enough to see the liberation of eastern Europe, but I thank God that I have; and, if a good deal of instability is part of the price, let us pay it.

We have just come through what was, in effect, a third world war: but for nuclear weapons, the cold war would have led to a holocaust. While we should not claim too much credit for that, I would point out that it was the determination of the West to make it clear to the Soviets that their policy of expansion was a no-win policy that created the Gorbachev regime: Gorbachev is, in that sense, the son of Reagan.

I am not at all dismayed by the prospective union of Germany. The Nazi phenomenon came from the appalling inflation of the 1920s and the consequences of the world recession of the 1930s. There is nothing like that on the horizon yet, but we must face—and, from what I have heard this evening, I am sure that we are prepared to do so—the fact that the union of Germany, and Austria's approching membership of the European Community, will mean a preponderance of German-speaking people in the Community. We had all better brush up our German pretty quickly.

How is this to be faced? There are two schools of thought. The thinking in Brussels and Paris, followed to some extent in Bonn, is that we should try to anchor Germany in the European Community by making it more federal. I see the force of that argument, but I do not believe that it would work. I do not think that it is possible to tie down a growing, organic popular development with rules and institutions. What did an Irish patriot say?—"You cannot set limits to the march of a nation." But I do agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath): if Britain is fully involved, some counterpoise will be provided for the preponderant German element.

Whatever view we may have about federalism or non-federalism, I do not see the House of Commons that I have served for nearly 40 years accepting a tight federation. How, then, do we cope with the problem? A tremendous responsibility rests with the French and the Germans. If they want to develop a system that we cannot join, they can of course inflict on us an economic and financial Dunkirk; but in that event, the French will find themselves, geopolitically, back in Vichy. If they want to choose that route, it is open to them.

On the other hand, we too have a great responsibility, because a Europe united without us could be a Europe united against us. We must also make a big effort to bridge the gap between the Paris thinking and our own—on, among other things, economic and momentary union—and I believe that that can be done. The Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, did not see fit to make Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen. We may regret that, but it is a fact and we must live with it. We shall all have to make a considerable effort.

It is important to remember that the foundation of the European Community is not the treaty of Rome, but the reconciliation of France and Germany. That came about in 1955. When the French Assembly had refused to accept the idea of German rearmament, Anthony Eden gave an undertaking to commit a British Army corps and a tactical air force on the continent indefinitely. That was a generous and a dangerous commitment. On that basis, the French accepted German rearmament, and the Germans themselves agreed to rearm. The treaty of Rome elaborated on that foundation in economic terms. I am sorry that we did not have more of a hand in framing that treaty, but that is neither here nor there.

We are putting together massive interests, economic and financial, in the European Community. So far, they have been protected by NATO. I agree with many hon. Members who have said this evening that the Warsaw pact is finished, but I am not at all sure that NATO in its present form can continue when there is no Warsaw pact. What we really need is a European defence system. I believe that the Western European Union—which we set up in 1955, and which formed the basis and condition of the Franco-German reconciliation—provides us with the necessary structure. France and Spain are not in NATO—the command structure—but they are members of the WEU. We have a minimum deterrent capability, British and French. Here, surely, is the machinery through which we could provide a system for the defence of the interests that we are putting together.

For most of my life, I have seen British Governments respond to European initiatives—the Schuman plan, the European Defence Community and the treaty of Rome—sometimes negatively and sometimes positively. Here is an opportunity for us to take the initiative, and to tell our friends on the continent that the WEU is the nucleus of a European security system that could form the European pillar of an alliance with the United States. Nor should it exclude the grander design supported by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, involving both the United States and the Soviet Union in the ultimate security of this part of the world. It could be the basic building block for such a design—and a fallback if things go wrong.

8.6 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I share the view expressed by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) of the magnitude of the events that we are debating, and also his special concern about the implications for the liberation of eastern Europe—and the near-collapse of the Warsaw pact—for the problem of a united or reunited Germany. We shall face a great power in our own western Europe.

Like others, I do not think that we are faced with any real threat to European security from Germany. Anyone who has had any dealings with West German politicians will, I think, agree that there is no doubting that their democratic credentials are good and solid; nor do I doubt that people have learnt the lessons of history. It would, however, be unrealistic for us simply to say that a united Germany poses no problems for us, or that others who suffered more terribly than we during the second world war are not still very anxious about a resurgence of German power. As others have said, west Germany is already the dominant economic power in western Europe and a united Germany will greatly reinforce that power.

We must guard against the contingency of future adverse change. We should always bear in mind the lesson of history—that, sooner or later, an expression of economic power will correspond with that of political and military power. The key question is how we guard against the fears and contingencies not of today, but perhaps of tomorrow and the years ahead.

Two approaches to the problem are already highly visible. The first is the drive towards West European federalism, or as near to it as its supporters can get, in order, they hope, to bring German power under collective west European control. The second approach is to develop proposals for new pan-European security arrangements and frontier guarantees which would safeguard the European nations from any future assertions of German military power.

The case for a federalist approach was set out with great candour in an article in *The Times* last week written jointly by former President Giscard d'Estaing and former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. As they put it, German reunification must be

"part of a strategy of establishing a federal union of the member states of the European Community. Such a federation would entail not only economic and monetary union but also the integration of foreign policies, and ultimately military and security policies, in which France and Germany will have a special role to exercise jointly."

That is the destiny for western Europe that the authors of the Schumann plan and the Rome treaty long ago envisaged, and which their disciples have never ceased to advocate. It underlines much of the thinking behind the Single European Act and, even more, the current proposals for economic and monetary union.

Those who hold that view—they include the President of the European Commission, Mr. Delors, President Mitterrand, Chancellor Kohl, Prime Minister Andreotti and, as we heard again this afternoon, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—can be expected to press for it with all their energy, in the preparations for the intergovernmental conference and in the conference itself, agreed at the last European summit and scheduled for later this year.

I believe that that is the wrong solution. The closer and faster the economic integration of Europe, with German

[Mr. Peter Shore]

economic performance far outstripping that of her European Community partners, and long in advance of any serious attempt to achieve economic convergence, the more certain it is that in such a union German economic power will increase and the rest of western Europe will become part of a German economic zone. It is an illusion for France to believe that it can be the partner, even a junior partner, in such a union. Nevertheless, that concept chimes with the whole thrust of current European Community policy—the rush for economic and monetary union, the transfer of power from the nation states to the Brussels Commission and the European Parliament, the total integration of the European economies.

A corollary of that drive for union is the moratorium on enlarging the existing membership of the European Community. That will keep out Austria. It will certainly keep out the countries of eastern Europe, other than East Germany. When the right hon. Member for Pavilion spoke during the debate on the Loyal Address on 24 November 1989, he said:

"We must ensure that in achieving a good measure of integration in the Community, we do not build an economic Berlin wall to keep others out."—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 381.]

I oppose the drive towards union because I want a wider Europe which will put a permanent end to the post-war division of our continent. I also oppose it because I believe that it would place the economic interests of our own country in great jeopardy. Political union in a federal or quasi-federal Europe is simply not acceptable to the majority of our citizens.

The alternative and, I believe, far more effective approach is twofold. The first task is to widen the collective security arrangements that have served us so well in post-war Europe. We can all applaud the present process of multilateral disarmament, under which huge, asymmetrical and verified cuts are being made in the Soviet Union's previously overweening conventional military power. However, the maintenance of the American commitment to Europe and the retention of NATO, in which not only has Soviet power been deterred but German power enmeshed, will be necessary for many years to come, and so, in a greatly modified form, will be Soviet guarantees for some of her neighbours in eastern Europe.

What we need to do now is to find a way to extend collective security across what used to be the iron curtain —a system that involves the Soviet Union and its east European neighbours, along with the NATO countries, in joint guarantees of existing European frontiers—except where peaceful and non-coercive changes may be agreed and the underwriting of those frontiers by collective security arrangements. That should certainly be on the agenda of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe meetings this summer. It may be that new arrangements can be grafted on to the existing Helsinki accords; it may be that a new pan-European and also a North American security conference is necessary. However, it is collective, Europewide guarantees about force levels, frontiers and mutual and collective assistance for which we should aim.

The second prong of such an approach is directed at the countries of Eastern Europe. We should encourage the earliest possible association with, and full membership of the European Community, of all European countries who wish to join. If that is to happen, we must recognise that it cannot be achieved if the present thrust towards political and economic union in Western Europe is sustained. In the *Times* article, Giscard and Helmut Schmidt put the central question:

"Is Europe seeking a single market with monetary stability in which all member states retain sovereign powers, or is it seeking a federation to which member states allot joint powers?"

The answer should be yes, yes, and yes again to the retention of our sovereignty, and no, no, and no again to a federation of member states.

I end with an analogy suggested to me by President Gorbachev's reference to a common European home and Mr. Delor's recent reference to his vision of a European village. To me, the common European home that we should seek to construct is a very large apartment block with flats of varying sizes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The right hon. Gentleman has gone beyond his time. Mr. John Maples.

8.16 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I am unable to share the enthusiasm of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) for constructing, through a system of conferences and the use of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe and border guarantees, the security that we need in a new Europe. It seemed to me to be all too redolent of the conferences at Locarno and Lugano and the League of Nations, all of which were full of guarantees and good will but which did little to protect us from the most awful war that mankind has ever experienced. We need to construct something that is much sounder than that.

I face the prospect of a united Europe with a mixture of joy and apprehension. We all rejoice that eastern Europe is finally free of the shackles of its imperial masters. However, I am apprehensive about tearing up a security system that has brought peace to Europe for 45 years. That peace was brought about by the division of Europe into two hostile camps. At times there has been tension, and sometimes there has been danger. Nevertheless, that division has worked. It succeeded in suppressing many of the nationality and border problems that had been at the heart of European history for a long time and that are now re-emerging.

The challenge that we face is to replace a system that has guaranteed us that security and not to allow the problems that are re-emerging—the problems of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century—to engulf us again. All those problems are still there—boundaries, nationalities, ethnic minorities, above all, a greater Germany and just exactly what that means and what its position will be in Europe.

Events have unfolded incredibly fast, but in some ways things are more certain now than they were three months ago. It now seems to be fairly clear that democratic states are emerging in Hungary, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. There is obviously some danger of rather greater problems in Romania and Yugoslavia.

It now seems certain that there will be a united Germany. Three months ago it did not seem at all clear that the United States and the Soviet Union would agree to that, but now it is perfectly clear that they will. We

should welcome that as it is something we have sought for a long time, but we have to focus on the fears and problems in western Europe and in the Soviet Union. If anybody has suffered from overweening German power in the past, it has been the countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

We do not yet know what the Soviet Union needs for its own security. We do not really know what the future of the Soviet Union and its empire within the boundaries of the USSR will be. We cannot ignore the danger that the Soviet Union may revert to what it was before. I doubt that it will present the same military threat, but there is certainly a possibility that the liberalising that has taken place under President Gorbachev will stop.

It seems fairly certain that eastern Europe will have to go through a simply dreadful period of economic reconstruction. Some of its economies have been practically destroyed, and almost all of them are in a terrible mess. If we are to help to sustain democracy in those countries, which is one of the keys to the future peace and stability of Europe, and prevent them from reverting to nationalism, dictatorship and narrow interests, it is extremely important to promote the free enterprise economy and the economic development of those countries in which West Germany and the EEC will have to play the foremost role.

I do not want to strike a churlish note in all the optimism that today's debate has generated, but I have some misgivings over German unification. The problem of Germany in Europe has caused wars in Europe three times in the past 120 years. Although the democratic credentials of our German friends are every bit as good as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has said, they must take into account our legitimate concerns in formulating their own stands for unification and the Europe in which that unified Germany will play a part. It looks as though Germany will unify within the West, perhaps firmly anchored into the NATO Alliance, as that is what Chancellor Kohl says that he wants.

However, I am concerned—and I shall be interested to hear the view of my hon. Friend the Minister—that if the Soviet Union and East Germany hold out for a neutral Germany and the German elections get closer and the SPD and Mr. Lafontein say that that would be a reasonable price to pay for German reunification, we shall then be faced with a very different problem which no one who has spoken in the debate has yet addressed—the serious possibility of a neutral Germany floating around in the middle of Europe.

We have vital interests at stake. They are definitely shared by France and most of the other countries in the EC, and I believe they are also shared by the United States, the Soviet Union and most of the countries in eastern Europe.

We should set ourselves a couple of signposts. Obviously there are many objectives that we should try to achieve. The establishment in eastern Europe of democratic states on their existing boundaries seems to be a crucial condition for the way in which eastern Europe develops. The united Germany that emerges from the present discussions must agree to that. East and West Germany have separately signed treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia agreeing their borders. There is some doubt over the legality of those treaties and how they might bind a unified Germany, but clearly they have to be brought into the process of unification so that everybody is committed to the existing boundaries.

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said that democracies do not go to war with each other—and there is a large element of truth in that—several dictators have been elected and, in past conflagrations in Europe, dictatorships have emerged out of democracies. Although democracy is a necessary condition, it is not sufficient. We need to develop some institutional arrangements which tie together the cultural, political and economic interests of all the countries of Europe.

We need to do that in the interests of ensuring the survivial of democracy, suppressing some of the nation state rivalries which between 1800 and 1945 gave rise to so much trouble, and trying to make those boundary disputes and nationality disputes caused by groups of one ethnic community living in another country less important. I do not believe that it is time to return to the old balance of power idea advocated by Peregrine Worsthorne in his article in *The Sunday Telegraph*. That would be extremely dangerous. It requires great subtlety to work for even 30 years and usually results in armed conflict.

The institution that is in place and clearly available to perform that function is the EC, on which we should build our hopes and the future construction of Europe. its first task would be to ensure the incorporation of East Germany into the Community and to start making arrangements with other eastern European countries and gradually bring them in, in less than 10 years in some cases, although perhaps countries such as Romania will take rather longer.

While I should be happy to move some way towards what the French and the President of the Commission are suggesting, I should also be happy to slow the process a little if it would lead to the broadening of the Community. If we want to construct a Europe in which the rivalries that have led to conflict in the past are diminished, we have to construct a broader Europe in which all those countries are involved. A united Germany might well dominate a Community of 12, but it would be rather more difficult to dominate a Community of 16 or 20.

To sum up, I am overjoyed at the prospect of a Europe emerging from 45 years of cold war, but somewhat worried about some of the minor disputes and problems of the past that have been in the deep freeze during that time. President Gorbachev has set us the challenge of creating a common European home, and that that has to involve a framework for containing a united Germany and for suppressing some of the border and nationality problems. The two key ingredients are making sure that democratic countries arise in eastern Europe and broadening the EEC. If we do that, we have considerable prospects for turning to great positive effect the wonderful opportunity with which we are faced. If we fail to do it, at some time in the future we may be faced with repeating some of the awful episodes of the past 150 years of European history.

8.26 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) and share his joy at the positive movement in Europe, having experienced it at first hand last March in

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

Hungary and having revisited Berlin and Leipzig last month. The changes there are bound to cause delight to anyone who prizes freedom and the movement of people.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) referred to Balfour saying that it was not a question of history repeating itself, but of historians repeating the past. That is one of the dangers we face at the moment. In that context I have more sympathy with what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said about the EEC. It has been regularly claimed in Europe and in the House that hope lies in a united Europe. Historians call the period of a united Europe the dark ages and I am a shade concerned that we might be returning to that period of history.

I was interested in the comments of the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who said that the Almighty had made Englishmen and Frenchmen different. He reminded me of the story of the English business man who claimed that he was a self-made man and relieved the Almighty of an awful responsibility.

We have a tendency to lecture others and although I am delighted that Members of Parliament and members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union have been using the agency of the IPU to share with the emerging forces in Europe some of our concepts, we have to do that with sensitivity. They have reached this stage in their development without a great deal of help from us. While they may not have much experience of the working of parliamentary government as we understand it, they have kept the torch of freedom alight in dark ages in the past 40 years. Now they are moving towards a new era. It is good that we share that with them.

I understand, and note with some thanks, that the Government are providing advice on local government structures to the emerging east European democracies. I fully support that, but, coming from Northern Ireland, I must say that the Government have little to boast about, when a significant part of this nation does not have a true local government structure and when the structure for Northern Ireland legislation is akin to old-syle Stalinism. We have left ourselves open to certain accusations.

With Jim Nicholson, a former Member of this House who is now a Member of the European Parliament, I visited and had discussions with many of the smaller emerging political parties in East Germany. We owe them some help, but I regret that blocs within European Parliament have voted against giving them financial help. It is all very well to say that we as individuals can help, but they need more help than that to deal with their state structures. I hope that hon. Members will use their influence and help them with their political campaigning.

The rush to encourage democracy and to dismantle dictatorships must not endanger already established democracies. I noted the comments that were made tonight about disarmament, but the arguments for massive cuts in conventional forces are premature and send a strong signal to the generals who still command divisions of tanks and missiles in the East.

I speak as a child of the early 1930s. I remember the high hopes for the League of Nations, which was set up after the first world war. Disarmament left the nation open to blackmail and attack. I remember the blood that had to be shed to restore freedom and democracy to only half of Europe. We have heard speeches from senior Members of the House who served at that time, but I should like to give a brief quotation from an elderly constituent—a man in his 80s—who served with the merchant marine on the Archangel convoys during the second world war. Dealing with what he believes is needed at this time, he says:

"Highly skilled statesmanship is required; the political rush to disarm requires extreme caution, in case this nation is placed in the position that we have been through before . . . of fighting by force of arms, to restore Europe's soul and sanity."

I regret the report from Romania, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), on the tragedy of HIV-infected children and emerging anti-semitic views. The Europe of the future will need strong moral principles and ethical structures based on a Judean-Christian ethic. If anyone has departed from that in the past, that is to their shame and we should not repeat their folly.

8.33 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Hon. Members who have been involved in the changing world since 1984 feel it a privilege to have been even a minor part of that process. I was lucky enough to be a member of the Select Committee which invited Mr. Gorbachev here in 1984. One has followed the unfolding process with enormous joy and it has reached the point where we can now debate East-West relations in a different context. The change in East-West relations is not simply a matter for continental Europe, on which most of the debate has concentrated. It goes wider and covers the regions and regional conflicts.

I should like to mention the concern of many hon. Members about the short term in the Soviet Union. Much has been said about Mr. Gorbachev's ability to rethink the Soviet Union's position and all that that has meant in the logjam of international relationships. Hon. Members who have visited the Soviet Union more recently than I have will recognise that the next three to 12 months will be critical to public opinion in the Soviet Union.

It behoves us to think deeply about what we can do not only to help Mr. Gorbachev and to ensure his survival but to help the Russian people to recognise the courageous step that he has taken. The liberalisation that he has brought about must show some results if people are to continue to follow. One of the saddest aspects at present, perhaps because of the way in which it has been done, is that ordinary people have yet to see the effect of perestroika.

A Soviet delegation recently visited the House. I asked what we can do to help. The message was, "We do not want anything special—we want normal loans." When I asked what else we could do to help, they said "Nothing." Yet one felt that that was the official position rather than the true position. The Germans, as I pointed out to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), did not ask what they could do to help—they did something. They provided an enormous amount of food and consumer goods and made the loan arrangements to facilitate that. Those goods will be in the shops shortly.

I hope that Britain will follow that lead and not wait and ask, "What can we do to help? What committees can we set up? How can we help to reinforce your democracy?" I hope that we shall perform some short, sharp tangible act so that people in the Soviet Union will say, "Gosh—

perestroika has started to work; we have friends in Britain, Germany and Europe." We must back that process of tremendous traumatic change, which many of us recognise will take 10 or 20 years to bear fruit.

I support the view that the dynamo for change has been the European Community. When the Select Committee visited eastern European countries, everyone said, "We recognise that this dynamic Community is part of the world economy and we want to be a part of it." The European Community was the magnet that was drawing them. We cannot afford to slow that process for 10 or 15 years while they develop their economies.

None of us knows which will be the good or bad economies or what traumas they will go through. We should extend the hand of friendship and ensure that they can become associates. We should not deny them the impact, dynamo and creation of the wider Community, which has the wealth to support that process. We can then have a Europe of concentric circles which will draw in countries as they are ready to join.

I am deeply concerned about the Horn of Africa, which was often regarded as an area of Soviet influence. The Horn of Africa committee met constantly to discuss the Soviet Union controlling the Gulf. Three countries are in a state of traumatic turmoil. We have heard about the human misery in Romania, but it does not compare with what is happening in Sudan, Ethiopia or Somalia. There are refugees from Ethiopia in Sudan, refugees from Sudan in Ethiopia, refugees from Ethiopia in Somalia, and Somalian refugees in southern Ethiopia. The formidable trauma of starvation is threatening Tigray and Eritrea. The takeover of the port of Massawa—the one port from which food can be obtained—is a cause of tremendous concern. When the public become aware of the turmoil in those countries, they will ask what we are doing to help.

One of the benefits of East-West relations is that we can work together on such problems. The Soviet Union and eastern European countries, which have had programmes in Ethiopia, and western countries, including ourselves, can work together to try to bring an end to the conflict in those countries. I ask my hon. Friend to do something about the Horn of Africa with the same urgency that we acted on Cambodia and the boat people. There should be a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council about the Horn of Africa before the position gets worse.

Vietnam is seen as part of the Soviet economy, because many Vietnamese work in the Soviet Union. That is one way in which Vietnam has tried to balance its books. Again we have seen a change in emphasis at the recent conference of the Association of South East Asian Nations. It was interesting to note that the conference asked that an Economics Minister rather than a Foreign Office Minister should attend its next conference, because ASEAN is a developing economic unit. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would be delighted not to have to go so far.

We should encourage Vietnam to be part of the economic element of ASEAN, free of Soviet influence. We have a vital interest, because the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), has just come back from Vietnam where he was trying to solve the problem of migration. We need to be statesmanlike; we have an opportunity to make statesmanlike gestures by increasing the aid programme and stopping sanctions against Vietnam so that it can leave the eastern influence and become part of its natural community in south-east Asia.

I was very much taken by what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said at the beginning of his speech about building bridges and motorways into central and eastern Europe. If we are doing that, surely we should do no less for the outlying regions.

8.42 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Over the past 40 years, we have grown accustomed to the division between East and West. It has been symbolised by the economic divide, so to speak, between capitalism and Communism. The same applies to the military sphere. The NATO Alliance has been lined up against the Warsaw pact. In the past few months, it is as if the whole edifice has been collapsing around us. Politicians and military leaders are busy contemplating the new framework.

The reunification of the two Germanys looms large. Some hon. Members, like the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), welcome it; others have doubts and anxieties stemming from their experiences in the second world war. Certainly a reunited Germany will be a mighty colossus in the heart of Europe. For the present there is no military threat, as has been pointed out in the debate, but that is no guarantee for the future.

More immediately, the threat from Germany is essentially economic. The Federal Republic already has a strong economy. It can boast a £50 billion balance of payments surplus, against our £20 billion deficit. The countries of eastern Europe which are emerging from Communist rule are seen as part of its natural markets. There will have to be massive investment by the Federal Republic in East Germany. There will also have to be massive investment in eastern Europe. Japan is gearing up to invest part of its huge surplus of capital resources in that area. France traditionally has close links with Romania. Where does that leave Britain? I am thinking particularly of the more impoverished areas, such as the north of England, Scotland and Wales.

To be parochial for a moment, in Wales we have had massive closures in our traditional industries, coal and steel. We have had to look to overseas countries for new jobs. Japan has invested widely in Wales. So has West Germany, as is symbolised by the major Bosch plant in south Wales. With the dramatic developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, will the investment which is badly needed in Britain dry up?

We all realise too that it is not only Britain which may suffer. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) has referred to the Third world. It could be adversely affected because money invested in eastern Europe will not be invested in the Third world or in Britain.

My main purpose in intervening in the debate is to point out that last week the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and I, on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, went on a fact-finding mission to Bulgaria. The first thought that strikes one in Bulgaria is that the hostility to Soviet Russia discernible in other eastern European countries does not exist. There are historic reasons for that; on two occasions Russia has liberated Bulgaria, once from the Turks and later, at the end of the

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

second world war, from Nazi Germany. It is also worth pointing out that there are no Soviet troops stationed in Bulgaria.

Another landmark is the fact that on 10 November last year Zhivkov, the longstanding president, was ousted by a Communist party coup. Since then there have been changes. The Bulgarian-Turkish border position has eased. People are allowed to retain their Turkish-sounding names. Religious tolerance has been introduced. While Bulgarian remains the official language, people are permitted to use other languages if they choose.

We found Sofia a hive of political activity. The newly emerged Union of Democratic Forces had been allocated a high-rise building and people were going in and out continuously as if it were the London underground. A daily newspaper was published and the hon. Member for Rochford and I had an interview with the editor. We also had numerous discussions with leading figures in the Union of Democratic Forces, which comprises activists in many factions who have come to the fore since th dramatic happenings of 10 November. Several had served prison sentences fairly recently.

Some of our discussions were about future election arrangements. The UDF wanted a delay because of the lack of time to organise. It thought that November would be the earliest time to hold elections. Nevertheless, there is strong speculation that the elections will take place early in May. The UDF complained about a shortage of newsprint. It also needs office equipment, including basic items such as typewriters and duplicators. Despite the difficulties, it displayed tremendous enthusiasm.

We also had many discussions with Communist party officials, including the Speaker of the Parliament. Talks centred on the method of electing a new democratic Parliament. In that respect, Professor Spasov, the secretary of the parliamentary legislative commission, was most informative. He said that the commission had in mind a dual arrangement for elections. There would be the first-past-the-post method, as in the United Kingdom, and a proportion of members elected by the method of a transferable vote.

Until the past two weeks, the Agrarian party had served as a junior partner of the Communist party and it had been part of the Government for the past 40 years. At present, Bulgaria has a pure Communist Government. At the election, the Agrarian party will fight under its own banner, but the leaders of that party suggested that, immediately after the election, they would again be prepared to enter into a coalition with the Communist party. That concept caused me concern. Bulgaria and the other countries of eastern Europe in this new era need an opposition party to expose the Government's mismanagement and errors, when they occur. That needs to be encouraged.

I believe that the Communist party, for the time being, will remain in power in Bulgaria. It retains a national organisation which will be too much for the new democratic forces, despite their enthusiasm. The American Secretary of State, James Baker, whose visit coincided with ours, suggested that his country would be prepared to recognise a Communist Government, provided that the elections were free and fair. I am sure that all hon. Members endorse that sentiment.

I have visited Bulgaria several times. The Bulgarians are essentially a friendly people. There is a need for modernisation and technical assistance. The Bulgarian people are in uncharted waters. I wish them well for the future.

8.52 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Two years ago, I had the great privilege of going to a small and, in those days, unusual gathering in the Netherlands to discuss human rights. It was one of the first times—the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) knows all about this—that a group came from the Soviet Union, led by the then Minister of Justice of the Russian Republic, and Fyodor Burlatski—who was the chairman of the Soviet human rights commission—to sit down and really talk with westerners about problems of human rights. It was a refreshing experience, although at that stage there was some hesitancy on both sides.

A year later, in January 1989, having met in the meantime at Atlanta, at the Carter presidential centre—both President Carter and President Giscard d'Estaing were members of that small group—we went to Moscow. I had the privilege there of being one of the first people from the West to stay in the Soviet Communist party's own hotel. The Labour party delegation who went two weeks later were somewhat surprised to find that my name was in the visitors' book when they got there.

The most moving moment of that visit came when Father Ted Hesburgh, who was President Carter's civil rights chairman, said mass in his room in that Soviet Communist party hotel, and we went to it. Whatever one's religious beliefs—and I am not a Roman Catholic—it was a most moving experience to see the dawn breaking over Moscow during the celebration. People knew that we were there, they knew what we were doing, and we were able to discuss it openly. That was an exciting leap forward.

I have watched with increasing excitement the events of the past year. It is remarkable that we in this House tonight can debate East-West relations in a wholly different atmosphere. There is real trust and a new understanding on both sides. There are several hon. Members in the Chamber this evening who took part in the discussions a fortnight ago when we had a visiting delegation of Soviet parliamentarians, and they know exactly what I mean. We exchanged views robustly. We even had the marvellous sight of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who is a dear friend of many of us, rebuking some of the Soviet parliamentarians for what he thought was too great a leap forward. He in turn was rebuked because the Soviet delegates said that they thought that the age of the stereotype was over. Things have moved a long way.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, in a remarkable and constructive speech, said that the time had come for fresh ideas and original thoughts. He was right. That is a challenge which hon. Members of all parties should take up and we should try to work together. If there was ever a need for people who truly believe in parliamentary democracy to work together, that need is here now, and this is the occasion.

The countries of eastern Europe are seeking to adopt or to create democratic structures. One must realise a point that has not been mentioned in the debate. We are dealing not with long-established nation states which had their

nationhood taken from them, but with countries that had a brief independent history. In their present boundaries, Bulgaria was created as an independent nation in 1908, Czechoslovakia in 1918, Hungary in 1920, Poland in 1918 and Romania, the oldest of them all, in 1877. None of them has had the democratic structures that we so easily take for granted in this place.

I was glad when, during an interesting exchange earlier between my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), there was talk of our trying to help the countries of eastern Europe to found, establish and strengthen democratic structures. We have a real duty as well as a real opportunity. We must not be patronising or seek to impose. When he was asked whether he was a supporter of the Church, Churchill once said that he was, but that rather than a pillar, he was a flying buttress. We must be the flying buttresses of the nascent democracies of eastern Europe.

What we could do—and it would be a challenge—is try to consider whether there is some merit in our having a special Select Committee on eastern Europe, which could be a unique institution because it could be a joint Select Committee with European parliamentarians from Britain. Perhaps we could help those countries through exchanges, seminars and discussions.

Goodness knows, our system here is imperfect enough and, as I said briefly in the House yesterday, the balance between the Executive and the legislature is not right. Nevertheless, we have a firm and secure parliamentary democracy of which we are all proud. We know that we can work together, across party lines—and we do, in our Select Committees and other things. Not all the emerging democracies are conversant with that. One sees splintering on the Right, with many parties jockeying for position. One also sees the understandable distrust of those who held office in former Communist Governments.

Eastern Europe is full of vicars of Bray, but we must accept that the vicar of Bray is an important political phenomenon when we are trying to develop new institutions that do not have deep roots or people with great experience. In this exciting year, with elections in Hungary and East Germany next month, with the great challenge and the great opportunity of German unification —which will come about—I believe that we, with our democratic traditions, have much to give as well as much to learn.

I was much taken with the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and who said that we could encourage those eastern European countries to form their own Common Market-type of Community that could come together with our own European Community because, through economic strength, one can break down divisions.

I am anxious to sit down to allow my hon. Friends a little extra time, but I hope that the message that will go out from this debate will be that we parliamentarians in Westminster are anxious to give and to share our experiences and that we should like to play a constructive part—not overpowering, but constructive—in helping the emerging democracies in eastern Europe to create institutions that will allow their countries to have far longer histories than they enjoyed before their freedoms were snuffed out in the 1940s.

9 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): As a relative political greenhorn, it is difficult for me to follow speeches of the quality and the authority that we have been privileged to hear this evening, especially from senior right hon. and hon. Members. It is truly fascinating to feel and to hear the excitement that they are experiencing, having been participants, either as politicians or as soldiers, in creating the world in which we have lived during the past 40 years, but which we now see being reshaped.

Their excitement is matched by the excitement of people of my own generation because we shall inherit the world that is being made now. That excitement took me to East Berlin and to Prague in November last year. I did not go as part of an Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation and I was not sponsored in any way. I went there independently and was emotionally swept up in the fever and the ferment of the new movements there. I was left in no doubt that what was happening were genuine revolutions in every sense of that word. I must acknowledge the assistance that I received from the embassy in Prague during my visit and the warm-hearted reception from the students who were active in the movement in Prague.

I vividly remember meeting a youngish man in jeans and denims in one of the theatres in Prague, with whom I had a fascinating conversation. Within a month of returning home, I read that that man, Vaclav Klaus, was the Finance Minister in the new Government in Czechoslovakia.

Hon. Members have referred to the need for cross-party work to try to establish contacts with the emerging democracies of eastern Europe. I am pleased to tell the House that I am participating in just such a venture with the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), who is in his place, in organising a conference in London in May to bring together young politicians from the emerging democracies of the East, as well as young politicians from the west of Europe and North America. I think that that conference will be important and exciting, and I should like to acknowledge the assistance and advice that we have received from the Foreign Office, and especially from the Minister of State who is to reply.

To depart from that cross-party note, I was disappointed by much of what the Foreign Secretary said when he opened the debate. I was seized by one phrase that he used, when he talked about the need to keep certain characteristics of NATO permanent, one of which was NATO's current membership. I was disappointed to hear that, because the Foreign Secretary still seemed to be stuck in the old bloc mentality that I had hoped that we were beginning to break out of and discard.

If the membership of NATO is to be permanent, how should we respond to the news in this morning's papers that the Foreign Ministry of Hungary is contemplating applying to join NATO? How on earth could we justify saying no to a democratic Government in central Europe? The attitude that NATO should continue in some kind of splendid isolation while everything else changes around it is of no assistance or help to President Gorbachev in his efforts to make the Soviet Union a respected member of the international community—the important goal that he must achieve if he is to rebuff some of his internal critics.

We must drop the unjustifiable and untenable idea of the western Alliance as a gentleman's club in which the

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

Foreign Secretary can blackball applicants for membership. We must also drop the almost existential search that has gone on over the past six months for a new role for NATO, whether in fighting the drug trade or as some sort of international environmental agency, as I have heard mentioned in NATO headquarters. Those suggestions were rightly ridiculed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

What is the future of NATO and the Warsaw pact? It is clear that the status quo is untenable. The Warsaw pact is already beginning to dissolve in front of our eyes. We can safely predict that, as rival parties begin to compete for power in the competitive political climate of the new democracies of the East, politicians will find that promises to leave the Warsaw pact are a guaranteed vote winner. The new Governments will not put up for long with the constraints and taints of the Warsaw pact.

Several hon. Members have expressed fears that, with the dissolution of the pact, we shall begin to see the emergence of the ethnic, national and territorial rivalries which disfigured European history and led to wars and conflicts. In that sense, we can regard the Warsaw pact as a 20th-century equivalent of the Ottoman empire, creating similar problems and potential crises as it decays and crumbles.

The significance of the fears of emerging conflicts as the Warsaw pact dissolves is—I address myself to Labour Members—that the traditional Left-wing demand for the dissolution of cold war security blocs is no longer adequate. As the cold war blocs dissolve, something new must take their place. That is why I support what some analysts have already advocated—a new security framework which includes, in principle, all members of NATO but also all members of the Warsaw pact, including the Soviet Union, in the medium to long term. There should be a new north Atlantic security alliance. I say north Atlantic because I believe that it should not be simply a pan-European alliance.

We should welcome and encourage the continuing involvement of the United States in European security matters. I say that as one who lived and worked in California for six years before becoming a Member of the House. I use the word "encourage" because I do not believe that the problem will be that the Americans will overstay their welcome in Europe but that they will be only too keen to orientate themselves towards the Pacific coast rim. I was well aware of the pull of the Pacific rim for Americans when I worked in California and of the way in which the whole pendulum of political power in the United States swings towards the south and west states, which do not have the traditional ties with Europe that the north-eastern states have.

We should work to encourage continuing American involvement in European matters. I believe that it will be good of itself but also that it will make it easier to have a balanced European security framework in which the Russians can eventually play their part as free and equal partners.

The new framework should have a sound organisational basis, and its development should start with the CSCE talks. President Havel has already called for those talks to be brought forward, but a conference by itself—even if it is semi-permanent—cannot act as a conflict-resolving body, though the Foreign Secretary seemed to suggest that. A conference is no substitute for the links, co-operation, understanding and ethos that can develop by working together in a proper organisational framework. That is the lesson to be drawn from the unique success of NATO in the past 40 years. We should carry that lesson forward into the future.

9.10 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In Britain we have looked on in amazement and with considerable pleasure at the pace and scale of the developments in Europe, particularly in Germany. The Prime Minister was none the less absolutely right to put it on record last Sunday that

"there is no doubt that this coming together of the two parts of Germany is going to happen."

A number of hon. Members have already said that that is a fixed point. It does not mean, however, that we should throw our hats in the air or lose our critical faculties. We must think long and hard about the framework within which the full implications of Germany's unification are worked out. Obviously that will be the vital task of the six, to which the Foreign Secretary referred in his excellent speech.

There are some necessary principles to which the Government should cling when playing our part in the process. The new, greater Germany should be encouraged in every possible way to remain a leading member of the European Community. It should not be tempted by some of the more euphoric distractions to the east, which I detect could be a temptation to German public opinion.

I do not believe that it would be right to disband NATO simply because it is argued that there is no longer a need for the Warsaw pact. In the past there was no necessary symmetry between those organisations. I am also worried about the concept of German neutrality, which was advanced quite strongly by some hon. Members, not least because, if that neutrality is armed, what reassurances will be given to Germany's neighbours? If Germany is a disarmed neutral, who will keep Germany disarmed?

Those questions haunted the House for many of the inter-war years. We should not lose sight of them, especially as German politics, admirable as it has been in the years since the basic law of 1949, has recently thrown up, for reasons I do not have time to go into, an alarming tendency on some of its wilder shores. Recently, Mr. Schonhuber spoke about the notion of armed autonomy in Germany. I do not pretend that that is the majority view within the Federal Republic—God forbid that it should be—but we need to be warned and to be wary about such things.

I agree with the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that it is vital to keep the Americans fully engaged in the new European construction. In that way we shall avoid the risk of repeating the cardinal mistake of the League of Nations between the wars when, essentially, we lost full American commitment to and participation in the maintenance of the European security arrangements at that time.

The European Community is the foundation of the common European home about which President Gorbachev recently spoke eloquently. We need to use that foundation to reach out generously to the new democracies and emerging market economies of central and eastern Europe to help them make the difficult

transition from state Socialism to a mixed economy, or, better still, to free-market capitalism, should they decide that is what they want. That help should definitely include the sort of help at which the Foreign Secretary hinted in his excellent opening speech, when he spoke about the possibility of help for the new emerging political parties in the eastern European countries. I hope that the Government will press forward with that.

To me, that suggests initially putting more commitment and resources into the excellent know-how funds that we already have for Poland and will shortly have for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. I hope that that process will be extended to other Comecon or former COMECON countries as they emerge towards a market economy. Clearly that will be the basis for those economies to move on towards associate status one day with the European Community and towards fuller participation, as I am sure they will wish to have, in the Council of Europe as a bridge towards the possibility of membership of the Community at a more distant date.

In that connection, it is important that we in Britain should play our full part both bilaterally, as I believe we are doing, and as part of the Community in its efforts to help those countries. They must not be left to languish in their difficulties because, as many hon. Members have pointed out, there is a sort of J-curve in these revolutionary developments; one goes through greater difficulties before reaching the stage when one reaps the fruits of great changes.

Nor should we take the view that those countries to the east of Germany have now become part of a predominantly German economic imperium. They have a right to expect support and sympathy from all the major western European countries and doubtless from the United States and Japan as well. So, in all these matters, Britain still has some vital policy choices to make, now and in the near future, in relation to these great questions. I put it that way because the situation has evolved over perhaps only the last six months.

The first option might be to continue with the present policy, as adumbrated by the Prime Minister and others, which undoubtedly has the right objective, which is a stable framework for a United Germany but which, in my view, needs to be followed through in a more diplomatically acceptable way than has been the case hitherto—acceptable to the Germans and to those who live in the proud and now independent nations further to the east, including the Soviet Union itself.

The second option—I see this as not to be recommended—would be to adopt an explicitly pro-German policy and then to try to use the political credit which we might hope that would build up for us in Bonn, and subsequently in Berlin, to try to dilute or slow the process of European integration in some sort of alliance of procrastination with those elements in the Federal Republic which would look on that with some favour. Such a policy would be fatally flawed because it would underestimate the degree of positive German commitment, especially in the older generation of Germans—people of 40 and over—to the existing structures of European integration.

I cite an interesting poll that was quoted in a book entitled "British Social Attitudes", produced recently by SCPR, which reminded us that, according to a poll done by Euro-Barometre, 50 per cent. plus of all the British people questioned said that they had great pride in their country and less than 20 per cent. answering the same question in the Federal Republic said that they had great pride in their country. So the fear of German revanchism is, in present circumstances, overdone because the nature of German public opinion has been changed in a fundamental way by the experience of the past 40 years, and that is all to the good.

The third and best policy option for this country would be to register our sympathy and support in practical ways for the process of German unification, but at the same time to move closer to our Community partners, especially France, Italy and Benelux—I was delighted to hear what the Foreign Secretary said about moving closer to Paris—in their determination to deepen the process of European integration by pooling sovereignty for our mutual benefit. I could not disagree more with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on that point, especially in relation to completing the single market and moving on with due speed towards economic and monetary union.

If we adopt that approach, we shall serve simultaneously not only our national interest, which is vital to this House, but the wider Community interest as well, to the benefit of the emerging democracies in eastern Europe which we welcome into the concert of free nations.

9.19 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Another interesting feature, in addition to the poll that the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) mentioned, is the interesting contrast in the fact that, although there have been demonstrations in favour of unification on the streets of Leipzig and Dresden, there have been no such demonstrations in western Germany. That goes some way to show that most of that population feel deeply anchored in the West and do not share the same romantic excitement of their counterparts in the East.

This has been a remarkably wide-ranging debate. The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) managed to bring in Ulster. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) managed to bring in the Horn of Africa, and the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), managed to bring in proportional representation. Some Members showed a more Atlanticist tendency, some a more European tendency, and within those groups, some gave a wider or narrower definition of that Europe. There was basic agreement, almost to the point of a love feast, although there was a spectre at that feast, but more of her later.

There was a sense of shared excitement at the change and co-operation after the stagnation and confrontation that has characterised so much of the post-war world. At a time of such bewildering change, it is difficult adequately to predict the future, and mould policy responses that are appropriate and prudent for the time.

We can imagine the problems of those Soviet astronauts who left the earth on 6 September. On their return, the old faces had gone—the Honeckers, the Husaks, the Zhivkovs and the Ceausescus. In their absence, we witnessed the strange death of Communist Europe as the old forces lost confidence and the new forces took over: an excellent theme for a future historian.

As East-West relations improve, clearly that river of improvement will go into many channels over the

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

landscape of the world, whether they be political, in the security sphere or in the extra-European sphere—the developing world—which the hon. Member for Broxtowe brought to our attention. Politically, it is clear that the old age of the two super-powers has gone. One can ask whether the Soviet Union can, in the full sense, still be defined as a super-power.

The decline of the Soviet Union was shown dramatically at the Ottawa conference last week. Mr. Gorbachev, a man of vision, and—as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said—a man who should be supported, showed that he recognised the need for fundamental reform. He realised that his east European allies were no longer reliable, has already faced the disintegration of the Soviet empire and now faces enormous problems in the Soviet Union.

While Europe, for its part, catches up with its geography and history after the untidy interlude of the immediate post-war world, the momentous developments in West and East Germany lead to an inevitable unity. East Germany is mightily weakened, to the extent that some parts of it simply do not function. The figures have already been given by hon. Members. Last year, 344,000 East Germans fled to the West. By the end of February it is assumed and predicted that—even after the opening of the wall on 9 November—at least 100,000 East Germans will leave. Many of them will be young, with skills, and that will pose housing and employment problems in West Germany. That development will be little influenced by outsiders as they proceed to unification, and probably to a social democratic future.

Unfortunately, the process of unification in Germany has been caught up in the West German election campaign. There is at times an almost hysterical element. Although events are moving fast, one needs prudence, a certain ability to step back and view what is happening in the light of history. Sadly, much is being decided on the hoof.

Ottawa has set out the steps towards unification—the necessary framework that the Foreign Secretary mentioned today. But I am a little worried that he mentioned the six, as opposed to the two plus four of the Ottawa formula. The key starting point of that unification is monetary and political discussion between the two parts of Germany. Then there is the endorsement by the four powers. We should be wary of using terms such as "occupying powers", which have fallen from the lips of the Prime Minister of late and have been completely unhelpful.

Then there is the wider framework—to ratify the frontiers and to ratify and take on the security implications, the 35 members of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe—the Helsinki process. That is the process which will lead to the long-delayed second world war peace treaty, but it is a peace treaty with a difference, because this time it is the vanquished who will set out its terms.

The German question is fundamental in terms of the political shape of central Europe and beyond and the new economic weight of that Germany, whether or not as part of a united Europe within the definition of the EC. That will play a decisive role in the future.

Yet no umbrella framework is yet in sight for the new political developments. Perhaps it is too early in any event to envisage that, but the question of how we are to build that new Europe can now be posed. Some principles stand out. The core will be the current EC, as enlarged, I hope shortly, with Austria, Norway and Sweden, countries which, economically, culturally and in every other way, are ready without difficulty to be part of the Community.

I hope that the Government will consider urging the Commission to set in train the preparatory work for the acceptance into the Community of Austria, the only country to have applied so far, so that that will not be too long delayed after 1992. That will be a sign to Austria of its easy acceptability into the Community.

The enlargement of the core Community is the starting point. It poses problems about the democratic deficit and the decision-making machinery within the Community. At what point does an enlarged Community under the current rules become non-sustainable? Those are practical problems which will have to be addressed in the near future.

There will be a European structure at different levels. The intergovernmental conference to be held towards the end of the year will take on some of those. Whether as concentric circles or constellations, other groups will be attached in various forms to that core Community. The association has proved extremely flexible in the past. It can be a framework either for those in a waiting room for entry for for those who will not be able to enter that core Community in the foreseeable future.

Clearly, the United States also will be linked. The Baker doctrine has already been alluded to, but it will not be the same form of relationship as currently exists, if only because of changes within American public opinion. Whether the United States is coupled to the new Europe by treaty or some other way, there is certainly a place for the United States in that new European home. There must be a place also for the Soviet Union, not only because it is a European power, but because, due to its size and economic position, it can never be part of the core of the Community.

The frontiers must be clearly defined. When the CSCE begins to examine the question of frontiers, given the nationalities and tensions within the existing countries, it may have to adopt, sadly, a formula not unlike that used by the Organisation of African Unity, which accepts existing frontiers and the fact that there can be change only with the whole-hearted consent of the people immediately involved.

It may be that the existing frontiers—particularly the Oder-Neisse line—will be sacrosant. As the Foreign Secretary emphasised, a way must be found of giving guarantees to cultural minorities within the central countries through the European convention on human rights, the court within the Council of Europe, or the cultural and scientific basket of the Helsinki process. We shall need to see how the revised Council of Europe can play a positive role in the interim process.

As to the security implications, there are across-the-board developments that would have been inconceivable a short time ago. The Warsaw pact as such does not exist, and NATO will have to redefine its position, because the threat as once defined no longer exists. However, as part of the problem is managing change, NATO must continue to exist in its current form for some time.

Other problems present themselves to the Government—and will do so to my own party soon. They include the conversion possibilities because of the considerable number of jobs in the military sector that are likely to be affected. We have 311,000 men under arms, and 365,000 personnel are employed in our defence industries. As it is unlikely that any research is currently being undertaken by the Government, it should begin urgently.

The challenge to our defence strategy is clear, as is the challenge to Germany to recognise the existing frontiers. It is said that Chancellor Kohl has been less than forward in that respect. Progress in current arms control negotiations—has been remarkable—whether it be at the CFE in Vienna, in the START talks, the breakthrough regarding chemical weapons, or the military basket of the Helsinki CSCE talks.

Only the hon. Member for Broxtowe and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) introduced the question of the Third world—partly in the context of the new Europe turning its back on the Third world as a result of its obsession with central and eastern Europe, partly because of the Community's inadequate personnel resources, and partly because it is so busy that it has time for nothing else. It is also clear that, in terms of East-West relations, we are in a new climate and that there are areas of remarkable agreement in respect of conflicts outside Europe. There are different levels. Clearly, in areas that are far from the immediate security interests of the super-powers, such as southern Africa, the Soviet Union has played a remarkably constructive role—for example, in the settlement that has led to progress there and to independence in Namibia. In other, more sensitive areas—those where conflicts are contiguous to the super-powers—whether it be Nacaragua or Pakistan, there has been less possibility of movement.

In intermediate areas such as the Horn of Africa or the middle east, there are some signs of constructive Soviet intervention. For example, there is evidence that the Soviets are bringing pressure on Syria as part of the middle east peace process. They are also putting pressure on Mr. Mengistu in Ethiopia—a former client state—to be more constructive in his internal position in that country. It is clear that we are in a new era, in terms of Third-world developments, although it is also clear that major conflicts remain.

What can Britain do? We should play to our strengths and respond imaginatively. We applaud some of the constructive things done by the Government—the excellent work of the Great Britain-East Europe Centre and the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union—my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned an IPU visit. There is also the know-how fund and the positive role of Britain within the Council of Europe.

Perhaps our Government could do as the Americans have done, and consider the adequacy of our diplomatic personnel in central and eastern Europe, because there have been massive cuts during past years and now we are in a different era.

Are the Government considering the COCOM restrictions, or visas for people in central and eastern Europe? The Germans are already saying that they will relax or abolish visas for the Polish. But, again, we appear to be reluctant, or to be following behind other countries in that respect.

We have not been constructive in other areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) stressed the Prime Minister's highly negative stance on Germany. The Minister accuses us from time to time of ritual condemnation of the Prime Minister. He and his colleagues should not just listen to what we have to say, but look at the press, which are normally tame and docile about the Conservative party and the Prime Minister.

I refer the Minister to *The Sunday Times*, which mentioned the handbagging of history last Sunday, and to the main editorial in *The Economist* this week. He should look at the article in *The Times* by Ronald Butt, who normally speaks—or at least writes—in reverential tones—on his knees, to the Prime Minister, who says:

"But the negative attitude of Mrs. Thatcher's government is well on the way to turning a tried friend into a suspicious, anxious and . . . inward-looking country."

There are a crowd of witnesses. It used to be said that the nightmare of any Conservative Prime Minister was to wake up and find *The Daily Telegraph* against him or her, but even its editorials are now showing the deep resentment that is being caused in West Germany.

Surely we should praise West Germany as a major ally and a well-founded democracy, and recognise the inevitability of unification. We should fight our corner on the details, as President Mitterrand did with great finesse when he met Chancellor Kohl last weekend. He made grand declarations and an acceptance, and then worked where they believed there were particular points of interest. There is a great contrast between the way that the Foreign Secretary has put the case and the way that President Mitterrand, albeit with some of those traditional reservations of France, has put the same case, with much greater effect, keeping an ally whose support will be needed in future.

The Prime Minister loudly trumpets that events in eastern Europe represent a triumph for the free market. That suggestion does not bear serious analysis. The theme has been "Democracy yes, the unfettered market no." That is true of both the leaders of the newly emerging countries and the parties that are likely to emerge.

The probable victor in East Germany is the SPD, the East German equivalent of the Social Democrats. That will affect Germany as a whole, and I believe that the welfare social democracy of Scandinavia and Austria—and of our own Labour party—will act as a model for the newly emerging forces in eastern Europe. We hail the developments there as democratic and social. We have no fears about the new age of social democracy in Europe, and the first fruit of that will be a unified and democratic Germany. We must be prudently optimistic: let us welcome this new age.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): When I had the privilege of winding up the last debate on this subject, on 1 December, I began by saying that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) had wound up for the Opposition with dignity, aplomb and a wide sweep of knowledge. He has done the same today, although his hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) opened with a ranting, knockabout speech. I could read my last speech again, as Lord Wilson used to, and glory in my own

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past genius. As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will remember, Swift said of "The Tale of a Tub":

"Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book."

If we repeat our dual act any more, it might be a good idea for the Opposition spokesmen to swap round occasionally. In any event, the hon. Member for Swansea, East widened the horizons of what has been a very interesting debate.

In a vintage performance, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent argued that we should not miss our opportunity, and quoted from the famous Churchill speech. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's speech will have shown him that we have no intention of missing that opportunity. When he studies my right hon. Friend's speech, to which tributes have been paid today, I believe that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that it contained much that was imaginative and forward-looking.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary talked about the development of the Helsinki process to deal with problems of nationalism, and the boundary difficulties that are certain to raise their heads again. He also talked about the need to use the original spirit of the United Nations to try to bring people together to deal with some of the long-lasting and intractable difficulties which will not have gone away when the force confrontation is dissolved.

I do not think that we shall make again the mistake that was made in 1953—let us pray that we shall not be seen to have done so—although I suspect that the forces in the Soviet Union were not there to respond at that time. There is the same feeling throughout Europe—although people are looking back at history with some nervousness, they are determined not to miss the present opportunity.

On one point I profoundly disagree with the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. Indeed, it would be surprising if I did not, for it is at the heart of the political divide between us. He paid tribute to the Ostpolitik of Willy Brandt, and said that it had helped to produce the present changes. He argued that it was ridiculous for Conservative Members, the Prime Minister and President Reagan to argue that the free market or any part of the great resurgence of western values had brought them about. I strongly believe, however, that that above all brought about the Soviet understanding that the competition was lost.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): That is what they tell us.

Mr. Waldegrave: Indeed, they say so quite openly. When they saw that a new and terrifying structure of armaments might face them in the shape of the strategic defence initiative, they realised that the competition would never be won and that they would have to join the school which would teach them the way forward. Although I admired the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent, I disagree profoundly with him on that point.

We also heard a vintage speech from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who managed to do something that even the hon. Member for Swansea, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) did not manage to do, although they referred to a wide range of issues. He managed to bring Pamella Bordes into the debate and in the process invented an excellent new joke. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East passed me a courteous note saying that he could not be here for the end of the debate. It is a tribute to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent that he has stayed until the end. I do not criticise those who have had to leave, due to other engagements, but it is a pleasure to us all that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has been in his place throughout the debate.

The theme that dominated the first part of the debate was Germany and our response to unity. I take issue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who also sent me a courteous note apologising for the fact that he could not be here for the end of the debate. He reminded me of the days when I was his private secretary. He said that it was all very easy and perfectly straightforward—that there was no need for committees or councils, that Community matters could be dealt with in a moment, and as for NATO, what was all this nonsense about discussions?

It reminded me of the way in which senior Ministers hold out their hands to their Parliamentary Private Secretaries for their railway tickets and expect them to be there. I have some familiarity with the psychology. In the meantime, however, somebody has to go and buy the railway ticket and produce it, one hopes, at the right moment. We must pay tribute, boring for them though it may be, to the railway ticket holders who labour in councils and committees to ensure that this historic and wonderful event—the freeing of the other one third or one quarter of the German people and their right to self-determination, for which we have stood for so long—comes about in a way that does not undermine the Community.

Let us consider for a moment the extraordinary developments in the Community, if we assume that soon there will be a united Germany, although part of its territory will be unable to comply with Community law for a considerable period. That will be unprecedented. I beg my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup to allow time for a little council, a little committee, just for a day or two. It will not happen automatically. It has never happened before, so we ought to consider it carefully.

As for NATO, I agree very much—as I so often do—with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and with a number of other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), again not for the first time—that the NATO structures are still valuable and that within them we can tackle, in an informed way, security issues.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup that I can never find much content in the ideas that come across the Atlantic about making NATO more political. I am never quite sure what that means. Committees invented by Mr. Nixon are still in existence. For example, there is a committee which discusses the environment. That would be the last way in which to make NATO a political institution. There are properly based political and democratic organisations, above all in Europe and the Community, to deal with the political aspects.

There is, however, a real sense in which NATO will have a different and very important role, even in the period immediately ahead of us, without looking too far ahead. I refer to verification—a new concept. We are moving towards something that we tried in the 1920s and 1930s but

got wrong. We failed to do it properly. We rested our security almost as much on treaty obligations, and therefore on trust, as on our capacity to repel any attack.

In one sense, it has been easy for the last 40 years. It was a great achievement for 40 years to persuade voters and taxpayers in democratic countries to pay for all the armaments to repel attack. Now we are moving towards far lower armament levels and treaty obligations. The last time we did this—the naval agreements of the 1920s and 1930s, the disarmament of Germany after the first world war—we did not verify, so an air force was trained in Russia and they built the battleships.

If we intend to rest our security to a far greater extent on treaty obligations, verification and trust will be crucial. NATO will change into an organisation which plays a vital role for a large part of Europe as well as maintaining a necessary minimum insurance, which will involve nuclear insurance. I strongly disagree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, because the Soviet Union is beginning to talk our language and discuss minimum deterrence.

We cannot go back to the old language of a denuclearised and demilitarised Europe just when the Soviet Union has started to realise that minimum deterrent theories are in its own security interests, so that there is a happy and potentially beneficial growing consensus on security issues and we should not throw it away. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) made those and other related points with his usual clarity.

We should examine with a great deal of care the fascinating, potentially creative and productive but also potentially dangerous instabilities of flux which we now face. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East was pulling our leg a little when he said that he could not conceive how any danger could come out of the balkanisation of eastern Europe. He said that it could not be dangerous to us. He said that the Soviet empire—using language that he did use at other stages of his career—would tear itself apart, so how could it be dangerous?

It is all too easy to write a scenario in which such a combination could be dangerous. I shall sketch one rather briefly, although others could do it much better. Let us imagine that not all the democracies created by the balkanisation take root. We hope that they will, and I shall say a little more about how we shall help them to take root. Mr Shevardnadze said at the recent plenum and repeated to journalists on the aeroplane back from Ottawa, so it was not said lightly,

"If perestroika collapses there is a risk that we"—

in the Soviet Union—

"could have a dictatorship.".

That is all too easy to imagine. One can imagine balkanisation, some of the democracies having failed and a dictatorship coming to power—they were not my words, but those of Mr. Shevardnadze—so it is not very difficult to sketch out a scenario in which there is considerable danger.

I am not saying that any of that is likely, and we hope that the chances of success are high, but it is surely worth retaining that reinsurance, particularly as our own peoples show no disinclination to pay for it. They want some savings, and they will surely get them, but they show no inclination to rush headlong into the disarmament and pacifism of the late 1920s and 1930s because they have a collective memory of what happened last time, which for the purposes of today's debate the right hon. Member for Leeds, East set aside when he said that he could not even see a purpose in the transatlantic Alliance. He seemed to be leading us back to the old doctrine, which was twice dangerous—that we can balance the security of Europe without the New World. Surely we have learnt that we cannot do that. That would be my answer to the interesting speech by the hon. Member for the Western Isle (Mr. Macdonald), to try to persuade him that those insurances were necessary.

The consensus around the CSCE process is growing and is satisfactory. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and many others made the point that perhaps that is the way forward. I would have said to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), had he been here, that there is some relevance to Northern Ireland. Are not those who seek to solve the problems of the minorities of Ireland by changing boundaries in exactly the same position as those who might seek to change the problems of the minorities in Moldavia or anywhere else by changing boundaries? We should seek to solve the problems within the existing national boundaries and such ancient attitudes will soon look as outdated as they are.

It was rightly said that there must be some trade-off between our security needs and the success of the growing democracies in eastern and central Europe. It is not only in our interests but in the interests of justice and democracy that we should try to help those countries to secure democracy. That is a fair and right argument.

I cannot agree entirely with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, who said that £25 billion of aid should be made available to the Soviet Union. A fundamental reason for my disagreeing is that the Soviet Union is not asking for such aid. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) said that the Soviet Union should be given credit, but it is not asking for credit. The credit line established by Lord Wilson is still open. There is a debate within the Soviet Union about whether it should go down what appears to be a rather dangerous but seductive route of borrowing to put food on the shelves, but what will that do to its agricultural production? We should not be doing the Soviet Union a favour by offering it cheap loans, which it is not seeking.

Mr. Warren: I am assured by the Soviet embassy that it is actively seeking credit from the United Kingdom. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be willing to facilitate anything that will enable it to obtain from our industry that which it so urgently need and that which it has been offered by West Germany.

Mr. Waldegrave: There may be some confusion here, as I am told that credit lines from the 1970s are still outstanding. We must get to the bottom of that. The Soviet Union has not yet decided whether to buy its way out of its problems using credit. The east European precedents show that that is a poor way of trying to do things.

The know-how fund extends to all the countries of eastern and central Europe, which is good. We must try to develop institutions—this point was made by the hon. Member for Western Isles and by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)—to handle political aid. That is new territory for this country. Earlier, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a new initiative, which was put to us by the

[Mr. Waldegrave]

hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Hamilton.

A new institution is necessary to handle political aid. At the request of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my office has today been in touch with the leaders of all the parties in the House, because we must discuss this thoroughly to achieve cross-party consensus. We must try to achieve that quickly.

Mr. Cash: Has my right hon. Friend anything to say about the kind of Europe that we shall inhabit?

Mr. Waldegrave: A large theme of the debate has been the future of Europe and whether it is to be intensified and deepened or whether it is to be widened. That may be an over-simple way of putting it, but I was surprised and fascinated by the consensus among hon. Members for the widening of the Community. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup agreed when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that we should consider the possibility of eastern European countries becoming members of the Community. I believe that that is the way that we should proceed. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) raised that issue.

This is the turning point, and we must decide which road to take. The explicit purpose of many in Germany and in the Commission is to intensify the integration of western Europe into a federation within the next few years. It is not realistic to think about a Community—certainly not within my lifetime—which contains the countries of eastern and central Europe. Can we foresee them being part of a federated Europe? I cannot believe that that will happen.

I believe that we shall move towards a wider and slightly looser Europe. I do not believe that it would be safe to leave a political vacuum in central Europe. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said that those countries may experiment with forms of association among themselves, but that was tried in the 1930s. An attempt was made to put together groupings in the centre of Europe between the two big blocs. That does not work. Western Europe should be the core of a reunited wider Europe. I was fascinated by the consensus which seemed to be emerging in the House that that is the way the country wants to go. It is an important matter for the nation to decide, but decide it we must, sooner or later.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The Arts (Government Funding)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It is a delight to continue the debate on the arts that began on Tuesday, although I must tell the Minister that hon. Members from all parties to whom I have spoken were disappointed by his reaction to the debate and by the way in which he studiously avoided talking about the problems of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Now that the lights are dimmed, the stage curtain down, the audience gone and the television cameras about to be turned off, I hope that we can have a quiet and detailed discussion about the issues. Hopefully, we will get answers from the Minister to specific points.

I spent this morning at the Royal Shakespeare Company. I was impressed by the attitude of the people, by their candour and by their ability. They made 11 points to me, each of which deserves a response from the Minister. First, they said that they were disappointed that the Minister seemed disinclined to talk about their plight and that he had not understood either its magnitude or its consequences. Secondly, they said that the staff at the RSC were "shell-shocked". They found the current position alarming and depressing. They want to know what the Minister intends to do to get the Arts Council to react.

Thirdly, they made it clear that the decision to close the Barbican in November was not a set-up, nor was it a phoney drama. It was not a repeat of Peter Hall's "Cottesloe." A female administrator put it with passion. She said, "Why should we make a deep incision into our own flesh? We lose sleep and sweat nightly because of this tragedy. The fault lies with the sheer bloody nonsense of the system." I turn that question to the Minister: what will he do about the "sheer bloody nonsense" of the system?

Fourthly, the people at the RSC said that the Minister and the Arts Council are forcing them to break their contract with their audience. Theatre going is a habit which requires continuity. The RSC does not know how the public will respond to a four-month closure of the Barbican. Fifthly, although they have said that they could reverse the decision to close in November if the necessary cash is forthcoming at any time before then, that is not true. The sheer logistics of getting plays on means that the deadline for the provision of the necessary money is July or August. If catastrophe is to be avoided, it is important that the Minister gets the Arts Council to start talking immediately.

Sixthly, the RSC insists that it is an efficient company. It points out that, during the last two lean and difficult years, it has played to audiences of 75 per cent. capacity. That compares favourably with the commercial theatres in the west end, whose modern dramas and comedies play to only 54 per cent. of capacity, and whose thrillers play to only 51 per cent. of capacity.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What about this place?

Mr. Sedgemore: It is not playing to great capacity at the moment.

Seventhly, the RSC says that the City of London is shocked at the prospect of the Barbican closing for four months, because the theatre is the heart of the Barbican centre. It draws in most of the people and it has a quality

which is indefinably important. Eighthly, the RSC says that there is no question of it wanting to move from the Barbican. Adrian Noble is the person usually cited as saying what a poor place it is to work in, but he is on record last week as arguing that it is the best auditorium in the country, and possibly the best in Europe.

Ninthly, the people at the RSC point out that a lot of nonsense is talked about musicals losing the company money. Not one musical has lost the company money.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): What about "Carrie"?

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall come to that.

Not one musical has lost the company money because all have been undertaken on a guaranteed no-loss basis, signed with the commercial people with whom the company operates. Even the flop "Carrie", I was told this morning, made a profit of £220,000. Nor can it be claimed that the RSC has sold its soul to musicals. "Carrie" was one play out of 40 that took place in a year. There have been only three musicals in the past four years. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) seems to dispute that, but that information comes straight from the RSC.

Tenthly, despite the regular contact that the RSC has with the Arts Council, it insists that it is not told from year to year the logical principles on which the grant is based. The company assumes that the reason is that there are no such logical principles.

Eleventhly—and this is the most important point—the company says that, contrary to what the Minister said in the debate on Tuesday, it and everyone else understood that the Government accepted the funding plan laid down by the Cabinet Office report in 1984. The company believes genuinely, as most people do, that the Minister and the Arts Council have broken their promises. The company referred me to the 113th report of the council, which says: "and the then Minister for the Arts reported to Parliament that the new subsidy was 'to establish a satisfactory baseline for future operations', that it was intended that the establishment of the new baseline would enable the RSC 'to operate on a satisfactory basis in the future', and that 'provision will also be made for subsequent years'."

I ask the Minister to answer the question that he refused to answer on Tuesday. What do those direct quotations mean unless the Minister accepted the funding plans in the Priestley report? The company told me that, if the Minister had said openly at the time that he was not accepting the financial proposals in that report, there would have been a public outcry. Here was the Priestley report saying that the RSC was a good, efficient company and here were three proposals, to which the Minister could have said, "I do not accept any of those cash proposals." It seems that that was what the Minister was doing.

As the Minister must know, Sir Kenneth Cork wrote an article in *The House Magazine* recently. The chairman of the RSC, in his article on 29 January, was of the same understanding about the obligation laid down by the Minister after the Priestley report was published in 1984. Sir Kenneth Cork, commenting on the fact that the Arts Council's contribution to the RSC's costs had fallen from 44 per cent. to 31 per cent., said:

"We feel this shift in the balance of funding is unreasonable, and it is certainly dangerous."

Sir Kenneth Cork, as I understand it, is no radical Socialist. Why did everyone except the Minister understand what was said in 1984?

I raise another question in more detail than I raised it in the debate on Tuesday, when it was left unanswered. Why was the Arts Council prepared to bail out the English national opera and the English national ballet when they got into trouble, but not to bail out the RSC? The conventional establishment wisdom has it thus. First, Tory Westminster city council withdrew 90 per cent. of grants to the English national opera and to the English national ballet. The Tory chairman of the Arts Council, Peter Palumbo, then described that withdrawal of funds by Westminster city council as "scandalous". He then went on to give £12·25 million from the reserves built up out of the recent increase in grant to the Arts Council to fund the English national opera and the English national ballet.

Yet the Minister says, "None of these things has anything to do with me." Indeed, as part of his written answer to a question that I tabled on 13 February about the RSC and its problems, he replied:

"It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies."

As part of his answer to a similar question on the same date about the English national opera, he said:

"It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. *417*.]

Hiding behind the arm's-length principle, the Minister was saying, "It has absolutely nothing to do with me." However, is that the case? Along comes Westminster city council, stung by the criticism, and Roger Bramble, the chairman of Westminster's arts sub-committee, effectively said, "No, it does not operate like that at all. The arm's-length principle does not exist. Mr. Peter Palumbo effectively made a fool of himself. He does not know what is going on, and the Minister has misled Parliament."

I ask the Minister to answer this point. I quote from a news release from Westminster city council in which Councillor Roger Bramble, chairman of Westminster's arts sub-committee, said:

"I am pleased that the Arts Council has at the eleventh hour honoured the commitment which was made by government to pick up the funding of these two major national arts bodies which Westminster is no longer in a position to provide."

If that commitment was made by the Government, how could the Minister say to me:

"It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies."?

Councillor Bramble also stated:

"The funding which the Arts Council received for next year from the Office of Arts and Libraries included specific provision for these grants and I only regret that this was not made clear to the companies earlier."

How can the Government making

"specific provision for these grants"

fit in with the Minister's answer to me:

"It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies."?

Which Tory is telling the truth? Is it Roger Bramble, Peter Palumbo or the Minister for the Arts? Does the Minister believe that Peter Palumbo was right to describe the conduct of Westminster city council as "scandalous", or has it given a proper explanation when it pointed out that the arm's-length principle did not exist?

There seems to have been some deception and irresponsibility in this matter. However, it is worse than that because, whichever of those people is right, we have seen that £2·25 million, which Parliament and the public were told was extra money for the arts, has gone to reduce Westminster's city council's poll tax bill. It has gone into

[Mr. Sedgemore]

Lady Porter's election fund. We were told that that increased cash was for the arts. However, it is not really increased cash because it is money to reduce Westminster city council's poll tax bills. It seems that the arm's-length principle has been abandoned without public or Parliament being informed.

Personally, I am pleased that the English national opera and the English national ballet have got the extra money, but I now believe that the Minister should see about giving the RSC some extra money. Mr. Peter Palumbo's handling of the affair has been fatally flawed. I hope that the Minister will not simply act as his apologist.

The Minister has accused my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) of "gloom and doom". However—I shall close soon because I want to give the Minister plenty of time to reply—the Royal Shakespeare Company told me this morning that its intelligence, which it suspects is better than the Minister's, about what is happening to the arts and to theatres around the country is deeply worrying. It said that cumulative problems are building up and that their extent will become apparent over the next year.

I do not know whether the Minister claims that he has more knowledge about these things than the Royal Shakespeare Company, but that view has not only been expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. On 10 February, the *Financial Times*, which is hardly a radical Socialist newspaper, contained an article by Antony Thorncroft that begins:

"Just three months after the Minister for the Arts, Mr. Richard Luce, staggered the art world by announcing an unexpectedly generous increase in the Government grant for the arts for 1990-91, most of the major theatre, opera, dance and orchestral troupes in the country seem to be in a state of severe financial crisis.

The future for the arts suddenly looks bleak . . . The arts will lose some of their zing and the nation will suffer—slightly and silently."

I end with a plea to the Minister. Is it really the case that London, the capital city of the world, is either so poor or so philistine that it intends to close its Shakespearean theatres? Surely to God, no. Surely to God the Minister will offer us some hope tonight.

10.14 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): It would be churlish not to congratulate the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on achieving the Adjournment debate and on choosing the arts and, in particular, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the English national opera and the subject which he did not reach but gave notice that he would raise, the English national ballet. Perhaps that was embraced in his point about financing from Westminster city council. I should certainly like to tackle that point.

The only thing that took me by surprise was that the hon. Gentleman said that he wanted to have a quiet debate. I had assumed that he would resume where he left off in last Tuesday's debate when he made quite a noisy speech. Compared to his speech on Tuesday, his speech tonight was relatively quiet. I shall respond in the same fashion, although we are bound to have something of a repeat performance of Tuesday. I hope that it will be of a high standard, as the hon. Gentleman's speech was.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman did not resort to some of the more vindictive remarks that he made.

Mr. Skinner: I had a word with him.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for his restraining influence. I shall call on his help on future occasions to restrain the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch.

In the time that the hon. Gentleman has allowed me, I shall make some general points before coming to the specific points. It is important to reiterate the broad context in which we are discussing this problem and the Government's strategy. As a Government, we are committed to maintaining taxpayers' support for the arts. That is a clear commitment that we have made and have kept to. It is a commitment that we must keep to.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) has in the past, along with many other hon. Members, welcomed the concept of three-year funding, which was introduced in November 1987. That, too, has a bearing on the points that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch raised about important companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company. It helps them to organise their long-term finances on a better basis than hitherto.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the settlement of autumn 1989. It incorporated a 24 per cent. increase in cash terms in the next three years. That demonstrates a clear commitment to the arts on the part of the Government. It includes a 22 per cent. increase for the Arts Council over the next three years. The cash position of the Arts Council—this is important in answering the hon. Gentleman's questions—will rise from £155·5 million this year to £175 million in the coming financial year. That is just under a £20 million cash increase. Of course, I accept that inflation must be allowed for. Nevertheless, I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that that is a substantial increase in the grant to the Arts Council.

That leads me to my next point, which was central to some of the discussions that we had on Tuesday. I shall meet the hon. Gentleman on his point about Westminster city council. It is a fair point to make. I hold, just as every Government since the second world war have held, that the arm's-length principle is the right principle to stick to. Every Labour Government and every Conservative Government since the war have done that. There is nothing new in my approach. I am simply reaffirming the approach of my predecessors of all political complexions. How one interprets arm's length is a matter for debate. How far it is taken is a matter for argument and discussion.

Before I discuss—if that is the right word to use—with my colleagues, the Chief Secretary and others, what should be the budget for the arts in the next three years, I take into account the views expressed to me by the Arts Council on behalf of its clients, which include the Royal Shakespeare Company, the English national opera, the English national ballet and others. I take into account all the arguments, including some of those put by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch tonight. It is then up to me to argue and discuss the case with my colleagues and to reach an agreement, as I have done.

I reiterate that that agreement includes a 22 per cent. increase in the next three years for the Arts Council. That

is the basis upon which the decisions are made, and I do not believe there is much difference between my approach and that of my predecessors, of any political party.

The logic of the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch is that we undermine the arm's-length relationship. Whenever an arts organisation faces a problem—there will always be such organisations at any one time—he believes that the Minister should intervene immediately. But I believe that that action in itself would flout the arm's-length principle. Having negotiated the funding, it is right to say to the Arts Council that it should take the decisions that it believes to be right, based upon the financial and artistic circumstances of the relevant organisations.

Once again I must express my great confidence in Mr. Palumbo and his vision and leadership of the Arts council. It is up to that council to decide whether it should continue to subsidise or increase the subsidy to particular organisations or reduce it. That is its job. The hon. Gentleman approaches this subject with great seriousness, and it is right that I should outline the broad context of funding.

I shall take head on, as best I can, some of the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. We come back, although it is something of a repeat performance, to the Royal Shakespeare Company, but I shall add one or two extra points which were not mentioned on Tuesday. I shall then consider the important points raised about the English national opera and the English national ballet, which I did not deal with on Tuesday as I was not challenged about them.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and with the view expressed to him when he visited Stratford, that the RSC is a highly efficient organisation. It does an excellent job and the quality of its arts is outstanding. In common with the hon. Gentleman, I have enjoyed the experience of seeing some of its performances and I do so every year. I have nothing but admiration for their quality.

The grant to the RSC stands at just over £6 million. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman suggested on Tuesday, it received an 11 per cent. increased allocation for next year. The hon. Gentleman implied that the English national opera got that increase but the RSC did not. All the flagships will receive an 11 per cent. increase in the coming financial year.

It is also fair to say that the Royal Insurance sponsorship is a magnificent support to the RSC. Over the years the RSC's box office has done extremely well and its overall turnover is about £20 million a year. Last year the RSC gave 2,000 performances and undertook a great deal of touring. It performs on two stages at Stratford and it has used its London base at the Barbican since 1982.

The purpose-built home provided by the City of London is important to the RSC. The corporation has been very supportive of the RSC. In 1988 a new 22-year lease was agreed that provided for low rents and limited overheads. It was a favourable deal for the RSC and it would be wrong of me not to highlight the contribution made by the corporation to the strength of our arts in London at the Barbican and its support of the RSC.

I accept that Mr. Cass and his team have had to take a difficult decision. As the Arts Minister I do not enjoy the situation in which any arts organisation must announce, because it is pressed for resources, that it needs to prune its operations.

We must keep in perspective what is being done. The hon. Gentleman implied that it was stopping completely. It is not. Its decision is to close its two London theatres, the Barbican and The Pit, for four months from 5 November 1990. There is some question—frankly, I am not clear about it, and I do not think anybody is—about regional tours to small venues. That issue, in discussion with the Arts Council, will have to be clarified.

I have given the factual situation. The RSC is adjusting its expenditure to the resources available to it, which is what I have been asking the arts world to do. It is the only responsible thing to do. The hon. Gentleman may argue that the amount available is insufficient, but the fact remains that it must remain within its resources.

The hon. Gentleman went on to deal with the Priestley—the Cabinet Office—report. I reiterate what I said in the debate on Tuesday. There were three recommendations in that report. The first was to write off an agreed level of deficit at that time. The second was to increase the basic grant to £4·9 million. The third was a series of recommendations under one heading, basically to index-link for the future. As I explained, the first two were accepted and dealt with. It was never fully accepted that that or any other arts organisation should be deliberately insulated in terms of inflation.

Having said that, I should point out that the Government's commitment is to maintain overall support for the arts, to give to the Arts Council sufficient sums of money to enable it to deal with its priorities. It is up to the Arts Council to decide how much to give and how much is deserved.

I must meet head on the hon. Gentleman's points about the English national opera and, by implication, the English national ballet. ENO has had its grant increased by 11 per cent. and ENB by 12 per cent. for the coming year. Both those organisations have performed at a very high level and I have been deeply impressed by the performances that I have seen. They have a great deal of public support.

But it would be wrong of me to allow the debate to end without dealing with the argument adduced by the hon. Gentleman in which I think he implied that what had happened over the withdrawal of most of the funding by Westminster city council of the ENO and the ENB was in itself leading to direct intervention by me as the Minister.

Both of those companies, with the financing from Westminster city council, have been facing a special financial problem arising from changes in the system of local government finance, starting with the abolition of the GLC in 1986. The city council agreed with central Government and the other London boroughs that it would pick up the GLC's funding of the ENO and London festival ballet, as it was then called, provided that the amount of the grants, which then totalled £2·2 million, was deducted from the city council's contribution to the extended London rate equalisation scheme.

Under that scheme, some of the proceeds of the business rates in the city of London and Westminster were spread around other London boroughs to help even out or equalise the rate base. From 1 April 1990, when the new system of local government finance comes into operation, that mechanism will cease to exist. I should point out that none of the grant came from Westminster's domestic rate-payers.

I realised early in 1989 that there was a problem, and the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central must also have known; I have no doubt that the chairmen of the

[Mr. Luce]

companies drew his attention to the problem. There was that problem at the time and I took that factor—which was a special factor peculiar to Westminster—into account in my discussions with the Chief Secretary and in relation to the final settlement.

It was against that background that the Arts Council announced on 14 February that it was replacing the grant to the two companies that was formerly made by Westminster city council, although we should acknowledge that the city council will still give—albeit a more modest sum—£160,000 to the ENO and £100,000 to the ENB.

I understand that Westminster's total expenditure on the arts, as earmarked for 1990-91, will be about £1 million, which puts it at the top of the league table of local authority arts expenditure in the London boroughs area. It was important for me to deal with that specific point made by the hon. Gentleman.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I take seriously the issues that he has raised. However, from my own experience of travelling around the country, I believe that there is growing public support for arts of all kinds. As I look around, the evidence is that, although companies have problems, organisations are doing well, whether they be orchestras such as the City of Birmingham orchestra or major arts centres in various parts, or theatres like the Plymouth theatre royal. All those organisations——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER, *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 23 February 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Road-Tunnel (Chiswick)

9.34 am

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): I beg leave to present a petition, organised by Chiswick community council, and signed by 13,429 people who are resolutely opposed to the building of a road or tunnel from Chiswick to Wandsworth plan, set out in option 12 of the West London assessment study.

Over 1,600 more people have signed the petition than signed a similar petition against a surface road, which I presented last April. That plan was rejected and so, too, must this manifestly unwelcome and ill-conceived road-tunnel option be rejected.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House urges the Right Honourable Cecil Parkinson, MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, to dismiss from consideration all proposals for new road or tunnel building in Chiswick, in the light of the major damage to the environment and local community life that roads and tunnels would cause, and instead to consider traffic restraint and improvements to public transport.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

East London Assessment Study

9.36 am

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I have pleasure in presenting 37 petitions on behalf of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). They all relate to the East London assessment study proposals for a major new highway from Archway to King's Cross and the City. All the petitions and the signatories, numbering some 4,000 in all, are completely opposed to the road-building proposals in the East London assessment study report.

I have a petition from the residents of Brewers buildings, who point out that the roads will destroy the quality of life, will increase pollution and will increase road traffic, and that a greater risk of accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists will ensue. They go on to say:

Your petitioners pray that your honourable House will, without delay, urge the Secretary of State for Transport to withdraw the ELAS road proposals, and to substitute them with traffic restraint and calming schemes and with a fully integrated transport policy for the United Kingdom, which will include massive Government investment in all forms of public transport, thus enabling the current high cost of fares to be reduced to a reasonable level, and by so doing rendering the use of public transport in London a more attractive and cheaper option than the use of the private car.

Those are sentiments with which I entirely agree.

There is a petition from the residents of Church Garth and St. John's road pointing out the destruction that the roads will cause to the environment.

There is a petition from the residents of Windermere road demonstrating that they, too, believe that the new road will cause severe destruction of their lives.

There is a petition from the residents of Witley road. They believe that the East London assessment study will threaten their homes with demolition.

There is a petition from the residents of Brunswick terrace and elsewhere. They believe that the road proposals will be harmful to the community affected.

There is a petition from the residents of Yerbury road. They believe that the road proposals will destroy their local environment.

There is a petition from the residents of Barton road, Dalmeny road and Camden road. They believe that the proposals will destroy homes and businessess.

There is a petition from the residents of Haywood Lodge in Hilldrop crescent saying that they believe there will be more road accidents and more pollution and danger to pedestrians and motorists.

There is a petition from residents of Pemberton gardens, Pauntley street and other roads. They believe that the road proposals will lead to greater lead levels in the atmosphere and in the air that they and their children have to breathe.

There is a petition from residents of Holloway road, Holly park and Cornwallis road. They believe that the health and well-being, especially of children, parents and teachers in the schools immediately affected, will be seriously damaged.

There is a petition from residents of St. John's grove and elsewhere. They believe that the proposals for road building will be detrimental and harmful to the community.

There is a petition from residents of Davenant road, Fairbridge road and elsewhere. They believe that the widening of Holloway road will reduce, and in some cases eliminate, green space available for public recreation.

There is a petition from residents of Tufnell Park road, Fairbridge road and elsewhere. They believe that recreational facilities and the livelihoods of employees will be destroyed.

There is a petition from residents of Rickthorne road and Stanley terrace. They believe that the amenities and environment of their community will be harmed and destroyed.

There is a petition from residents of Hornsey road, Clifton court and elsewhere. They believe that the road proposals will be detrimental to the health of their children.

There is a petition from residents of Sussex way. They believe that the road proposals will make their lives miserable, and will devastate the community in which they live and work.

There is a petition from residents of Bovingdon close. They believe that more pollution and a decline in their quality of life will result from the road proposals.

There is a petition from residents of Elthorne road. They believe that increases in noise and pollution will result from the road.

There is a petition from residents of Tollington way. They believe that the road proposals will be detrimental to their environment, their community and their amenities.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

There is a petition from residents of Holloway road and elsewhere. They believe that the road proposals will involve the loss of their neighbourhood and community.

There is a petition from residents of Yerbury road. They believe that the road will destroy their community and amenities.

There is a petition from residents of Highwood road. They believe that noise and pollution will increase.

There is a petition from residents of St. John's way. They believe that the road would cause great disturbance to them and their lives.

There is a petition from residents of Partington close. They believe that the road proposals will not accord with any of their wishes and decisions for their local neighbourhood.

There is a petition from residents of Mercer's road and Holloway road. They believe that the proposals will involve the demolition of homes and places of work.

There is a petition from residents of Kingsdown road, and teachers and parents at Acland Burghley school. They believe that the road proposals will directly affect their local community.

There is a petition from residents of Junction road and Davenant road. They believe that the road works will disrupt their local services, destroy their local community and work places and pollute their environment.

There is a petition from residents of Yerbury road, Sussex close and Wedmore street. They believe that the schemes will be very detrimental to their community, and will increase traffic.

There is a petition from residents of Fairbridge road, St. John's grove and Marlborough road. They believe that the ELAS scheme will be detrimental, and urge the Secretary of State to abandon it.

There is a petition from residents of Church Garth. They believe that the demolition of local shops, churches and homes will result from the road proposals.

There is a petition from residents of Fairbridge road. They believe that traffic noise and lead pollution will increase.

There is a petition from residents of Miranda road. They believe that shoppers and residents will be affected detrimentally.

There is a petition from residents of Fairmead road and Dunmow walk. They believe that the road scheme should be abandoned.

There is a petition from the residents of Eburne road. They believe that the road proposals will be harmful to their environment.

There is a petition from residents of Newcommon house, Sussex way, Hornsey road and Gladsmuir road. They believe, especially as parents of children attending St. John's Church of England primary school in Upper Holloway, that the widening of Holloway road would be severely detrimental to the health and welfare of their children.

There is a petition from residents of Holloway road and Axminster road. They believe that the road proposals will affect their homes and businesses and inflict blight on their area.

Finally, there is a petition from residents of Trinder road, Henfield close, Lady Margaret road and elsewhere, together with pupils and teachers at the Islington sixth form centre. They believe that the road proposals would harm their area as a place in which to work and be educated.

All those petitioners are wholly opposed to the ELAS road proposals. They represent thousands of others who feel exactly the same, and I hope that the Secretary of State for Transport will take due notice of the anger, dismay and distress felt by my constituents.

To lie upon the Table.

9.45 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) in presenting 51 petitions from residents of my constituency and his, and from Holborn and St. Pancras, Hackney, North and Stoke Newington and Hackney, South and Shoreditch. All the petitions concern the Government's proposals to construct a major road from Archway to King's Cross, which would destroy the homes of some 2,000 people and a large number of local jobs, and would create a concrete canyon through our borough. The proposals are bitterly opposed by all the people who have signed the petitions, and by many people who have written to us. Not one person in my borough has at any stage expressed support for the scheme put forward by the Department of Transport through the consultants.

Let me quote from one of the petitions:

The Humble Petition of General Practitioners serving the communities of Islington which will be affected by the ELAS road widening proposals, sheweth

That the ELAS road widening proposals, will adversely affect the physical, psychological and social health of these communities for the following reasons: 1. the loss of homes will exacerbate the housing crisis, and disrupt community ties; 2. the loss of community facilities such as churches and shops will remove important support structures; 3. the widened roads will act as barriers, promoting increased fragmentation and isolation within the community; 4. increased atmospheric and noise pollution; 5. probable increase in road accidents. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport to abandon the road widening schemes and increase investment in public transport.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I have a further 50 petitions in front of me. One is from the residents of Fortnam road and Davenant road, explaining why their homes and businesses will be destroyed. Another, from Salterton road, says the same, as does a petition from one person, Mr. Michael Channon. I also have a substantial petition which was presented to me at a public meeting, signed by some 1,300 people who attended the meeting. That is a measure of the feeling against the scheme.

I have a petition from the residents of St. John's grove in Upper Holloway—indeed, a number of petitions have come from them—concerning the harm that the construction of the road will do to their community, and another from residents of Kiver road, which is alongside the proposed development. I have a substantial petition with some 1,200 signatures, collected during a very short time at the Nag's Head shopping centre, explaining that the road options will be detrimental to shopping and the community in general.

I have a petition from people who use a local shop, the Wellcare pharmacy on the Holloway road, saying that they rely on the pharmacy for prescriptions for the many elderly people who live in that community. I also have a substantial petition from parents and students of Islington

as a whole, which describes the harm that will be done because of the difficulty of walking around the borough. Children and students will find it hard to get to school.

There is a petition from residents of Marlborough road, part of which would be destroyed by the construction of this major highway through the centre of the borough.

I have a petition from the residents of Giesbach road N19, which would also be partially destroyed by the construction of this major road.

There is a petition from the students of the Polytechnic of North London, which is alongside Holloway road and which would suffer from the proposals and lose some of its teaching facilities.

There is a petition from the members of the Baptist housing association and the Upper Holloway Baptist Church local project team, which demonstrates that a housing project—of 17 flats for elderly people and 24 for frail elderly people which is at present being constructed, after enormous efforts by the members of the Upper Holloway Baptist Church and which is not yet finished and opened, with no residents in place—is to be destroyed before it has even been completed, to make way for a major road. That is deeply resented by the members of the Church. I join them in their resentment. I hope that the Secretary of State will listen carefully to what is said on behalf of the Church.

I have also a substantial petition from Highgate nursery school, the children of which live in the area. It demonstrates that the construction of the road would be detrimental to the environment, by exposing children to intolerable levels of noise and air pollution. Air pollution is already a serious problem in the community.

There is a petition from the users of the Manor Garden centre, which was founded in 1908 by people who wanted to provide decent health care for the working class communities in my constituency. It says that it will lessen pedestrian safety for all those who use the centre, notably the young, the aged and the disabled. Once again they pray that the Secretary of State for Transport will reject the proposals.

The people who use the Hercules street dining rooms have petitioned this House to show that the road would be detrimental to the environment in their community. Many of the people who live in my constituency are in bed-sit accommodation and rely on facilities such as those provided by the Hercules street dining rooms to provide themselves with a decent meal every day.

I have a petition from the residents of 9 Hargrave road. It says that the road proposals would be detrimental to the local environment, that their road would be subject to increased pollution and that the quality of their lives would be impaired as a result. The residents of Gatcombe road say that the East London assessment study proposals for the improvement of traffic management in north-east London will not alleviate the problem and that it will be detrimental to the environment of Holloway.

There is a further petition from the residents of St. John's villas, No19. It says that the demolition of local houses and shops and noise and lead pollution, due to the widening of the Holloway road, would reduce and impair the environment of the people who live in that street.

I have a petition from the patrons of a number of businesses in Hercules street, where a new housing development has just been opened by the Holloway tenants co-operative. There are a number of small clothing factories in that street. The petition says that the environment will be made worse because of noise, dirt, vibration, fumes and danger from traffic and that their livelihoods will be adversely affected.

There is a petition from the residents of Kingsdown road, who will also be affected by the proposal.

There are many more petitions. I shall not refer to them all, but a few of them merit consideration and should be mentioned in the House. The residents of Hatchard road say that the ELAS proposals would be detrimental to the environment of the people who live in the road. Virtually every resident in Duncombe road N19 has petitioned the House not to allow the Secretary of State for Transport to ruin their environment and community by the construction of this major road. The residents of Mulkern road consider that the proposals would be utterly detrimental to their community. According to the petition of the residents in Carlton road, which is already used as a rat run for traffic, they are concerned that the situation will become far worse and will increase the danger, unsightliness, noise and pollution and will lower the property values of their homes. They are not confident that the proposed traffic calming measures would make any meaningful difference.

The residents of Windsor road N7 have presented a substantial petition. They say that the ELAS road proposals would be detrimental to their environment and community and would lead to the demolition of their homes. The residents of No. 39 Huddleston road, together with their friends and neighbours, are concerned about pollution of the environment, the destruction of the community and work places and shops. The clients, students and staff of Choice—the Islington branch of the Family Welfare Association—which is situated at No. 608 Holloway road, say that almost certainly that property would have to be demolished to make way for the road. The centre assists people with social security difficulties and poverty difficulties which, I am sorry to say, are rife in my borough. They are concerned that the road proposals would mean the destruction of Choice, which is a charity shop, a drop-in centre and provides counsel for various community projects. It is greatly used and is of invaluable help to many people who have problems, including loneliness, bereavement, chronic illness, handicap, discrimination, anxiety and depression.

I have a petition for which the signatures were collected in front of my very eyes at a meeting of the Islington pensioners forum. It is signed by every person who attended the meeting. The petition says that the petitioners are concerned that the road construction would do nothing to remove local traffic jams and would make public transport worse. As pensioners, they rely entirely on public transport. They have lived in the borough for a long time. They are appalled to think that their borough would be divided by a concrete canyon.

The residents of Isledon road are concerned about the severance of the community. The residents of Calabria road are concerned about the destruction of their community and the neighbourhood as a result of the road proposals. A petition from the residents of Caledonian road says that the ELAS proposals would be detrimental to the environment by increasing noise, dirt and pollution. The petition of the residents in Holloway road and Hercules street says that the environment would be seriously affected and that homes and work places would be destroyed by increased traffic.

Another petition from the residents of Alexandra road says that the road building proposals would be detrimental

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to their environment and that in some cases residents would lose their homes. The residents of Axminster road in Upper Holloway say in their petition that the ELAS road proposal would be detrimental to their environment by increasing the level of noise and air pollution, that it would increase traffic accidents, that it would disrupt the local community, that houses and shops would have to be demolished and that access to the west side of Holloway road would be reduced.

A substantial number of petitions have been presented this morning by both Members of Parliament with Islington constituencies. Our community and borough is deeply angry that the Secretary of State for Transport should have provided only eight weeks for consultation on the future of the homes of 2,000 people. We implore the House of Commons to intervene and to ensure that the road is not constructed and that instead resources are provided for public transport and for the protection and improvement of our environment.

I have pleasure in presenting 51 petitions, totalling well over 6,000 signatures to the House. I hope that the Secretary of State—who, tragically, is not here—will read every petition and will reply to all the people who have put so much effort into petitioning the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that all hon. Members admire the way in which the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) have used, very properly, the rules of the House to present their petitions, taking some 20 minutes to do so. That is entirely in the traditions of the Labour party which, I remember, campaigned in the early 1970s on the basis "Stop this motorway madness around London". That is the immediate cause of London having such a rotten traffic system. I wonder whether there is any procedure whereby there could be an early debate on the matter that has been raised by the hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Not now. The hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) were perfectly in order. The House will know that last Wednesday we passed a resolution to the effect that petitions on a private Members' Friday could run until 10 o'clock. They did not quite do that this morning.

Orders of the Day

Rights of Way (Agricultural Land) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.59 am

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a great pleasure to be given the opportunity today to move the Second Reading of my Bill. When I heard that I had drawn number five in the ballot I got that sinking feeling that one gets at parliamentary selection conferences when one is asked what private Member's Bill one would introduce. I must admit that there was a gaping void in my mind.

In considering what Bill I should introduce, a number of factors occurred to me. First, it should not be a Government Bill. It is not that I have any objection to most Government Bills, but private Members' day is an opportunity for private Members' Bills. Secondly, it should be of some interest to my constituency, which is one of the most rural in the country, covering some 700 sq miles and more than 170 villages. Lastly, I was determined that, as the opportunity might not be repeated for many years, if at all, the Bill I introduced should be of interest to me personally. I have regretted many things in my life, but I have never regretted going for a walk, and if the Bill makes walking in the countryside easier it will have achieved something very important.

By way of a hobby I am an amateur landscape artist, so I shall give some idea of the structure of my speech and paint in the broad colours first. First, I shall try to outline the interest in walking in the countryside and the problems that have occurred; then I shall deal with the legal and common law history of the footpath network; then I shall examine the current legislation and its deficiencies; and lastly I shall explain the Bill and attempt to convince the House that it would improve matters.

There is a long history of parliamentary debate on footpath matters. In 1880 James Bryce was elected to the House on a campaign based on the freedom to walk the Scottish hills. He introduced a number of private Member's Bills to bring that worthy aim to the attention of the House, and he made such a bore of himself that eventually they put him in the Cabinet to shut him up. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is prepared to give me similar consideration.

There were a number of such attempts until 1939 when Arthur Creech-Jones introduced a Bill that was so watered down in Committee that it was said to be a landlords' charter. My Bill is neither a landlords' charter nor a ramblers' charter. It is a compromise, but it is not a weak, milk and water compromise; it is an important piece of legislation which will have a practical effect.

The basis of the problem that my Bill attempts to address is outlined in various surveys carried out by the Countryside Commission. They show that walking is probably the most important leisure activity. On a typical summer Sunday no fewer than 18 million people visit the countryside, and two thirds of them visit the wider countryside and, therefore, are in contact with the farming

industry. Apparently, no fewer than 17·5 million people are regular walkers and riders, so the House should seek to foster and encourage those important leisure activities.

In 1988 the Countryside Commission produced a survey that was carried out by 1,000 volunteers. They discovered that on a typical two-mile walk along the 140,000 mile footpath network there was a two in three chance of meeting an obstacle.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): A bull.

Mr. Leigh: Not necessarily a bull, although I shall return to bulls later.

Impenetrable vegetation or hedges or fences across a footpath can be dealt with by existing legislation. The most important problem, which occurs repeatedly in the surveys, is the ploughing up and cropping of footpaths. One quarter of all footpaths and 13 per cent. of bridleways are affected, and of those, half are poor and one quarter are unusable. The ploughing up and cropping of footpaths is the single greatest disincentive to people using the countryside.

The consistent comment of people who answered questions in the surveys was that they want to enjoy the countryside but cannot find the way in. The great majority —more than 80 per cent.—do not have the confidence to read maps and assert their rights when they meet a problem such as a ploughed field or a growing crop. As a result, people return to the few places that they know are safe to use, and those places become overused and eroded.

We are not talking about any great cost. I mentioned ploughing and cropping, but the Bill would not be allowed to introduce any increase in public spending. Even if we are talking of local authorities taking more action to deal with overgrown footpaths, way-making or building bridges, we are talking about 6p or 7p per walk, while every visit to a local swimming pool or leisure centre may involve a cost to local government of up to £1. If one sets the enormous popularity and importance of walking in the countryside against the relatively cheap cost to local authorities to enhance that enjoyment, it is clear that we are considering an important problem.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the footpath officers of county councils and highway authorities frequently have hundreds of miles of footpaths to inspect to check whether complaints of obstruction are justified so that they can initiate action? Unless councils have a few more staff, they will be unable to make more than a small impact on the problem. However, if they take on more staff, they will be accused of overspending and putting up the poll tax.

Mr. Leigh: The number of staff in the recreation department of the average shire county shows that the resources spent on footpaths are an infinitesimal proportion of what is spent by county councils on education, for example. I admit that I may be calling for a modest increase in public spending, but the amount is so small compared with total public spending, and the potential gain is so great, that it is worth addressing. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that local authorities need more resources.

I have outlined the popularity of walking in the countryside and some of the problems that people encounter on an average walk. I shall now explain the basis of the Bill. I said earlier that when I was considering introducing the Bill a number of factors came into my mind. One of the most important is that a private Member's Bill is a very delicate flower. I did not want to invite the attentions of the Friday Whip to crush my Bill under his heel by encouraging overlong speeches. Therefore, I felt that it was essential to introduce a private Bill that could obtain the support of the Government. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give it that support.

A number of people have questioned whether I was wise to take on the problem of footpaths which has engendered so much passion in the countryside and on which the barricades seem to have been raised higher than on any other issue. It is said that the farming community is on one side and the ramblers are on the other, and never the twain shall meet.

Thanks to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst)—I pay tribute to him and I hope that he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, later in the debate—and the rights of way review committee that he chaired, and thanks to the work of the representatives on that committee from the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the ramblers, we have worked out a compromise which everyone is prepared to accept. I urge the House to accept the Bill as a compromise.

I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is present. He is a well-known horseman and he may be concerned about the width of bridleways. I ride in the countryside and some of us might like bridleways to be wider, but I urge my hon. Friend and others who may represent the ramblers or the farmers to remember that the Bill is a carefully crafted compromise, and I shall explain later just how we managed to achieve it.

I want to address the fears of farmers, not least because I represent a farming constituency and farming is the most important industry not just in my area, Lincolnshire, but in the nation. Farmers are going through a very difficult time, buffeted by difficulties over the green pound and Government attempts to deal with agricultural surpluses. I do not want farmers to think that this is another anti-farmer measure. On the contrary, it has been carefully drawn up in consultation with the farming community to meet farmers' fears.

Circumstances in the countryside are changing. Many years ago, one could say that the countryside was almost part of the cities. The countryside was brought into even our great cities, such as Lincoln. With the industrial revolution and enclosures, there was a divide between country and city. The Countryside Commission surveys bear out the fact that an increasing proportion of people now live in the countryside—people who may live in villages but do not work on the land. The farming community must realise that this is an unstoppable process.

I hope that, in a modest way, the Bill will be the beginning of a process by which the farming community can be reconciled—if that is not too strong a word—with those who live in the country but do not work on the land. As surveys show, the advantages of living in the countryside are enormous. New patterns of employment in the countryside are emerging. More people are based in the home rather than in the office, with increasingly effective links by electronic communications, and others choose part-time work. High technology firms seek a pleasant,

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rural environment. I need not labour the point. More and more townspeople—if that is the right word—are living and working in the countryside.

We must try to improve attitudes. I was amused to hear of a case in Lincolnshire where the county council was asked to step in when ramblers protested about a sign on the edge of a field, which stated, "The next stile is 335 yd away. The bull can get there in 20 seconds. Can you?" The sign was eventually taken down.

Mr. David Nicholson: Was that a good thing?

Mr. Leigh: I do not know.

Surveys show that farmers are worried about the impact of the public on footpaths. Woodland Trust surveys show that some fears may be misplaced. I quote one example:

"Take the case of Great Bramingham Wood on the northern edge of Luton in south Bedfordshire. Hemmed in on three sides by housing estates and with 50,000 people living within a mile of its boundaries, this 40-acre mainly oak woodland was until two years ago out of bounds. It was just another fenced-off private wood. This did not mean, however, that nobody except its owner ever got into it. Fences were broken, rubbish dumped and small fires started, by irresponsible groups of vandals and perhaps also by people who, feeling they had no stake in the place and frustrated at being kept out, saw no reason why they should not abuse it.

Then in 1985 the Woodland Trust bought the wood and immediately opened it up for general public access. It is the better for it. According to the Woodland Trust, the amount of damage has dropped markedly. 'For now that the responsible majority are allowed to visit the wood, they keep an eye on the irresponsible minority. Says Woodland Trust officer Andrew Thompson: 'The people who were causing damage don't want to be seen doing it, so the more people you get into a wood like this the less damage you get.'"

A Woodland Trust volunteer said:

"We are finding that the variety of birds has actually increased over the last year."

I am delighted to see in the Chamber my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who often walks the countryside and takes a particular interest in the local pheasants.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend said about the Woodland Trust. Has he heard of the "adopt a path" scheme, which operates in some parts of the country? There is a partnership between local ramblers and farmers, and individuals who are interested in walking are given a stretch of path to look after. That prevents the vandalism about which many farmers complain. The rambling community is drawn in and the maintenance of the countryside and footpaths does not fall entirely on the farming community.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes his point well. He sums up what I am saying in this part of my speech. We must create trust. My Bill is based on trust and co-operation. We are addressing only one part of the problem of the footpath network. Farmers often say to me, "I am happy for people to walk across my land, but I have a path that has not been walked for years. Are you saying that I should face the cost of maintaining it?" There are opposing arguments. First, whether we like it or not, those paths are public highways and must be kept open by law. Secondly, if they are made usable, more people may use them.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): One interesting feature of most of our footpaths is that they are a historical record. We take a lot of trouble to preserve other historical things, but we should also retain the pattern of communications in our countryside as far as possible because it reminds people of old mills, chapels and other buildings which have perhaps almost disappeared.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman makes his point well. Footpaths are part of the history of the countryside which help people to understand their history, and that is important.

Farmers ask, "Why are the ramblers so bloody-minded"—I hope that that is not an unparliamentary expression—"and why do they object to every simple diversification order?" If the Bill engenders an attitude of co-operation and progress and ramblers see that to deal with one part of the problem we have a law that ensures that the existing network is easy to use, I hope that it will give the Ramblers Association, the Open Spaces Society and people who take an interest in these matters confidence in the farming community. In turn, that will create more trust, and we might have more diversification and create a more modern footpath network, based on leisure. Of course, history has its part to play, but we must continually update the path network and make it more receptive to modern needs.

Between 1983 and 1987, about 80 per cent. of the 3,222 diversions of footpaths, were unopposed by ramblers and three quarters were in the sole interest of the landowner. If the Bill is not passed, I am afraid that both sides to the issue may retreat behind the barricades. If it is passed, I hope that it will be the basis for co-operation.

For the future, the countryside premium, which the Government have set up under their set-aside scheme, is the way to manage the countryside. Unfortunately, it applies only to certain parts of the country. Under that scheme, grants will be given to farmers to manage existing hedgerows, to create valuable habitats for wildlife, to create meadowlands and new areas of grassland for the quiet enjoyment of the local community and to provide, in selected areas, habitats attractive to curlew, lapwing and other ground-nesting birds.

In a sense, this is a modest Bill. It deals only with the existing path network. The Government should address the wider issues involved in managing the countryside in an age when more and more people want to use it, but in a way that also recognises the rights of farmers, who are business men. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that important point.

Let us examine existing legislation and the way in which the law has developed. As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, footpaths are a part of our history, and that history goes back a long way. I have done some research. The hundred rolls show that as long ago as 1272, the Abbot of Sibton

"ploughed up a certain royal way in Thorington in the width 3 ft and 20 perches."

The court roll of Hatfield of 1444 shows that William Atte Water senior ploughed the church way in a field called Warmelee to the grave nuisance of the public and was fined one penny. That was a lot of money in those days. In 1682, Griesly's case determined that ploughing a highway was a public nuisance. Despite that case, the common law grew up in local usage that people were allowed to plough.

A number of cases in the 19th century show that almost nothing has changed. In 1871, for example, Arnold *v.* Blaker concerned a farmer who had ploughed up a path and failed to restore it. The parish restored it and made an awful mess for 20 ft on each side of the path. The farmer took umbrage and took the council to court. These problems have been addressed by the courts for centuries, but they have found it difficult to solve them.

The two world wars affected many aspects of life, even the remotest footpaths and bridleways of England. In the drive to grow more food, the wartime agricultural executive committees decided that it was necessary to allow the ploughing up of footpaths. The wartime regulations were eventually codified. The source material for what we are talking about today is the Highways Act 1980. In short, layman's terms, the Act gives farmers the right to plough up, but they must restore within a certain time.

The Act raises several problems. Under section 134, an occupier may plough a cross-field footpath

"in accordance with the rules of good husbandry".

He should restore the surface to make it

"reasonably convenient for the exercise of the public right of way"

within 14 days, or as soon as reasonably practicable if prevented from doing so by exceptional weather conditions. Failure to comply is a criminal offence with a current maximum fine of level 3 on the standard scale. Section 135 enables an occupier to apply for temporary diversion orders. All that seems sensible, but it has resulted in problems such as those I described earlier. There are problems for the farmer who is attempting to comply with the law and for local authorities which are attempting to enforce the law.

The Act is concerned only with ploughing, which was perceived to be the problem in 1948 when the first of the series of Acts was put on the statute book. It is not concerned with disking, hoeing or harrowing, which are common preparations for the seed bed. How does the farmer know whether a particular operation is covered by statute and whether he has the right to plough? There are also problems for local authorities which try to enforce the law and with defining a route, with which the present law does not deal.

The Act has resulted in so many problems that the county solicitor of Lincolnshire wrote to me:

"The wording of section 134 of the Highways Act is, of course, particularly diffuse. We would welcome any measure which will help to crystallise and clarify the law relating to the restoration of public rights of way. We would welcome any measure which will help to provide clear standards for both the public and the land owners."

That is what the Bill seeks to do.

The committee of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden set out with a number of objectives. I hope that he will forgive me if I summarise them, although, if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will want to go into more detail. The committee's remit was that the law should be simple and straightforward, and should recognise the legitimate interests of farmers and users. It felt that the law should address the whole cycle of cultivation and that there should be provision for the other necessary operations involved in agriculture. The committee said that the responsibility should be put firmly on the occupier of the land and that there should be a reasonable time for each operation. At the end of that time, the path should be restored and be convenient to use. The committee recommended that there ought to be fines that are sufficient to encourage ready compliance, with clear powers for local authorities to act in default. As a result, we have the Bill.

When we were drafting the Bill, we originally proposed a stand-alone Bill, which the ordinary layman would have been able to understand. Unfortunately, we came up against a problem with the departmental lawyers who insisted on producing a Bill that no layman could understand. I accept that Parliamentary draftsmen must have their way, but if any layman were unfortunate enough to pay £2·80 to Her Majesty's Stationery Office for my modest Bill, he would find it extremely hard to understand. He would have to read it in conjunction with existing provisions in the 1980 Act. I understand that parliamentary draftsmen are always seeking to codify. The Bill must be read with the existing Act.

I want to summarise the provisions of the Bill briefly. The term "ploughing" is replaced by the word "disturbing". That will bring in all the necessary modern operations for cultivation. The period allowed for restoration is set at 24 hours except for the sequence of operations leading to sowing, where 14 days is allowed, under clause 1(4). The restoration requirement is extended to encompass indicating the line of the path or way on the ground, which is an important provision of the Bill.

A new duty is imposed on farmers to prevent crops encroaching on paths, either by growing up through the surface or growing on it, under clause 1(6). The widths are specified for paths affected by cultivation, where no width is otherwise defined, under clause 1(4). The minimum and maximum widths for footpaths are set at between 1 m and 1·8 m, and 2 m to 3 m. That is part of the compromise which we had to achieve in the Bill. Path users, especially horse riders, would have liked the paths to be wider, but that was the best compromise solution at which the committee could arrive.

Repetition of an offence attracts a higher penalty with the maximum fine increased by one level on the standard scale, under clause 1(3). Local authorities are given enhanced powers to act in default, including a power of entry on a line other than the line of the path concerned, under clause 1(2). That is an important point. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made the fair point that local authorities do not always have the resources to maintain the path network, to police it, and to bring prosecutions which, because the existing law is diffuse and difficult to understand, can be expensive. It is important that local authorities should be given more opportunities to act in default. Local authorities are given the power to authorise other operations on agricultural land that would disturb the surface and to authorise associated temporary diversions for that purpose.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): If a farmer decided to spread muck at the rate of 20 tonnes an acre, he could hardly be said to be disturbing the surface, but the footpath would hardly be passable.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend brings a particular expertise to these problems from his own profession. We should welcome his membership in Committee, if the Bill is fortunate enough to get a Second Reading.

I have tried to outline some of the problems and the importance of the path network for our future. I have tried

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to outline the problems with the present law and what I hope to achieve through the Bill. I hope that the Bill will play a modest part in opening up our wonderful countryside to more people. Our country poet in Lincolnshire is Tennyson. I live in the Lincolnshire wolds and I thought that it might be appropriate to conclude by quoting from his work. I found a little quote from "The Miller's Daughter":

"And oft in ramblings on the wold,
When April nights began to blow,
And April's crescent glimmered cold,
I saw the village lights below;
I knew your taper far away,
And full at heart of trembling hope,
From off the wold I came, and lay
Upon the freshly-flowered slope."

When I read that poem I recalled a Christmas card that I had been sent by my predecessor, Lord Kimball—the last Christmas card that he sent before he ceased to be a Member of the House. The picture was of these green Benches. At one corner a sad, grey-suited Treasury Minister sat reading his brief. Behind him, the picture gradually dissolved into a glorious scene of the hunt. The card contained a few words about how those hon. Members sitting on the Benches looked forward to leaving the Palace of Westminster on a Friday and going back to their rural constituencies—to enjoy the pleasures of the chase and of walking in the countryside. I hope that my Bill will enhance those pleasures. I am not trembling, as the poet trembled, about the Bill; I think that it will become law.

I shall sit down now in the hope that I shall give other hon. Members the opportunity—in speeches that are not overlong—to address the problems. We may then do a little bit towards improving access to our glorious countryside.

10.30 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Let me be the first hon. Member to congratulate the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). He is not an hon. Member with whom I often agree, so I was delighted when he was successful in the private Members' ballot and has introduced a Bill to which I can give my wholehearted support. I congratulate him on his choice of subject and on his speech, which I am sure we all enjoyed. I shall try not to take too much of the time of the House because I hope that not only the hon. Gentleman's Bill but the Access to Health Records Bill will be given a Second Reading today.

I am an honorary life member of the Ramblers Association and proud of it, and I am often able to speak on the ramblers' behalf. Before I speak on the leisure functions of footpaths, I want to make a point of which the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle did not remind us: a large number of paths are still used by people as part of their daily lives. Many people still use footpaths to go to church or chapel, to work or to school or to visit friends. One ought to be able to use footpaths as easily as one uses roads. It is a little unfortunate that some of those who live in in the countryside now find that the footpaths are no longer there. They have to wear wellington boots and take their shoes with them to go into church once they arrive.

I do most of my walking in the hill areas of Britain and the ploughing problem is not a major problem in most upland areas. Occasionally, coming back down off the mountain one finds the inbye land or the frith ploughed up in summer to be planted with rape or reseeded. But it is fairly rare. Usually the fields are small in any case and it does not cause too much inconvenience.

For the last couple of years I have managed to fit in a long weekend in the Cotswolds between party conferences and the return of the House. The daytime has been spent walking in the Cotswolds and the evenings at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford. Those most pleasant weekends have been slightly spoilt by the fact that in the Cotswolds I have encountered substantial problems with ploughed-up footpaths, which are difficult to follow and unpleasant to walk on.

The farmers will say that there is no real problem in walking over ploughed land. They will claim that they still do that, although in my experience they tend to ride over it in tractors. As a youngster, I worked with a horse with both harrow and rollers. Farmers tended to work their land when it was dry as there was not much point in working the land in bad, wet conditions because that did not produce a good seed bed for cultivation. It is important to remind farmers that people have to walk footpaths in conditions that are not ideal, in which they themselves would not choose to cultivate. In or after bad weather, walking any distance across ploughed land is unpleasant: it clogs up boots and completely ruins shoes. Others will point out that it can also cause major problems for horses.

It is not just the physical unpleasantness, however, with which we must concern ourselves. The sight of ploughed land may intimidate people. They may not wish to start to walk across the land. If they come across a field that is ploughed or harrowed, they assume that they have gone astray—that they have got it wrong and that they have not been reading their map correctly or following the right path. Many people are reluctant to walk firmly across a field containing a growing crop even where they have a perfect right to do so. People may be put off.

Unfortunately, the problem of paths crossing fields has increased in recent years because of the grubbing up of hedges. One of the things that annoys me most is that whereas in the past footpaths perhaps went round the edge of the field, the taking out of hedges—sad in itself—has made it necessary to walk right across the middle of the new field rather than round the edge of the old one.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle referred to the rights of way conditions survey. It is good news that 67 per cent. of footpaths are passable, although it is worrying that 19 per cent. are in poor condition and worse still, that 13 per cent. are completely unusable. I note that the survey was made between April and December and I suspect that, if people had gone out in January and February, they might have found the conditions of the paths rather worse.

Take the Cotswolds area. About 60 per cent. are in good condition, 20 per cent. in poor condition and 12 per cent. are unusable. About a third of paths are not satisfactory and of that third, a quarter—8 per cent. of all footpaths—are ploughed up. I am delighted that the rights of way review committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) has been able to reach a compromise solution that has been agreed by the National Farmers Union, the Country

Landowners Association, the British Horse Society, the ramblers, the Open Spaces Society and others. I hope that this Bill will be the first of a series of agreed measures.

It is true that bulls are only a minor problem—although if one meets a bull it is much more than a minor problem. In addition, we must address the whole question of access to moorland and other similar issues. One or two people are reluctant to get involved in negotiations and I would stress to them that there may be growing pressure to introduce a Bill that would impose restrictions on one group or other rather than provisions that are agreed by everyone. I hope that the interested parties will use the compromise procedure that has been developed for this Bill.

The most important aspect of the Bill is the duty to restore footpaths to a good condition for people to walk on. I hope that farmers will realise that in certain places one cannot plough up a path and restore it to a good condition. If the ground is heavy, it is difficult to restore it by any agricultural means to a good enough condition for walking. I hope that some farmers will decide that in certain circumstances it would be better not to plough in the first place, but to leave a strip of land unploughed. Marking the line is extremely important and will solve the problem of people being intimidated from walking over fields.

The Bill will also make it slightly easier to prosecute, but I am worried nevertheless. I receive many complaints from the Peak and Northern Footpaths society about the attitude of Cheshire county council and its reluctance to prosecute farmers who block off footpaths by ploughing. I have some sympathy with the county council, whose legal department tends to be stretched. It does not have a legal officer involved solely with prosecutions; they represent only a small part of his activity. I hope that it will be easier for county councils to prosecute under the Bill. I wonder whether it would have been better to give the right to prosecute to other individuals as well, but perhaps we can pursue that point in Committee.

I do not necessarily want there to be prosecutions. I want there to be certainty that if farmers break the law the law will be enforced. The vast majority of farmers want to obey the law and they will do so if there is the added spur of the likelihood of prosecution if they do not. I hope that it will be easier for prosecutions to be brought and, simply because it is easier, I hope that they will not be necessary.

I have a small quibble about the width of the paths. I understand that if people want to take horses on to bridleways they will need considerable width. In certain circumstances, particularly when a field has just been restored, a certain width is necessary. However, I would also argue that one of the nice things about walking through a cornfield is that, if there is a very narrow path, one is able to flick one's hands against the grains of the growing corn. That is very attractive. Therefore, the question of width is a matter for common sense. I am sure that the vast majority of walkers and farmers will ensure that that common sense is shown.

I welcome the Bill and I do not want to take up any more time. I hope that the Bill will make speedy progress today and that it has a short and successful Committee stage. I hope that it will them make its way through the other place quickly and that it receives its Royal Assent during the summer so that the Act can be in operation before next September. If that is the case, when I go walking in the Cotswolds in the autumn, I will not have to put up with ploughed footpaths which are a pest to walk over.

10.41 am

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I am grateful for the opportunity to support my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). He has set out the terms of his Bill admirably today, so I do not intend to go over them in detail. I believe that the Bill as a whole is a significant step towards resolving a problem which is frequently encountered by millions of people who enjoy our network of footpaths and bridleways: rights of way are often ploughed and are not restored, or are affected by growing crops.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) referred to muck being spread on paths. The Bill does not extend to that because it is already covered by section 148 of the Highways Act 1980. That matter does not require further attention in this Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow is relieved to hear that.

The Bill will benefit farmers and landowners because it will remove doubts over a farmer's right to cultivate land which is crossed by a right of way. It will also help local authorities which have a responsibility to ensure that the path network is maintained. They will be able to manage that responsibility better in future. I believe that the new measure can be enforced quickly and efficiently with the minimum of bureaucracy.

In short, I believe that the Bill is designed in such a way as to help everyone. I hope that it will be welcomed by hon. Members and that the House will agree that congratulations are due to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle for taking this opportunity to introduce the Bill and for the admirable way in which he presented it to the House today. He made me feel that I should have had recourse to the dictionary of quotations to add a literary quality to my speech. No doubt my colleagues, if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be able to emulate the excellent style and manner in which my hon. Friend presented his Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle acknowledged that rights of way are an extremely tricky subject. Footpaths, bridleways and byways in England and Wales are seen by many to be the essence of the countryside. They obviously mean access to the countryside for millions of people. They also impart a sense of history, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) acknowledged. They are part of the heritage of country people and they provide a release from urban pressure for townsfolk. For many the paths network is something to be cherished and defended, often tenaciously. However, we must remember that rights of way are also public rights over private land and the seeds of so much conflict lie in that fact, not least when land is used intensively for agriculture.

Of course many farmers welcome the public on their land, and that welcome may be extended in future as we consider different ways to manage the countryside and if we consider that intensification is not necessarily the order of the day. Some people, however, believe that the paths network is an outmoded and unnecessary anachronism.

There is also sometimes conflict between different users of the paths network. The interests of the walker are not

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

always those of the horse rider, and those who come to the countryside in search of a quieter or slower pace of life and to stroll down the byways do not always appreciate that the trail rider or the driver of a four-wheeled vehicle has rights as well. There are plenty of opportunities for disagreement. That underlines the case for strong practical legislation to protect rights of way. Such legislation must reflect technological changes in the farming industry and changes in the public's use of the countryside.

With all that potential for trouble, hon. Members may wonder how the terms of the Bill have received such widespread support outside the House. Perhaps I should try to explain how such harmony has been created and the role of the rights of way review committee of which I am chairman. I appreciate the kind remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle about that.

Like many elements in the British constitution, the rights of way review committee is a peculiar creature. It was not set up by the Government, nor is it a Government agency. Its origins lie in discussions which took place between representatives of the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Ramblers Association. They first came together in 1980 under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). Like my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, he was drawn to the subject as a result of constituents raising with him seemingly intractable problems involving a clash of interests in the paths network.

More than 20 bodies and organisations are today represented on the rights of way review committee. Uniquely the committee brings together the full range of interests in rights of way. It brings together the organisations whose members own or farm land. The different path users are represented by the Ramblers Association, the British Horse Society, the Open Spaces Society, the Trail Riders Fellowship and other vehicular users. The local authority associations, whose members are responsible for maintaining paths and asserting and protecting people's rights of passage, are also represented. Government agencies are represented on the committee in the form of the Countryside Commission and the Sports Council. Perhaps one of the strangest features of the committee, but also an important feature, is that we have officials from the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Transport.

However, it is important to stresss that the committee is completely independent of Government. It is a special and unusual committee in that all those members can meet discreetly and informally and achieve a great deal of progress behind the scenes. It is mainly concerned with legislative aspects of rights of way. The commitee's approach is informal. It meets in private and brings together people in a quiet and, I hope, non-histrionic way to take part in very technical discussions.

The people who form the organisations that I have mentioned represent a formidable body of practical knowledge and experience. The aim is to build mutual understanding and thereby develop practical, common-sense solutions. If the House is minded to believe that the Bill is common sense and should go forward, I hope that the committee will be able to consider other matters affecting rights of way and perhaps inspire other solutions to greater difficulties.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Has the hon. Gentleman thought about involving the Moorlands society in the committee's discussions, perhaps to try to solve problems of access to upland areas?

Mr. Haselhurst: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that suggestion. A little bird has whispered in my ear that the organisation might be seeking membership of the committee. Membership of the committee is not in my gift, but I am sure that an application would be seriously considered. It offers a prospect of being able to cope with some difficult problems.

One of the committee's early successes was its role, under its former chairman, during the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Its members' advice to Ministers on the many key aspects of the Bill enabled the legislation to proceed successfully to a conclusion on some complicated issues. The answers that were found in that legislation are now proving to be balanced, fair and workable. Great credit is due to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South and his colleagues.

The progress that has been made by local authorities towards completing the formal legal record of rights of way on definitive maps and statements and bringing up to date other definitive maps, after many years of delay, within the revised framework of the Wildlife and Countryside Act is due in no small measure to the fact that the rights of way review committee was able to establish a consensus. That is the basis of its approach. Such was the committee's success at the time that it continued to meet. It has monitored the implementation of the 1981 Act, and, since 1985, under my chairmanship, it has considered a wide range of other issues.

Some of my hon. Friends might wonder how on earth, among all those highly qualified professional people whom I have mentioned, I could possibly fit in. It was once put to me by a member of the committee that my great virtue in being in the chair was that I appeared to have absolutely no knowledge of the subject. I like to think that it was probably meant that I at least approached the matter with neutrality and that I had no bias towards one interest or another. I hope that I have been able to maintan that approach in the time that I have had the honour to be chairman. The committee's low-key, non-partisan style reflects the way in which it works. That underlies the formulation of the proposals in the Bill.

On Several occasions in recent years the committee has considered the problem of ploughing and cropping on land that is crossed by rights of way. In 1984, at the suggestion of the rights of way review committee, the Countryside Commission made a study of the subject. It confirmed that farmers generally had a poor understanding of the state of the law. Case studies showed that 59 per cent. of rights of way over arable land—that is, 24 per cent. of all rights of way—were adversely affected by ploughing or cropping. Those results were broadly confirmed in a later national survey carried out by the Countryside Commission.

In the light of that study, a working party was set up by the rights of way review committee which comprised representatives of the National Farmers Union, the Ramblers Association and local authorities, under the direction of an officer of the Countryside Commission. A

code of practice was developed, the purpose of which was to inform the farming community of its rights and responsibilities and to offer practical guidelines on how they should be exercised. The code was subsequently endorsed by all members of the rights of way review committee, and published in 1986 jointly by the Countryside Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, together with the Agriculture Department of the Welsh Office. The code was bilingual and was distributed by the Ministry to all main farmholdings in England and Wales.

That was an important step forward, but it has not been enough. The code was produced in a form that could be adhered to the window of the cab of a tractor. The results were not altogether gratifying. Despite all the publicity, and despite continuing endorsement by successive Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the code had but limited success. It was not for any lack of backing by the NFU and the Country Landowners Association. The code increased farmers' awareness of the law. A survey showed that, whereas in 1986 21 per cent. of farmers knew what the state of the law was, by 1988 the figure had risen to 47 per cent.

However, knowledge and practice do not always walk hand in hand. The sad fact remained that ploughing and cropping remained the single most important factor affecting the public's use and enjoyment of the paths network. Local authorities that have tried to enforce the law have found that it contained serious deficiencies. The present law can be enforced only with difficulty and with a high and disproportionate expenditure of manpower. Last year, in the light of those conclusions, the rights of way review committee returned to the subject.

The working party that had drafted the code was reconvened, again under the chairmanship of an official of the Countryside Commission, and we asked it to consider what legislative changes were needed to give effect to the code, and to make recommendations. The membership of the working party again represented the National Farmers Union, the Ramblers Association and local authorities. Later, a member of the British Horse Society was added. Throughout, officials of the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were present.

It is a mark of the trust and understanding that exists between group members and is indicative of the general spirit that informs discussions in the rights of way review committee that it took only four meetings to produce the fully integrated package of proposals and draft clauses that are embodied in the Bill.

However, when the work was done, there was no immediate prospect that a legislative slot could be found. The most timely interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle and his willingness to take the recommendations as the basis and inspiration of his Bill have been warmly welcomed by members of the working party and by all other members of the rights of way review committee. The underlying principles of the proposals and how it is envisaged that they will work in practice have already been explained by my hon. Friend.

I shall make three general points. First, formal prosecutions will inevitably remain expensive. They continue, therefore, to be a measure of last resort. The key to encouraging compliance will be the realistic prospect that a local authority can take direct action to restore, mark or clear a path, and also that a local authority will have unambiguous powers to recover its costs for so doing. That is provided for in clause 4, in the form of the insertion of new schedule 12A into the Highways Act 1980. The procedures are fair and workable. They are essential if the problems that the Bill would tackle are to be resolved speedily and without excessive bureaucracy.

Secondly, the Bill does nothing more than give clear, unambiguous legislative strength to the ploughing code. A farmer who already complies with the code need have no fear of the Bill. Its proposals should be welcomed by him because they clarify his position under the law and remove any doubts about his rights to carry out several essential operations. A farmer who has ignored the code until now and, perhaps, stolen an economic march on his more conscientious neighbours may regret the strengthening of the law, if that is what hon. Members decide to do, and it is right that he should.

Thirdly, I emphasise that the virtue of the Bill lies in its being a carefully balanced and comprehensive set of proposals favouring no one set of interests. I echo strongly what my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said in that regard. It provides a means for dealing with a problem encountered every year by millions of path users in a way that also meets the legitimate interests of farming. It will help to ensure that people's right of passage is upheld and enforced quickly and easily by local authorities. All the parties represented in the discussions on the proposals stated that they would endorse that view.

The Bill is not a compendium for dealing with all matters of rights of way which are of legitimate concern to hon. Members and the people whom we represent. Therefore, I hope that it will not be seen as a convenient opportunity to tack on other issues. The rights of way review committee has proceeded by agreement, inching forward over the years, and sometimes managing to bring together disparate and conflicting interests. It takes a great deal of effort to do that. The committee has endorsed the proposals in the Bill. Therefore, I plead with hon. Members, now and in later stages of the Bill, not to upset the balance of the Bill. Of course, that does not preclude proper scrutiny and examination of the Bill and some of the detailed points in it.

There may be drafting amendments to be made to the Bill which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will urge upon us. I say with conviction and passion that the Bill has come about because of careful, extensive discussions based on an understanding of the practical considerations involved. I hope that the proposals in the Bill will not be too greatly disturbed by the alterations and experience which hon. Members can bring to them.

The Bill has wide and enthusiastic support among a whole range of interests outside the House. I hope that that wide and enthusiastic support will be reflected in the House and that the Bill will be allowed a swift passage.

11.1 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I shall speak briefly, because I must return to my own shire county to walk some footpaths this afternoon with a Minister who is coming to see me. I support this excellent Bill, which represents a marvellous compromise between the interests of two communities—walkers and farmers—both of whom are strongly represented in my constituency. My

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

constituency is on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors national park and walking is one of the major interests of the local population.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to the adopt-a-path scheme which has been used in many parts of the country. I intervened on that matter in my hon. Friend's speech.

Millions of people expect that there will be a right of way for them in the countryside. Too frequently we forget that rights also carry responsibilities. For instance, responsibility for marking paths and rights of way should not fall exclusively on farmers. As my hon. Friend said, farmers are often in difficult financial circumstances and have a difficult time as it is. They resent the small minority of people who go into the countryside to vandalise it and cause damage. If the wider community could be encouraged to take on some of the responsibilities for looking after the countryside, the farmers would not feel as resentful of people walking over privately owned land.

There is great and growing interest in everything to do with the countryside, and the farming community will have to accept that. If we can move towards a system where the rambling community takes on some of the responsibility by adopting stretches of path, co-operating with farmers to keep paths in good condition, and making sure that obstructions are not put in the way, shrubs are kept back and marking is done where necessary, paths will be kept in good condition and any vandalism will be immediately reported. There will be a much more secure and better future for our countryside.

11.4 am

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on introducing it. Many of my hon. Friends found his speech a helpful explanation of the content of the Bill.

We live in an era of growing recognition that the environment is challenged. The Government have responded to that by doubling the budget of the Countryside Commission, doubling the allocation of land to green belts, increasing the emphasis on protecting areas of outstanding natural beauty, recognising the essential need to preserve areas of scenic beauty to pass on to future generations and, in one of the more recent initiatives, introducing environmentally sensitive areas where traditional farming methods are to be preserved. I am delighted that in my constituency the Test valley, or at least some part of it, has been declared an ESA. That will bring great benefit to many people.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be a small but imaginative measure by the Government to encourage greater access to such areas?

Sir David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman takes the words out of my mouth. I was about to say that there is not much point in conserving and preserving the countryside if people cannot enjoy it. That is why I welcome the Bill and the increased opportunity that it represents to ensure that people who want to walk in the countryside enjoy the benefits of legislation passed by the House to ensure preservation of the countryside.

I welcome the Bill for three reasons. First, the preservation of ancients rights must be close to the heart of all of we parliamentarians. Secondly, the countryside provides a lung for town dwellers. They must have the opportunity to get out into the countryside and see it from defined footpaths where they are allowed to walk. I hope that at the same time a balance has been preserved and that people will not expect to wander all over the farmland and damage crops. Clearly, once right of access to footpaths is undisturbed it will discourage people from wandering across the land.

Thirdly, I am a southern Member but one who much enjoys walking and rambling in the north of the country. We have an overcrowded south-east. Therefore, it is doubly important that people in the south-east have the opportunity to go out in the country.

I have an unusually attractive constituency. In the north there are the north Hampshire downs. Various chalk streams flow from those downs, the Test being the most famous. The local ramblers association in the Andover area has recently conducted an intensive survey of 20 per cent. of my constituency. It found some 13 miles—21·4 km to be precise—of footpaths in that area. A detailed examination of those footpaths showed that about one third were properly preserved and impeccably treated by landowners and farmers. But some two thirds had various forms of obstruction including wire fences, lack of stiles and so on. That is one of the reasons why I welcome the Bill and my hon. Friend's initiative.

A footpath in my constituency leading to the Lone Barn area near Overton was closed by local landowners and farmers. It was reopened only after great efforts by one of the local residents who sought not only my assistance but, perhaps more effectively, that of Lord Denning, who was effective in ensuring that the path was reopened.

Per contra, I pay tribute to some landowners, and certainly to the John Lewis Partnership in my constituency. After vigorous representations that I made to the company it dedicated land and reopened a footpath that had been legitimately closed for an airfield during the war. It did not have rights to be reopened, but because of the public spiritedness of the John Lewis Partnership the Mark Way has been reopened and links two other groups of footpaths. We must recognise that many landowners play a notable part in ensuring that access to the countryside is maintained.

The Bill holds the balance between the farmer and the public. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) has the support of the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association for his proposals. He also has the support of the Ramblers Association and he and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) ought to be in the diplomatic corps for having done so much to draw together in the Bill what would otherwise be conflicting interests. The Bill removes much uncertainty about rights of way. I welcome it and hope that it will quickly reach the statute book.

11.11 am

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): This is a first-class private Member's Bill. I shall be brief, not because I am not an enthusiastic supporter of the Bill but because we have reached the stage at which the longer the speech the more harm could be caused to the Bill. I congratulate my hon.

Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on the work that they have done in improving access to the countryside and rights of way.

I should like to make a point that has not been made before. My constituency does not have much open countryside although it is attractive on the sea coast. I am therefore keen to promote access to the countryside and it disturbs me that many landowners still put up signs saying "Trespassers will be prosecuted". That sign is incorrect because people cannot be prosecuted for trespass. If a trespasser is responsible for malicious damage he could be prosecuted, but trespass is not a crime; it is what lawyers call a tort. Anyone who wanders from the recognised country path cannot be prosecuted. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle mentioned that. I reassure those who lack confidence about finding their way into the countryside. They should not worry, because they cannot be prosecuted for wandering away from the paths.

I urge all those who want access to the countryside not to be shy and nervous, but to equip themselves with proper maps and to join the Ramblers' Association which does splendid work in opening up the countryside. I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the Bill and wish it every success.

11.13 am

Dr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on bringing the Bill before the House. It is necessary because of the widespread disregard by highway authorities of their statutory responsibilities, and because of the unco-operative attitudes of some farmers and landowners. It is also necessary because of the widespread disregard for the ploughing code that was produced some four years ago.

I declare two interests. First, I am a keen rambler and, secondly, I am a landowner. I live on a farm through the centre of which passes a fairly lengthy public bridleway. I can therefore speak to both sides of the problem. Walking is one of the most popular hobbies in Britain and also one of the most commendable. It is estimated that 17·5 million people are regular users of the footpath network, and that 200 million countryside walks are undertaken each year. Our network of footpaths and bridleways is one of the best parts of our heritage. It is an invaluable national asset and must be seen as such.

In many years of walking I have come across good and bad practices by landowners. The Peak District national park is an area that I know fairly well. In our most used national park the rights of walkers have not only been protected but considerably enhanced. The Peak Park planning board, the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, the National Trust and many private landowners have done an excellent job. Open access agreements have been negotiated, subject to withdrawal of access to protect sporting interests on certain days in the year, and a great deal of conservation work has been undertaken in that national park. It is an excellent example of what can and should be done.

I commend in particular the largest landowners in the area, the Chatsworth estate. The trustees of that estate and the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire have done a commendable job in fostering the interests of people who want to enjoy the countryside there. The major part of Chatsworth park has been open to unrestricted public access for many years. People are welcome to park free of charge, to wander at will and to picnic in the park. Concessionary paths have been opened in many parts of the estate. Those paths were never public rights of way, but people are welcome to wander and to enjoy the magnificent scenery on the estate. The Chatsworth estate is a walker's paradise and we have every reason to be grateful to the trustees of the estate and to the duke and duchess for their far-sighted attitudes in making so much of the area available to people. By contrast, the attitude on the Welbeck estate a few miles away is different. I have found there that walkers are discouraged.

The approach of landowners varies from area to area. However, my main criticism is of public sector landlords. They above all have a duty to afford access where possible. Some of them, such as the Forestry Commission, are to be commended for the open access policy that they have adopted. However, authorities such as the Ministry of Defence, the water authorities and the county councils could do a great deal more. The Ministry of Defence occupies large tracts of land throughout the country. Without compromising security or safety the Ministry could do more to provide limited access to that land. Even the National Trust, which does such a valuable job, could improve access to many of its estates. I have been astounded on visits to many National Trust estates to find a general lack of access. I recognise that the National Trust needs to use a great deal of land as farmland for generating income to maintain the great houses in its charge, but there is no underlying reason why access needs to be incompatible with farming interests in those areas.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman mentions the National Trust. Ramblers and others are concerned at the unfortunate attitude of the trust towards the Dove valley. There is an opportunity to open a short piece of footpath there which would make it possible for people to travel the full length of the valley without having to take a diversion. Will the hon. Gentleman use this opportunity to encourage the National Trust to open up that access?

Dr. Woodcock: I do not know that area well, but I agree that the National Trust could do a great deal more to open up more of its land to public access.

In my experience the worst offenders are the arable farmers who have failed for many years to respect the status of paths and bridleways. My experience may be completely untypical, but in 25 years of walking the footpaths of England, often in heavily ploughed areas, I have never come across a footpath that has been properly reinstated by a farmer after ploughing. I have never read or heard of a case of a highway authority taking action against a farmer who did not reinstate a footpath. I suspect that my experience is not untypical and that that is the general position around the country.

There must obviously be a balance between farming, sporting, walking and riding interests, but agricultural areas in these crowded islands must be much more than food production factories, and upland areas must be much more than playgrounds for the rich.

The countryside is a precious resource which must be shared by everyone who lives in these crowded islands. In the United Kingdom context, it is nonsense that farmland

[Dr. Woodcock]

set-aside schemes take land out of agricultural production at the same time as farmers continue to remove hedgerows and plough paths to increase agricultural production. In the European context, it is nonsense that the common agricultural policy continues to encourage the overproduction and subsequent dumping of food on land that could be better used for access and recreation.

While the proper use of footpaths and bridleways must be protected and enhanced by law, it is also important that their improper use should be prevented by law.

Mr. David Nicholson: My hon. Friend has been a little critical of farmers, particularly in arable areas. Has he studied the Countryside Commission's report entitled "Managing rights of way: An agenda for action", which suggests that the ploughing of crops is a significant bar to pathways and bridleways?

It also refers to "Impenetrable natural vegetation." Does my hon. Friend recognise that the farmer has an important role to play in civilising impenetrable natural vegetation? We should therefore not be too tough on the farmer; afer all, the National Farmers Union is co-operating on and supporting the Bill.

Dr. Woodcock: I seek not to be tough on the farmer but merely to point out that a farmer must take account of the fact that a public highway runs through his land. Farmers have a duty not only to tame uncontrollable vegetation, but to reinstate footpaths that they have ploughed. Later in my speech, I shall suggest how such problems can be solved.

While it is important that the proper use of footpaths is safeguarded in law, it is also important that their improper use is prevented in law. I refer to some practices that have grown up in recent years, particularly the use of some private roads as footpaths and the use of bridleways by motorists, who have no business to use them. The law should be stronger in preventing that use.

The growing use of bridleways by motor cyclists is a particular problem because it is impossible to secure access for horses at the same time as preventing access for motorcyclists. I should like to see enhanced penalties for the unauthorised use of those paths by motor vehicles, particularly by motor cyclists, and I should certainly like to see police forces take much more interest in the problem.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that a matter that is becoming of great concern is the use of some bridleways by not only scrambler bikes but four-wheel-drive vehicles? Many bridleways and tracks have been seriously damaged as a result of that.

Dr. Woodcock: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. Four-wheel-drive vehicles and motor cycles using bridleways, private roads and footpaths are a major problem. The House should enhance the penalties for that and make sure that enforcement of the law is more rigorous.

Mr. David Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem of four-wheel-drive vehicles using bridleways is exacerbated by the greater number of hunt supporters? I support the right of people to hunt, as I am sure do my hon. Friends, but the hunting fraternity has a major public relations job to do. One of the factors that it must take into account is the damage that its followers cause during the winter and wet months by driving along paths and bridleways.

Dr. Woodcock: That problem is made worse by the fact that more four-wheel-drive vehicles are now capable of crossing the countryside. That problem must be addressed, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing it to the attention of the House.

We have heard that the Bill is modest and that we should not take the opportunity to tag more aims on to it. I do not wish to tag anything to the aims of the Bill, but there are other matters that I should like to see in legislation and which do not come within the province of the Bill

First, I should like to see a legal duty on all public landowners to facilitate reasonable access to walkers, where such access would not conflict with the primary use of the land. The assumption should be opposite to what it is at present. There should be a right of access to publicly owned land unless there are good reasons for preventing it. Land owned in the public interest should be available in the public interest, unless there is a good reason for preventing it.

Secondly, I should like to see a presumption in favour of the use of disused railway lines as bridleways. Many disused railway lines have been used as bridleways, but not all have, and British Rail could have done more to ensure that they were preserved for the enjoyment of everyone.

Thirdly, I should like to see a system that links national payments aimed at restricting agricultural production to access and conservation. It would not be easy to do that, but we should make the attempt. We should say that if land is to be taken out of agricultural production, and the nation is to pay for land to be left idle, there should be a presumption that it will increase access to land for recreational purposes.

Fourthly, I should like to see some financial encouragement for the National Trust to increase access. I have said that it needs to farm some of its land, but if, as a nation, we are to pay for land to be taken out of agricultural production and to lie idle, why not make some of that money available to the National Trust, which in turn could free land for access purposes and achieve two objectives with the same amount of money—to take land out of agricultural production and to encourage access?

Fifthly, I should like to see legislation to compel the many deviant highway authorities to take signposting seriously. In many parts of the country, it is almost impossible to find footpaths, even where they cross public roads. We should do more to ensure that highway authorities take their responsibilities seriously.

Finally, I should like to see access conditions applied to woodland sales by the Forestry Commission. The commission makes a valuable contribution to access in this country. I favour privatisation of some of our forestry interests, but those interests should be sold only to parties that are willing to give the same guarantees of public access as the Forestry Commission.

Those are subjects on which I hope we shall legislate. They are not, however, the aims of the Bill, and I do not seek to tag them on to the Bill. Its aims are extremely modest. If all landowners had behaved properly in the

past, it would not be necessary, but it is necessary. The Bill is modest, but it is worthy of the support of the House and we should give it an unqualified welcome.

11.28 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am grateful for being called, and I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock). I congratulate him on a comprehensive and important speech.

I particularly agreed with my hon. Friend when he raised the difficulties that riders and footpath users experience when motor cycles and fast cars use the bridleways. I have seen groups of riders stampeding along bridleways and fast cars being driven irresponsibily. Drivers rev up their cars and wreck the whole spirit of the countryside, and the people and animals within it. It should be stopped immediately.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who is such a versatile gentleman. Not only is he a fine man of the country, but he is a fine hockey player and is a member of the House of Commons and Lords hockey team. He may play ice hockey, for all I know, but he is certainly very good at grass hockey.

My hon. Friend has introduced a Bill of great importance. I am proud to be a sponsor of it, and I speak in that capacity today. Also, I am a nationally elected member of the British Horse Society council, as I have been since 1973. I was consistently proposed by the late Dorian Williams, who was perhaps the foremost authority on horses and anything to do with them in this country until he died two years ago.

The British Horse Society strongly supports the Bill. However, I shall be raising some subjects later in my speech on my own behalf, which I think the BHS will consider sensible.

At least 3 million people are known to ride regularly, and the number may be as high as 5 million. That includes people who ride in a clever way—event riders, dressage riders and show jumpers. There are also many people who just ride about the countryside on horses, and take the greatest pleasure from doing so, and they are a substantial part of the community.

My urban constituents like to ride, as do those of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, who made a telling point when he said that many people from urban constituencies find it therapeutic to get out into the countryside as walkers, or riders, or to run about, and that it is important to remember that the countryside is greatly enjoyed by those who live in it and by urban dwellers.

I was for some time deputy headmaster of a comprehensive school for 1,100 boys at King's Cross. I introduced riding and show jumping to the curriculum there—one was allowed to do that in 1964. I had the greatest pleasure in twinning the school with one in the countryside, and I know that the boys enjoyed that, too. The boys from King's Cross who had an aptitude for riding went to the Fitzwilliam pony club in the countryside of Northamptonshire and the Fitzwilliam children used to come to King's Cross. We made a positive effort to bring town and country together, and it was to the greatest benefit of both. Many boys from King's Cross benefited from that scheme. They certainly never left gates open in the countryside, and did not abuse rights of way. When the boys and girls came to London from the countryside, they enjoyed the town—as most country dwellers do. We do not think of the situation the other way round. An enormous number of country dwellers like to go round Westminster abbey and to shop in London. Similarly an enormous number of urban dwellers like to go to the countryside.

The executive officer of the British Horse Society who deals with access to rights of way is a great lady called Anne Lee. She has represented the BHS on the committee which has been mentioned so often this morning. The BHS is concerned about the large number of complaints it receives from riders that bridleways crossing fields used for growing crops are ploughed and are often not restored.

The introduction in July 1986 of a code of practice on the ploughing of rights of way does not seem to have made any perceptible difference to the numbers of complaints and they have, in any case, tended to increase because of the practice of using the plough more frequently in the same field to grow different crops, according to the season of the year. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle of that fact, although he is probably aware of it. Once the bridleway has been ploughed, it is then seeded or planted, with the rest of the field, and in the growing season the crop obstructs the path. On many occasions riders have been abused by farmers for ruining a crop which should not have been planted there. I have one farmer in my constituency, but there are many more outside it. I say with great respect that farmers have sown crops over bridleways too often, and it is wrong of them to have done so. Some farmers have tried surreptitiously to take the bridleway back into full farm use, and that is to be resisted.

With clay soils, the disturbance of the subsoil by the plough means that the soil cannot settle to provide a reasonable and firm surface on which to ride. When clay is disturbed, the particles of soil become rearranged to a much more open structure which allows more water to be absorbed, thus weakening the clay. It can take years to regain its original strength and it follows that with annual or more frequent ploughing a bridleway is constantly unstable or muddy, and that is not fair.

On chalk soil, in Dorset and many other areas, ploughing disturbs the soil so that the flints begin to move to the surface. That is a continuous process. The flints are very sharp and may injure the soft parts of a horse's foot, leading to lameness. Some 90 per cent. of lameness in horses occurs through damage to the foot, so the importance of what I am saying can easily be evaluated. The flints are too numerous to avoid, and lameness occurs too often as a result.

On chalky soils, it is not possible to restore the surface of the path satisfactorily, and the working party of the rights of way review committee says that legal advice shows that the Highways Act 1980 implies that the right to plough should be dependent on the occupier's ability satisfactorily to restore the surface of the path. That is forgotten too often. The review committee considers that the implication remains in the Bill, but it would be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment mentioned it in his reply and if some assurances could be given about the acceptance of such an implication by the Under-Secretary of State.

Speed on bridleways is not covered in the Bill, and I think that that is a pity. As the case is over, I do not think

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

that I will be out of order, Mr. Speaker, if I refer briefly to Miss Constance Scrafield, aged 42 years, who was found guilty yesterday of riding her horse, Patrick, at a gallop in Richmond park and was fined £50. She was thought to be riding at 30 mph and was shown in a picture in *The Times* today riding at a recorded speed of 23 mph. She said that it was a fast canter—well, it was pretty fast at 23 mph.

I think that the speed of riders on bridlepaths needs to be considered by all users. There have to be times when the horse can be given what is called a pipe opener. That is what bridleways are for. Horses need to go flat out to open their lungs and to use themselves so as to be good, sound and healthy. We need bridleways that will facilitate that. This may cause difficulties in the Bill, and I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to mention it in his reply. There could be accidents on bridleways, and we must remember that. Bridleways need to be constructed to ensure the minimum number of accidents.

Perhaps Miss Scrafield was carted. That can happen: it has happened to me, and must have happened to many other hon. Members. However bomb-proof the horse has been taught to be, something unexpected may upset it, causing it to take off at an uncontrollable speed and refuse to return to the rider for some time. If the law does not take account of that possibility on bridleways in the country, and also in such places as Richmond park—and even Hyde park, for that matter—the law is an ass.

Early this morning I rode, as I often do, in Rotten row, which celebrates its tercentenary this year—and a very fine ride it was. If the excellent horse that I was riding had been suddenly shocked or frightened, however, I could easily have been carted at an uncontrolled speed. I am not saying that the police, or the authorities in Richmond park and London's royal parks, do not take the possibility into account, but if they do not the law is not satisfactory. I should like to think that if Miss Scrafield was carted when riding her horse Patrick—although I hope that she was not—the officials who apprehended her did not prosecute. I hope that my hon. Friend shares my concern, for this is an important and human point—and an equine point, of course.

The Bill lays down bridleway widths—a minimum of 2 metres and a maximum of 3 metres. I have strong feelings about that, as I have told my hon. Friend in private. The Byways and Bridleways trust says that less than 2·5 metres is a dangerous width, and recommends at least 3 metres. I should like the Bill to be amended to specify a minimum of 3 metres and a maximum of 4 metres. I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would agree on the basis of your own country observations that 2 metres is not wide enough to allow fat horses and riders to pass safely in opposite directions. They are likely to collide, and leg-bashing by riders—if not by horses—is also likely. If the bridleway is fenced on either side and horses try to pass one another at a hand canter—or, indeed, at a gallop, or even at a trot or walk—a serious accident may occur.

The average horse, in fact, is fat. "Fat" does not mean huge like the working horses that used to pull the plough, although they were often fat as well as muscular. Riders come in all shapes and sizes. A fenced 2 metre bridleway would cause problems to both horse and rider, and could be very dangerous. Low cast-iron fencing could also be dangerous if the bridleway was only 2 metres wide: riders have been impaled on such fencing in Rotten row after being suddenly unseated. In days gone by the fences were spiked, but fortunately the railings in Hyde park now have no spikes. Other railings still have them, however, and they can cause very nasty accidents to horses as well as riders.

Hyde park has a bridleway that is 3 or 4 metres wide, with low, round-topped cast-iron fencing. Nevertheless, if even that path were only 2 metres wide there could still be difficulties for both horse and rider. I think that that makes the case against allowing the fencing of bridleways of only 2 metres wide, whatever material is used. Hedges are easier, but, as my hon. Friend will know, being pitched into a hedge can be a very painful experience. I feel that the width should be 2·5 metres at the very least.

There has been considerable abuse of bridleways in both town and country in recent years. Bridleways have been taken away from riders, just as footpaths have been. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) also mentioned this. Once a footpath or bridleway has been surreptitiously removed, it is lost for ever to riders and walkers—and I like to walk myself. It disappears from the maps.

I have supported the arguments of Exmoor friends who want footpaths and bridleways to be reinstated. They were there during the war, when I lived in the area as a small boy, but now they have gone. The removers have got away with far too much, and it is often impossible to persuade the authorities that the footpaths and bridleways have really gone. Farmers, for instance, sometimes divert footpaths, which spoils the enjoyment of both riders and walkers. I believe that the Bill will deal with the problem and I welcome it for that reason in particular.

There has been no greater advocate of riding than the late Sir Winston Churchill, who rode until he was well over 80. The other day I saw a picture of a man who was still riding at the age of 101, and looking quite good. He could walk as well; he did not need to be lifted on to his horse. The late Reggie Paget, a great Labour Member of both Houses, rode until he had to be strapped on to his horse. Two or three days before he died he told me that he just had to stop riding; he could not even be strapped on to his horse. He also said that he would rather die than give up riding. Not long after he gave up riding, he died. What a fine fellow he was. He was much treasured by all hon. Members.

Riding can form character as no other sport can. The horse disciplines the rider. If riders lose their temper, they get nowhere. Self-control, which is so fundamental in our lives, can be instilled in that way.

I have referred to a man of 101 who still rides horses. Many of us know children who were put on horses as soon as their backs were strong enough to allow them to sit there. Therefore, it is a sport of life. It must be encouraged by good and sound bridleways everywhere.

In response to the poetry that was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, I intend to quote from Sir Winston Churchill's book "My Early Life". It is an admirable book which I know that you have read, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He said:

> "Parents, don't give your sons money; so far as you can afford it, give them horses."

No one ever comes to grief, except honourable grief, through riding horses, though they may come to grief through backing them. If death should come to a man while he is riding a horse, then, taken at a gallop, it is a very good death.

11.51 am

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). I enjoyed listening to him riding his hobby horse with such strength and vigour.

My constituency is almost entirely urban. It is very small and compact, with about 50,000 electors. I hasten to add that this is not a maiden speech. However, I am sketching in the background to reinforce what was said by my hon. Friends who pointed out how valuable it is for those who live in urban areas to have access to the countryside. There are very few open spaces in my constituency, although, surprisingly, it contains a small chunk of Epping forest. However, if all my constituents decided to take a walk there on a Sunday morning, there would be less than standing room only. Some of them would be climbing the trees.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) referred to a sign that he had seen in the countryside, saying, "Trespassers will be prosecuted." He pointed out that that is incorrect. I wish that he would say that to an order of nuns who own a small piece of land and have put up a sign saying, "Trespassers will be prosecuted to the utmost extent of the law. Signed, Sisters of Mercy." That is not a very good example to set, and the sign is also incorrect.

To hark back to my days as a land agent, when I was responsible for estates in Oxfordshire and Hampshire I had a great deal to do with public rights of way and public access to the countryside. Fortunately, the owners of both estates were extremely public spirited. On one estate there was great difficulty over public access to the famous white horse hill. The Uffington white horse is the oldest and most famous of all the figures cut out of chalk. At one time there was a car park right beside the white horse, in full view of the Vale of the White Horse. If one stood in the vale and looked up at the white horse, one could see the sunlight twinkling on the windscreens and mirrors of cars parked on top of the hill. Even worse, the white horse was being damaged by people who had heard that it was good luck to stand in the horse's eye. More and more people were doing that, with the result that the horse's eye was being eroded.

A scheme was hatched to close the car park and provide a new one in an existing chalk pit 200 or 300 yards away from the white horse. Many people visit the countryside as a recreational end in itself, and we thought that people who wanted to do that could just sit in the chalk pit car park, which was out of sight when one looked at the white horse—one could still enjoy the view from the vale—while those who wanted to walk on the downland turf up to the white horse could do so without having their view of the white horse spoilt. After many years of bickering and upset, because local people did not like the idea, the new car park was provided. It has been a great success.

The story that I have to tell about the other estate is not so happy. We wanted to divert a public footpath, we arranged a meeting with local and official bodies so that the line of the existing footpath could be inspected and the proposed diversion considered. When I turned up for the meeting I was astonished to find about a dozen motor cars parked nearby and that officials of all sorts had come from miles around. They came from the Countryside Commission, the county council, the district council and the parish council. There were representatives from the Ramblers Association and the National Farmers Union. The village schoolmaster and the local vicar were there. About 20 people stood around and debated the matter solemnly. Eventually, they said "No, this is not a good idea." That was despite the fact that diversion of the footpath would have meant that people would have had a longer walk. I tell that story just to show that there have been conflicts and differences of opinion for many years about this difficult subject.

I plead with those who use public rights of way to take their litter home and to shut gates. It does not take long to put one's litter in a bag and take it home, and it does not take long to shut a gate. People should not throw down bags, or those wretched plastic rings around six-can lager packs. They can cause dreadful damage to farm stock and wildlife. People should not throw down cigarette ends in the countryside, particularly when it is very dry. There were appalling incidents all over the place during the hot summer of 1976, and we suffered from one. Apart from cigarette ends, people discard empty bottles. As soon as a little rainwater gets into an empty bottle and the sun shines on it, it acts like a magnifying glass. That can set the countryside on fire.

Clause 1 rewrites section 135 of the Highways Act 1980. Under the clause, the occupier could apply to the highways authority for an order to carry out works over a three-month period. I wonder whether that is long enough. For some works, such as field drainage, it will not be long enough. Would it be possible to ask for an additional three months? I know from experience that if one is draining a large field, the decision might be taken to put in drains at two-chain intervals. Three quarters of the way through doing that, it may become obvious that it should be done at one-chain intervals because two-chain intervals are not sufficient. Consequently, the field will be in a state of chaos for a considerable time.

We have to add breakdowns to the difficulties that might be experienced. Furthermore, in certain parts of the country there are sarsen-stones. The first one knows that they are there is when the draining machinery hits a sarsen-stone with a tremendous clang and there are showers of sparks. The machinery is ruined, perhaps for several days. In addition, there may be the effect of bad weather. The Bill is a compromise and if the NFU believes that three months is sufficient, that is fair enough.

The so-called rights of way network covers about 140,000 miles. What exactly do we mean when we talk about rights of way? There are footpaths for walkers only; there are bridlepaths for riders such as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North—bridlepaths can also be used by cyclists, provided that they give way to walkers and those on horseback—there are byways currently or previously used by wheeled traffic and there are byways never so used. They all carry rights of way. Other categories are green lanes, ox droves and herapaths. Then there are the Roman roads—Ridge way, Port way, Icknield way and Ermine street—some are motorways now, but some are simply tracks. Of course there are humble footpaths which arose mainly from specific uses by people to visit the local shop, the church or school.

As the House is in the mood for verse, let me quote from Gray's famous "Elegy in a Country Churchyard". Part of it sounds slightly uncomfortable for my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), but I do not think that Gray had that in mind. He wrote:

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

I shall concentrate on the words, "the ploughman homeward plods" because that is where many of our public footpaths have their origin. They were wayleaves granted by landowners over their land for local people to get from A to B for essential purposes. They never had it in mind that they would be used for the public access that we are discussing today.

I wish to enter a note of caution. Some of the things that have been said by my hon. Friends could be construed as being anti-farmers. I do not believe that everything that farmers do is correct, but we must remember that rights of way are an imposition on farmers. When my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North talks blithely about making a bridleway 3m minimum or, even better, 4m, he should remember that they cross land from which someone has to make a living. Quite frankly, it is a nuisance for the farmer to reinstate a right of way. He has to bear in mind when he is ploughing, sowing or cropping that he must reinstate a right of way; it is in the back of his mind that he has to do it within 24 hours and he is a busy man. Sometimes I feel that farmers' interests have not been taken sufficiently into account. Nevertheless, the NFU is happy with the Bill, so who am I to complain?

I had intended to speak at considerable length on a subject which has already been raised—the use of public rights of way by motorised traffic. It is an anomaly that because a footpath or a bridleway has at some time been used by wheeled traffic it can be used for wheeled traffic today. In the past wheeled traffic might have been a horse-drawn wagon, a medieval bullock cart or even Boadicaea's chariot, but now it means that yobs can drive their wretched jeeps and beach buggies up and down the tracks and churn them up, charging into the crops and shattering the peace and quiet of the countryside. They can ruin the soil structure of those paths all too easily. Especially with clay, once the soil structure gets deflocculated it is very difficult to restore it. I shall not go on at great length about this issue because my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), the chairman of the footpaths review committee, has said that his committee will continue its work. The committee should look into this matter closely and bring forward proposals.

It causes tremendous resentment when the people who live in the countryside have to suffer invasions. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden will look into the problems, but I support the Bill and wish it a speedy passage through the House.

12.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on bringing forward the Bill and on the way in which he introduced it. He said that he used to be unclear about what he would do if he had the chance to introduce a private Member's Bill. As he said, it is a standard question for selection committees when interviewing parliamentary candidates. He will remember that seven or eight years ago he and I were shortlisted for Gainsborough and Horncastle. We were probably asked that question and, although he may have given an unsatisfactory answer, I must have given a worse one, as he was selected for the seat.

I am happy to respond to my hon. Friend on behalf of the Government and to give his Bill a qualified welcome, certainly on Second Reading. I support the Bill because there is a need to clarify the law on rights of way. My hon. Friend introduces his Bill at an opportune moment because concern with green issues generally has never been greater and there is enormous interest in access to the countryside as part of that concern.

I read recently that the general household survey for 1987—the most recent one available—shows that during that year 38 per cent. of people took part in rambling, hiking or country walks. That is far more than the 13 per cent. who took part in the next most popular activity, swimming. By comparison, only about 5 per cent. of people played football, which is suposed to be our national sport.

Undoubtedly there is huge interest in access to the countryside, and I recognise the importance that people place on it and the benefits that can be derived for the very many people who enjoy a walk or a ride on horseback in pleasant surroundings. In England and Wales access to the countryside has traditionally been achieved through linear access across private land. There are about 140,000 miles of such paths, footpaths and bridleways. The rights of way network is particularly important in helping to avoid the conflicts that can arise, particularly on intensively farmed land, as in the area represented by my hon. Friend.

That network provides a wealth of access opportunities without disrupting or damaging the environment or inconveniencing those who live and work in the countryside. A central principle of our access legislation must be to continue to observe that balance of interests. Any change that overemphasises the rights of users or landowners carries the danger that it will create conflict and be potentially unworkable.

The Countryside Commission's recreation and access initiatives properly emphasise the central role of rights of way. We have endorsed the commission's objective that all rights of way should be accurately defined on maps, and readily available for use by the end of this century, and have provided it with additional resources to take forward its work and to continue its co-operation with local authorities to raise the profile of rights of way work.

Parliament has delegated the duty and responsibility for day-to-day management of rights of way to those local authorities responsible for the highway network as a whole. It is perhaps not surprising that some of them have seen rights of way as less significant than their many other priorities, but that is changing. The costs of maintaining and managing footpaths and byways compared with the costs of roads programme are small, yet the benefits for many millions of users are substantial.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I have tried to get Lancashire county council to reopen a bridleway in my constituency in Shay lane in Briercliffe. That area has been overgrown for a considerable time. The council is committed to returning that path to use as speedily as possible, but it does not have sufficient resources. The Minister referred to resources, and he should bear that important aspect in mind.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is often a matter of priorities. The Countryside Commission has indentified the sums spent by highway authorities, including Lancashire county council, on their statutory duties over rights of way at about £14 million per annum. That is a small sum compared with the total recreation and leisure budget of £1 billion. Therefore, only a small reallocation of resources within existing budgets would be needed to release resources for such tasks as the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) highlighted. There are great differences in the performance of county councils and highway authorities. For example, my Department recently carried out a survey of signposting. It found that some highway authorities had virtually completed their duty of signposting all rights of way in their areas, but less than one third was done in others. As often happens, we try to get the general performance up to that of the best. It is often just a matter of a small adjustment in a budget or of better and more concerted management, which is not necessarily more expensive.

It is not just a matter of resources. Access issues are contentious. As I have said, there may be conflicts of interest and often money alone cannot resolve them. Rights of way officers need to be skilled negotiators. They need to encourage co-operation by landowners and users. I commend their work. We are anxious that their worth is properly recognised within their county councils. In particular, I support their work with local liaison groups, getting together representatives of users and landowners to investigate conflicts. It is not possible for central Government to lay down a formula that will solve all local disputes. We support the Bill because it is a good example of how disparate and conflicting interests can reach agreement, where previously none existed, by addressing an issue round the table. Conciliation can often be more effective than legal enforcement in securing long-term protection of rights of way. The liaison groups often put in a lot of time and effort, but they often avoid the need to go to court, which is expensive.

We live on a small island which is fairly overpopulated in some areas and there are inevitable pressures on our comparatively limited countryside. We must take into account the needs of those who live and work in the countryside as well as of those who, rightly, want to visit it for leisure and enjoyment. There is little genuine wilderness in this country. Most of our countryside has to be managed and looked after. The traditional English countryside has been shaped by generations of farmers and landowners. We need to respect their rights and their work when we look ahead to the more general conservation interests which are at the heart of the efforts made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle.

I should like to put the Bill in context. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides a framework for this legislation. The purpose of the Act was to clarify the question of ploughing rights of way, including the illegal ploughing of headland paths and byways. The founding Act in this respect was the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the first legislation to define our modern rights of way network.

In 1981, we used the Wildlife and Countryside act to clarify the law on ploughing, incorporating some of the proposals of the rights of way review committee, which at that time was under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who is now a fellow Minister in my Department. It soon became clear that, despite this legal clarification, further efforts were needed to secure compliance with the law. Productive discussion by members of the committee led to the issuing of a code of practice on ploughing by the Countryside Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In 1986 this was distributed to all farmers.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) has told us, even that was not enough. I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend, who is now chairman of the rights of way review committee, in solving many issues and bringing together disparate interests—very much as my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle did in bringing forward the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden said, his committee has identified the need for something more specific and legal. The committee demonstrated that, in arable areas in particular, ploughing and cropping on public rights of way is the single most significant factor interfering with or preventing the use and enjoyment of the countryside. In the Countryside Commission's eastern region, for example, walkers undertaking a two-mile country walk have only a one in 10 chance of completing it. More than a quarter of footpath links in the regional survey were classified as completely unusable, with ploughing or growing crops the most significant factors.

Ploughing over rights of way remains one of the major causes of dispute between path users and landowners. Only a limited number of authorities have taken people to court. This is mostly because of uncertainties about interpretation of the existing law. There are doubts about whether rights of way are ploughed, hoed or harrowed; about whether to prosecute the landowner, the ploughman or the contractor; about the ability to enter land and carry out works necessary to reinstate rights of way; and about the necessary width of these paths for restoration; and there are more general questions about access to land.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister describe what he expects a farmer to do to restore land that has been ploughed over? Obviously this is a matter of persuasion. I am sure that it would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman would describe how easy it is for a farmer to restore a path across a ploughed area.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is possible to restore a path quickly, and most farmers do that. As always, we are dealing with a minority who will not do it, who overlook their responsibility or who, in some cases, are deliberately obstructive. The NFU has taken a positive line on this. It recognises that it is very much in the interests of farmers generally to have an unobstructed network of rights of way because it often avoids trespass, which can result from rights of way that simply peter out in a ploughed field and do not clearly sign the way forward for those seeking to cross the fields.

When the issue was approached, there were differences of interest. It is a tribute to the working party set up under the rights of way review committee that it sought and achieved the necessary consensus.

Dr. Woodcock: I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's response to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr Bennett). I heard my hon. Friend say that most farmers reinstate footpaths and that we are dealing only with a

[Dr. Woodcock]

minority who cause problems. My hon. Friend may recall that in my speech, I said that in 25 years of walking in the countryside, I had never seen a footpath restored properly by a farmer. Although I want to encourage the restoration of footpaths by farmers—and I applaud any farmer who does so—will my hon. Friend tell us from where he is obtaining his information? Are there any national figures or surveys? What is the basis of his contention that most farmers reinstate footpaths?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend may be able easily to identify paths that have not been restored, but how can he tell whether a path has been restored at some time in the past? Many agricultural operations cause the temporary disruption or blocking of a footpath, but the footpath is restored and reopened. My source of information is my Department, the Countryside Commission and the rights of way review committee. I do not want to minimise the problem. In giving way and through the Government's support for the Bill on Second Reading, I am acknowledging that problems exist, but I do not seek to suggest that most or all farmers are blocking footpaths by ploughing.

Dr. Woodcock: It may be a fairly minor point, but the Minister asked how I or any walker knew that footpaths had not been reinstated. I collect my evidence simply from coming across arable fields that have been farmed, where the clear lines of the plough can be seen and where the footpath has not been reinstated. In the fairly extensive growing season, one can clearly see crops growing across paths.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall not repeat the point at length. However, I seek to suggest to my hon. Friend that when he finds a path that has not been restored, it is a problem, which he has drawn to the attention of the House. I agree that it is too frequent. However, when he is going along a path unobstructed, he cannot know whether that path had been ploughed over or otherwise disturbed and later reinstated. Almost by definition, one finds the problems, whereas paths that have been properly managed in the past and may have been reinstated by responsible farmers are not a problem. I suggest that my hon. Friend should not overlook the many farmers and agricultural interests who take their responsibilities seriously.

No single group that comes together to address the issue can get everything that it wants. What is impressive, even in our debate today, is that hon. Members of all parties have given general assent to the Bill. That arises out of the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle has achieved the explicit support of the NFU, the Country Landowners Association, the Ramblers Association, the British Horse Society and local authority representatives. We have heard from the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and from my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock) that they would like the Bill to do additional things. I ask them earnestly to bear in mind that a private Member's Bill is a fragile vessel. It is vulnerable to storms and squalls—if not in this House certainly in another place. I ask them not to upset the vessel in which my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle has launched himself.

The provisions of the Bill have been explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle in some detail. There may be disappointment that the Bill does not go further or that it does not do everything. It is essentially a measure which clarifies and builds on existing provisions. It will allow local authorities to get tough with those who flout the law. It will penalise persistent offenders and effective enforcement action will demonstrate that it is no longer possible for landowners and farmers to ignore their responsibilities. It will ensure that compliance rests squarely with the occupier, who will not be able to excuse himself because of the inaction of contractors. Rights of way across arable land will be clearly delineated on the ground. The farmer who has always followed the law has nothing to fear.

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said; the Bill is not an excuse for farmer bashing. For centuries, farmers have shaped the countryside, as I have already made clear. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden has made the point that many footpaths, byways and bridleways were laid down by the forefathers of the people who presently farm in the countryside. Generally, farmers welcome the making of paths. It clarifies where people have the right to go and prevents trespass.

Naturally, farmers are bothered by irresponsible walkers. There are people who leave gates open, who leave litter, who light fires, who allow stock to get out and who fail to control dogs. It is true that rights entail obligations. I cannot wave a magic wand to make people behave properly in the countryside. However, I urge all who deal with countryside matters and who belong to access organisations to stress that access to the countryside entails an obligation to respect the rural environment and those who seek to make a living there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle has presented a Bill that is a helpful clarification of the rights of way.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Before my hon. Friend sits down, will he refer to the important question of the width of bridleways?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I must emphasise that I am not answering the debate, but contributing to it. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's points. We shall come back in Committee to the question of the minimum and maximum widths of rights of way. I listened with particular interest to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) about the problem of restoring paths over heavy or flinty soils. Separate from this legislation, I shall draw the attention of the working party to my hon. Friend's remarks. In consultation with the working party, we might be able to cover in circular advice or in a revised code of practice the need to restore paths as my hon. Friend suggests.

The Bill represents a welcome clarification of rights of way. It has been drafted competently but, inevitably, very quickly. In all cases, laws must be simple and straightforward and beyond argument. Therefore, while the Government back the Bill in principle, we shall wish to examine its provisions closely to ensure that they are all workable and clear in law. The question of minimum and maximum widths must apply solely for the purpose of the

Bill. We shall want to look at its scope as it affects highways in general and examine the proposed penalties to ensure that they are consistent.

All those matters can be resolved in Committee. We shall hope to keep Government-sponsored amendments to a minimum. We shall seek to emulate the work of the working party and to secure improvements by compromise. We shall also be looking to the review committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden to advise us whether, when the Bill is passed, we need additional advice to cover practical details that are inappropriate for primary legislation.

The committee's resolution of disagreements can have a fundamental influence on policy and practice in future. One of the good things to come out of the Bill is that it will show that we can see the way forward on these difficult questions of access. There are several others that have attracted the attention of the House. We can see a way forward by agreement and compromise. I have no hesitation in commending the Bill to the House; the Government support its Second Reading.

12.30 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Minister prefaced his comments with a reference to the general housing survey. He told us that the most popular leisure pursuit was walking while the next most popular was swimming. I am a keen walker and a keen swimmer and I therefore feel particularly well qualified to take part in the debate. The Minister is clearly not as aware as some Members of just how many paths have been ploughed up and how it affects the paths network, or of how difficult it is to walk from one place to another where there is ploughing up. It poses a real problem for keen walkers.

Perhaps the Department of the Environment does not have figures, but surveys have been conducted by the Countryside Commission and voluntary surveys made by Ramblers Association groups throughout the country. In 1982-83, the association's Cambridge group carried out a survey of paths in south Cambridgeshire. Of 1,276 paths, 405 were ploughed up and few have been reinstated. A survey of most paths in the borough of Maidstone, in Kent, carried out by the association's Maidstone group in 1988 said:

"Following massive publicity on this subject"—

the reinstatement of paths after ploughing—

"from the Countryside Commission, National Farmers Union, Kent County Council and district councils to landowners the resultant activity by the latter was hardly noticeable. The result was that during the maximum period of growth a considerable number of rights of way became obstructed by crops—oilseed rape being the biggest offender."

That is why the Bill has our support—not our qualified but our unqualified support. I congratulate the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on his choice of subject: it really is a worthy Bill.

Membership of organisations such as Ramblers Association, the Youth Hostels Association, the National Trust and the Open Spaces Society, which promote access to the countryside, has never been higher. That reflects the extent to which people want access to the countryside. It is certain that the Bill will be welcomed by all members of those organisations and by everyone from town and country including hon. Members on both sides of the House who enjoys walking. The single most important recreational facility in the countryside is the right of way network. Unfortunately, as we have heard this morning, legislation has never fully protected or maintained it.

The Opposition welcome the Bill and believe that it takes us one or two small but important steps in the right direction. We recognise that a tremendous amount of background work preceded the Bill. A very unlikely accord has broken out among the key associations with an interest in rights of way, including the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Ramblers Association. It is rare to see such constructive co-operation among bodies whose interests are usually contradictory. The Bill is an opportunity to include the Moorlands Society which perhaps has not been so keen to debate the issues. There should be co-operation before we resort to compulsion to get access to the rights of way that we all want.

We welcome the proposals and will do all that we can to handle the Bill with care and assist its overdue passage on to the statute book. We firmly believe in the public's right to enjoy the countryside. We believe that the legal right to access should be extended to common land, mountains, moors and heaths. We are critical of farmers and landowners who, intentionally or otherwise, prevent the general public from enjoying their legal right to walk along public footpaths or bridleways.

The network of public footpaths and bridleways which by tradition has allowed the landless to get out into the countryside has been eroded in recent years. We need to ensure that we have comprehensive legislation to redress all the deficiencies in access to the countryside. We need legislation that will give local authorities the resources and powers to restore our footpaths network. We could have had such legislation in the Environmental Protection Bill which is currently in Committee. I wish that the Minister had told us why that Bill was not used as a vehicle to iron out some of the many deficiencies, loopholes and anomalies in current legislation.

Why was not the Government's professed concern about the environment matched by a commitment to deal with rights of way, access, perhaps even freedom to wander and to common land? Why could not the Government provide time for those issues in their parliamentary programme? The Conservative party manifesto commitment on those issues is clear and it is a pity that we have not had comprehensive legislation to cover those problems. None the less, this private Members' Bill will be an important step forward.

I take this opportunity to put on record the bad drafting of the Environmental Protection Bill. Schedule 5(7) to the Bill amends the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which set up the National Parks Commission, while the Countryside Act 1968 set up the Countryside Commission to promote access to the countryside through the use of footpaths.

The Welsh element is ignored in the Environmental Protection Bill and the Ramblers Association is concerned about the commitment to Welsh rights of way. The proposals are a contentious part of the Environmental Protection Bill and we hope that they will not reach the statute book in their present form. Does not the Minister recognise that there are fears that the separate Welsh body, as currently proposed, will abandon the Countryside Commission's rights of way targets by the year 2000?

The Bill deals with one aspect of the many issues relating to rights of way—the extent to which ploughing

[Ms. Joan Walley]

and other activities prevent proper access to our footpath network. That is very important. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 did not resolve the matter; it produced grey areas with which we have had to live ever since. It is impossible for local authorities to deal effectively with obstructions to footpaths and rights of way. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 tinkered with the legislation, but failed to help.

As we heard from the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) the next attempt to put things right was the voluntary code of practice drawn up in 1986 between the Countryside Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The code was sent to smallholders and farmers in England and Wales. It would have been nice to think that that voluntary code of practice could work, but clearly it has not. That is why there is an urgent need for new legislation to put the matter right. Some farmers may have tried to put things right, but many, and perhaps the majority, have not. There was no prospect of getting the entire footpath circuit clear of obstructions.

The further failure to put things right in the Environmental Protection Bill as currently drafted means that this is our only reasonable chance in the lifetime of this Government clearly to determine the duties of farmers and local authorities to restore land for public access. Farmers will know that they are under an obligation to keep paths free, and local authorities will have clearly defined duties to enforce the law, using default powers where necessary so that the process can be self-financing.

I wish that the Minister had spent a little time dealing with resources, whose importance was stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). All hon. Members recognise that a private Member's Bill is not a vehicle for increased public spending, but we must recognise also that there are resource implications.

The Countryside Commission's survey shows the extent to which we are paying the price of years of neglect of our footpath network. Farmers have taken advantage of the fact that local authorities do not have clear duties and resources to keep footpaths clear. Even though local councils have a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to protect and assert the public's rights and to maintain rights of way, they have rarely been able to do that work properly. Will the Minister tell us, now or in the future, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport? Why does the transport supplementary grant to highways authorities invariably give money to named traffic schemes but not give sufficient money to the highways committee to carry out its duties under the Highways Act?

Will the Minister make it clear to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the poll tax and the amount of money available to local councils will make it less likely that they can increase spending on the footpath network? Why cannot the Government tell us how many highway authorities are unable to carry out their statutory duties? How many highway authorities must be supplemented by the discretionary powers of the Countryside Commission, stretching money that could be spent on circular walks and leaflets to basic rights of way work?

Hon. Members should be aware that walkers belong to all age groups and social classes. As a nation whose perception of environmental issues is growing, our deep desire to get out into the countryside and away from pollution is also growing. It is a national scandal that our rights of way network is in such a poor state. It is a national scandal that someone setting out on a random two-mile walk shown on an Ordnance Survey map has only a one in three chance of getting through. There is a two in three chance of obstruction.

The Minister must tell us how he proposes to finance the work that needs to be done by local authorities, voluntary groups and the Countryside Commission. Much of the work to the basic infrastructure was done by the Manpower Services Commission. It is all very well for the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to tell local authorities to ignore access at their peril, and say that they should look closely at their leisure budgets with a view to spending more on countryside access and recreation. Will he make available the resources? Will the expenditure be recognised in the standard spending assessments? Will the money granted to the Countryside Commission be increased by the necessary amount? There has been an increase in grant to the Countryside Commission, but the increase in its duties must be taken into account.

When will the Government take the initiative and give local authorities the resources they need to take the action that the Minister recommends? One clear problem lies not simply in the work that can be recovered by default payments but in the expense of appointing rights of way officers and ensuring that there are sufficient officers in the legal departments to allow court cases to be completed rather than left in suspense. What extra resources will the Countryside Commission have to meet its target of opening all rights of way by the year 2000?

I received a letter from David Fowler, the chairman of the Staffordshire ramblers association, asking me to support this private Member's Bill. In Staffordshire walking and rambling is now the most popular outdoor activity, but obstruction of rights of way due to ploughing continues to be a major problem in preserving access to countryside.

Paths in the national park are relatively accessible, as are the paths which Staffordshire county council tends. The problem is elsewhere on paths which are off the beaten track and which farmers and landowners feel that they can get away with not reinstating.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is unfortunate that Staffordshire county council seems to have a policy of dealing only with a network of paths which it considers to be important, rather than fulfilling its legal responsibility to ensure that all footpaths are clear of obstructions?

Ms. Walley: That issue has concerned the ramblers association in Staffordshire. I can reliably inform my hon. Friend that Staffordshire county council, in addition to its tremendous work in respect of reserves and footpaths which have been signposted, such as the Staffordshire way, to which it is committed, is ensuring, in close conjunction with the Countryside Commission, similar scrutiny of all paths. The Bill will assist greatly in that.

It is no use having some clearly defined paths if other paths are obstructed. All that happens is that the well-defined paths become over-used while the others are

avoided. That creates too much congestion on one part of the network of paths, rather than enabling the whole network to be properly used. In Staffordshire we are keen that the latter should happen. We should see the fruits of our policy soon.

A point which has not been made is the importance of footpaths to the rural economy. Footpaths have never really been regarded as an asset, but surveys have established that every visitor to the countryside who goes out with the intention of walking spends between £5 and £6. It must be acknowledged that that could be a great boost to tourism and the local economy, particularly in areas that are taking a battering from Government economic policies. Farmers and landowners must realise that by opening up the network of footpaths they are contributing to the local economy.

In the absence of proper safeguards of access to our footpath network, it has been left to individual campaigners everywhere and the organisations that they have championed, such as the Ramblers Association and the National Trust, to fight for access to footpaths. We owe a great deal to their continuing vigilance and to the programme of protest walks which such organisations have sustained over the years. We owe a great deal to local authorities which produced the adopt-a-footpath scheme. The scheme was introduced by one of the abolished metropolitan councils. We have also encouraged local authorities to take action against farmers and landowners who defy legislation, knowing that the chances of action against them succeeding are remote.

Public anxiety about footpaths has never been greater. It is time for the Government to take a lead and defend the countryside, and the least that they can do is not to hinder the Bill. They should say what resources they will give to local authorities and they should increase the resources of the Countryside Commission. They should set out how they will effectively ensure that the Countryside Commission's target of a legally defined rights of way network, properly maintained and well publicised, will be met by the year 2000. The Government must ensure that everybody who wishes to explore the countryside is aware of his basic rights and responsibilities.

The Bill will assist that process and it has our full support. We look forward to working closely with the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle in Committee to ensure that the legislation is enacted by the summer so that walkers can enjoy their holidays.

12.51 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on the part that they have played in bringing the Bill before the House. Both my hon. Friends worked hard on this matter and have brought together a remarkable array of disparate bodies such as the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the two sides of agriculture—the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners' Association—the Association of County Councils, ramblers and the British Horse Society, all of which have been mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle might consider the skill of the late Prince Bismarck the Chancellor of the German empire. It was said about his great power of diplomacy that he managed to keep together a collection of greased balls throughout his time as Chancellor. I assure my hon. Friend that that will be my last reference to globular objects.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle will recall that the last time that I spoke in the Chamber on 7 February he made a rather unkind intervention, and outrageously suggested that he and I should not believe the statistics issued by the Department of the Environment. I am sorry that the Minister has just left the Chamber. Perhaps he had some divine expectation that I would mention this subject.

I listened with interest to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). Unfortunately he is not present. He will be interested to know that I served on the Committee that examined the City of London (Various Powers) Bill. That private Member's Bill did not really deal with the normal activities of the City but with bridleways in Epping forest, the varying rights and responsibilities of horse riders, and the requirements of the environment, the countryside and walkers. I am happy to say that last week that Bill proceeded through the House. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North will also be happy about that.

I cannot speak with great experience about horse riding. I have only once been seriously astride a four-footed beast. That was in the Kingdom of Jordan some 15 years ago when we were trekking across extremely rough country. I am sure that the beast that I was astride had formerly been used by the Abbasid Caliphs. It was extremely ancient and broke into life only when somebody took a pot shot at some birds, at which point there was almost a disaster.

Despite my expanded girth I am a walker. At one time I had a sylph-like shape that was maintained by walking. I have walked in Lancashire and Cheshire where I was brought up. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) may be interested to know that I have walked along the banks of the Goyt which is near his constituency. My mother was brought up in that area. I have walked in Anglesey in north Wales and more recently in Devon and Somerset.

I wish to narrate an experience that I had about two years ago. One sunny summer afternoon, I was persuaded by my wife to take my children, who are fairly tiny, for a long walk while she did something useful; she was either painting a room or doing some gardening, but she wanted the children out of the way. I followed the instructions on the Ordnance Survey map, on which a footpath was printed between two roads quite near my home and across quite a lot of scrub country. I decided to explore the footpath. We went down a track past a farm, where there was a fierce dog—I do not know whether it was a Rottweiler, but it certainly was fierce—and at the bottom of the hill the path disappeared and we got into considerable difficulty. We had to cross a barbed wire fence—the House can imagine the difficulties and dangers of crossing a barbed wire fence—and then we got into a bog. I do not know whether hon. Members have experience of navigating a marsh, but inevitably one's foot gets stuck. When one pulls one's foot out of one's wellington boots, the boot stays stuck and one's foot get all muddy. My children became a little perturbed because I gave voice to a few Anglo-Saxon epithets.

[Mr. David Nicholson]

That was all because in practice the pathway marked on the map did not exist. It had not been ploughed over, but it had been covered by natural vegetation. That is why I have a particular interest in the Bill progressing.

I am pleased that the Minister mentioned the positive and constructive attitude of the farming community. I was glad to receive a letter from the parliamentary adviser to the National Farmers Union. It says that the NFU has contributed throughout all the negotiations of the working party of the rights of way review committee. It was a member of that committee and it supports the Bill because:

"we believe that farmers and landowners will benefit from many of the Bill's provisions.

Although, at first appearance, the Bill places extra requirements on farmers in the restoration of cultivated parts, and maintenance of paths and ways free from growing crops, we do not believe that those farmers who presently uphold their responsibilities of keeping such paths open and convenient to public use have anything to fear from this Bill. Indeed, in respect of the cultivation of rights of way all farmers will benefit from the clarification of the present law which this Bill will make."

How often does legislation, particularly private Member's legislation, clarify the law when it is unclear? That is a welcome feature of the Bill. The letter states that the NFU believes that the application of the provisions of the Bill

"will reduce the conflicts between walkers, other path users, highway authorities, and farmers which have arisen because of inadequate restoration and difficulties of identifying the route of paths through growing crops. Such conflict often arises because all parties are uncertain about the extent of their responsibilities and the methods of adequately restoring and identifying the paths or ways across arable land."

I welcome the fact that the NFU recognises that the Bill, supported by a negotiated and flexible system of applying its provisions—my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden referred to that aspect—will benefit all parties. That is excellent.

I pay tribute to the work of other organisations, particularly the Countryside Commission. Hon. Members may have seen a document that it has produced entitled "Snakes and Ladders". It points out all the difficulties that can arise when one is walking, such as the absence or otherwise, of signposts, trying to cross not just the ordinary single strand of wire but the coiled bands of electrified wire, the disappearance of paths, the presence of gates that are falling down, so that one can neither open them nor get across them, as well as ordinary maintained gates. Horse riders are particularly affected by gates that are padlocked.

I pay tribute to the work of the Countryside Commission, and the survey that its volunteers did when they attempted to walk all the footpaths, or to ride and cycle all the bridleways in a number of randomly selected squares throughout the length and breadth of England and Wales—a total of almost 3,000 rights of way. They completed a report for each path, and gathered information. The leaflet that the Countryside Commission produced is based on that work. There were nearly 13,573 completed survey forms, and that was a great achievement.

I referred earlier to the various factors that posed difficulties in the NCC's analysis—ploughing, crops, natural vegetation, fences, hedges and walls, areas that are muddy, boggy or flooded and difficult gates. The report is very welcome.

This morning I was pleased to receive a letter from the Central Council of Physical Recreation. Let us not underestimate the health aspect, as we hear a lot about that subject at the moment. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) mentioned the Environmental Protection Bill, and I have been serving in the Committee on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill for the past few weeks. If we can facilitate more exercise in the countryside, how much will that do to minimise the ill-health and heart disease which plague so many people who have to pursue sedentary occupations in their professional lives?

The council gives wholehearted support to the Bill. It thinks that its measures will greatly benefit riders and walkers and says that no restrictions beyond those currently set out in the code of practice will be placed on farmers. In certain ways landowners and the natural landscape will benefit.

The council emphasises that the guidance in the Bill

"is particularly important in areas where the grubbing-up of hedges has removed the natural marker and a sharp turn in the path becomes almost impossible to spot."

If there had been time—I am sorry that there is not—I would have referred to the last report of the Nature Conservancy Council, the work it has done on sites of special scientific interest and elsewhere, and the reference it makes in that report to the Water Act 1989 and the various discussions that took place to ensure that the consumer—the walker or the person seeking leisure—was able to get access to water authority land.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied that those rights will be maintained when the privatisation of the land takes place under the new water authorities?

Mr. Nicholson: I confess that I did not serve on the Committee that considered the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) did, and if she catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, she may like to comment on that. We need to monitor that, and I see from the NCC's report that it has certain reservations about that aspect of water privatisation, although there has been progress.

One aspect of this subject links it to tourism. We increasingly find that people who live in the United Kingdom, instead of jetting-off to extremely hot and crowded Mediterranean resorts to take holidays, or going to the seaside, as was traditional, go to the British countryside.

I have here "The Caravanners Guide to South-West England", published by the Caravan Club, which was presented to me a few days ago at a reception in the House. It is a marvellous guide to people—particularly those with young children—whose idea of a holiday is to park the caravan on a plot where the planning arrangements permit and to walk in the surrounding area. On page 5 is an article by Keith Bungay, the national park officer for Exmoor. I was pleased to see that, because the plateau of Exmoor—perhaps the most attractive part—is in my constituency. The article describes the prehistoric remains, barrows, cairns and circules that can be seen there—items which should be preserved, because they are of interest to walkers. Iron age forts of more recent vintage can also be seen, and the author adds that Exmoor is the land of the

wild red deer. The guide contains some splendid descriptions of Exmoor walks, such as the Lorna Doone walk.

I have reservations about the Bill, although I do not share the ideological resistance expressed by Opposition Members. Like the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North and for Denton and Reddish—and, in a brief intervention at the beginning of the debate, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—I am a bit worried about resources. Although I appreciate that each highway authority will be asked to provide a fairly modest sum, I am afraid that the community charge will pose a problem. In many areas it will be much higher than the Department of the Environment predicted, often because of overspending by Labour authorities, but partly because of next year's grant settlement. I am glad that the Minister is present to hear me make that point; I made a similar point in a debate two weeks ago. I fear that valuable aspects of the work of local authority highways departments will be sacrificed.

Ms. Walley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholson: No, there is not enough time.

This problem will be the "delenda est Carthago" theme of my speeches this year, for it is a source of great concern to many of my constituents. In the meantime, I have the greatest pleasure in congratulating my hon. Friend and supporting his Bill.

1.7 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): It is a great pleasure for me to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), who illustrated very clearly some of the pitfalls for ramblers and walkers, and also some of the advantages that the Bill will bring to farmers and landowners. Clearly defined rights of way would prevent people from getting lost and trespassing.

I am privileged to be a sponsor of the Bill, which was admirably introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). He is certain to win golden opinions, both in his constituency and elsewhere. He is also a brave man, for during the next few weeks he will probably meet his predecessor, who was a very fine Member of Parliament. I was trying to decide this morning what kind of Bill he would have introduced had he come fifth or sixth in the ballot. He might have introduced a Bill to prevent such people as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) from visiting the countryside, or a Bill to make foxhunting compulsory; he might even have introduced a Bill to close all rights of way. The question is probably academic, however, for he would not have been here on a Friday in any case: he would be doing something more constructive.

As the owner of land in Norfolk with rights of way going through it, I must declare not only a personal but a major constituency interest. Pressure on the countryside is on the increase in Norfolk. Norfolk's population is increasing. The roads are being improved. More and more people want to come to one of the most beautiful parts of the countryside and enjoy it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle referred to the growth in leisure activities. Walking in the countryside is one of the most popular pastimes. It is important that leisure activities should be reconciled with the interests of the farming and land owning community. The land-owning community is beginning to feel isolated. Farming is having a difficult time. Farmers' incomes have fallen sharply. Nothing will do more to encourage that sense of isolation than antagonism building up between the farming community and those who want to exercise their right to enjoy the countryside.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle eruditely documented the network of rights of way. The majority of farmers respect right of way and behave properly, but a minority do not; they abuse and neglect their duties. They have given the rest of the farming community a very bad name.

Above all, the law needs to be clarified. In counties such as Norfolk, 60 per cent. of the rights of way network could be open; the other 40 per cent. might not be. If 5 per cent. of the network is not open, that may be enough to ruin a walk. That point was made very well by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. If one small link in a walk is unavailable, it can completely ruin one's enjoyment of it. It may be just one farmer who is causing the trouble. I was prepared to be a sponsor of the Bill because it was the result of a great deal of discussion, negotiation and debate and represents a compromise. Above all, it has been endorsed by all the key interests, parties and organisations. I join my hon. Friends in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), who has done so much work on the subject.

If the Bill is passed, as I hope it will be, the law relating to ploughing will be clarified. Until now the statute law has been uncertain. We relied in most cases on common law. That was most unsatisfactory. Farmers will know exactly where they stand. If I am fortunate enough to serve on the Committee, I shall refer to various rights of way that are little used. Certainly farmers may object to the Bill. There are certain rights of way in my constituency that have not been used for 15 or 20 years. However, there may be a right of way nearby that is used. A diversion of the existing right of way may represent a far better route across that section of the countryside.

If the Bill is passed, it will create a far greater sense of trust and co-operation. When the closure of some rights of way that are never or are rarely used is proposed, the climate for negotiation will be much better. The Bill represents a move in the right direction. I referred earlier to the fact that farmers and landowners will benefit from the Bill. They will have to give up certain rights, but in return they will know exactly where they stand. Their rights and duties will be laid down in black and white.

Apart from a better climate of co-operation, we should also avoid the instances that were documented by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton. He referred to people going on a walk where the route peters out because of an impenetrable jungle of undergrowth, or fields of growing corn. Then they wander off in all directions. That may well lead to gates being left open, damage to stock and disturbance of nesting birds. Such activities can lead to antagonism between farmers and the rambling public. On the other hand, if rights of way are properly marked and maintained, people will know where they stand. We will then move into a new era and a climate of trust and co-operation.

Clause 4(5) provides great advantage to farmers who wish to carry out major draining or engineering works.

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

Until now that matter has been unclear, but now they will know their rights, will carry out the work and will restore the right of way.

Action must be taken about the minority of scrambler bike riders and four-wheel-drive vehicle users who abuse tracks across the countryside. I have heard about a number of examples of tracks being badly damaged by people who consistently drive up and down them in four-wheel-drive vehicles. In a number of cases in Norfolk and Hampshire, councils have opened up tracks, which presumably were previously bridleways, for the use of such vehicles. Action should be taken to prevent that from happening. We do not want more vehicles using tracks. Obviously vehicles are allowed to use some tracks, but those activities could lead to antagonism between the public and farmers and between people who engage in such activities and ramblers and horse riders who enjoy the countryside in a civilised way.

I must make it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle that I entirely support the right of a local authority to bring prosecutions, but if there is any attempt in Committee to extend that right of prosecution to members of the general public, I shall go flat out to resist it. Although the vast majority of people who walk in and enjoy the countryside will not store up trouble or do anything that is likely to lead to conflict, there will always be a minority who may do that. A general right of prosecution for the public would be dangerous, and if there are any attempts to introduce such a right I shall forcefully resist them.

Given that the Environmental Protection Bill is going through the House at the moment, we ought to consider the situation regarding landfill sites. I should declare an interest as an occasional adviser to the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors, which represents the waste disposal industry. Many people in the industry are concerned about rights of way across landfill sites. We have had some ridiculous examples recently of local bodies and organisations pressing hard for rights of way through landfill sites to be maintained and kept open. Obviously there are problems of scavengers and people coming into close contact with heavy working machinery on landfill sites. Anyone who wants to walk on a landfill site must need his brains tested, but there have been attempts to keep open rights of way over landfill sites in some parts of the country. The obvious solution is to apply for a diversion.

Ms. Walley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellingham: I shall not give way as I want to be brief. We can discuss the matter afterwards, perhaps in Committee.

If the Bill results in a better climate and more trust and confidence between the rambling organisations and the farmers and others with interests in the countryside, diversions will be agreed more readily because there has been ludicrous opposition to diversions of rights of way across landfill sites. We cannot tolerate that, and I hope that a much more constructive attitude will develop among a very small minority.

I support the Bill. It is a historic step forward from the days when there was antagonism, conflict and lack of trust to an era when there is greater use of the countryside, with people coming from the towns, living in the villages and making use of their right to walk in the countryside. We shall move forward if their rights can be reconciled with those of landowners and farmers. It is important that the people who walk or ride in or otherwise enjoy the countryside understand what makes it tick and exactly why farmers want to enjoy their land in particular ways —for field sports and other sports and amenities. If people who go into the countryside understand why farmers enjoy those pursuits, there will be less antagonism in some circles towards them. We are certainly moving in the right direction.

I hope that the Bill will leave the Committee stage a far better Bill, perhaps with one or two minor improvements. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle quoted Tennyson. I should like to conclude by quoting Blake, who, in his "Auguries of Innocence", said:

> "To see a world in a grain of sand
> And a heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
> And eternity in an hour.
> A robin redbreast in a cage
> Puts all Heaven in a rage,
> A dove-house filled with doves and pigeons
> Shudders Hell through all its regions.
> A dog starved at his master's gate
> Predicts the ruin of the state."

I am sure that my hon. Friend's predecessor would approve of the last verse:

> "A horse misused upon the road
> Calls to Heaven for human blood.

1.21 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I am delighted to support the Bill. In my constituency, the primary industry is farming—food production, processing and distribution—and a secondary industry, about which everyone knows when they come to the area, is tourism. Therefore, rights of way are important.

There is the potential for a large conflict between the farmers and the tourists. It is to the credit of farmers that the conflict has been kept to a low, almost infinitesimal, level in my constituency. None the less, adoption of a track as a right of way is a crucial matter. I am sad that the Bill does not contain a proposal by the Countryside Commission—which I know was not supported by the National Farmers Union and other bodies and, therefore, did not see the light of day in the Bill—whereby farmers would be allowed to alter the route of a right of way if it went across the middle of a field and was merely a nuisance to everyone because the hedge or boundary had shifted.

Rights of way are ancient tracks. Sometimes these prehistoric routes were used for the transfer of goods from one part of the United Kingdom to another. In another age, we did not need the Channel tunnel as we were physically joined to Europe. In the past, goods travelled from the centre of the continent of Europe to places in the United Kingdom along the Berkshire Downs prehistoric ways.

In my constituency, a good example of a historic right of way used today as a trade route is the one at Bucks Mill, where there is a right of way down to the beach. It has been used for many hundreds of years by fishermen to bring their fish ashore and today it is readily used by tourists. In the second last great debacle by mother nature—as a result of the greenhouse effect, or merely a local Devon storm —that right of way was demolished. The knock-on effect in today's world is that people letting cottages in that

beautiful part of the world have not been able to say whether the tourists will ever be able to get down to the beach. Those lettings are a major source of summer income. These routes are an important part of our tourist industry.

As for other routes, unhappiness is caused when modern routes are ploughed up not by farmers but by motor cyclists. One sees Suzukis on the loop road on Dartmoor. We know of other tracks where motor cyclists are wrecking ancient and beautiful rights of way. There are vast problems which will not evaporate easily and are not addressed by the Bill. There are modern despoilers who wreck the rights of way and do not enhance them.

However, the Bill addresses one small part of the problem. It cannot have been an easy task even to reach agreement on these few modest proposals. For me, a Bill that has the unqualified support of the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Countryside Commission, all of which are key players for my constituents in farming and in tourism, and for our visitors, must be right. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) for his excellent initiative in presenting the Bill. I hope that it will have a swift and easy passage through Committee. The Bill deserves unqualified support.

1.25 pm

Mr. Leigh: By leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I say that this has been an interesting debate and it is a great pleasure to sum up for three or four minutes. I want especially to commend the speeches of my hon. Friend the Minister, and of my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), for Hampshire North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson).

One point must be made again and again as the Bill proceeds through Parliament. Farmers have absolutely nothing to fear from the Bill. They will benefit from the Bill, as the NFU said in its brief. On one or two occasions in the debate, there have been some harsh words about farmers. I do not echo them. In any industry, of course, there is always a small minority who give a bad name to the rest. However, the overwhelming majority of farmers who want to obey the NFU code of practice have nothing to fear from the Bill. It will benefit farmers because it will clarify the law and make it easier to understand. It will meet the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West and others in that it will stop people roaming where they should not and it will mark the line of the path clearly on the land. Farmers have nothing to fear in any of that.

The point has been made to me in the debate that the most popular part of the countryside premium under the set-aside scheme has been that farmers have been increasing access to the countryside for recreational purposes. Many farmers realise the way that things are going and want to co-operate with the public. The Bill will make it easier for them to do so.

I want to respond briefly to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) about bridleways. I am not sure whether he is aware that there has been a further concession by the NFU. Where a path runs along the headland of a field and a rider could be in danger of coming too close to a fence, the minimum width will be 3 m. My hon. Friend made the point about paths running through the centre of a field. In that case, it is extremely unlikely that there would be a fence on either side. we are talking about the restoration of paths and I think that my hon. Friend will find that the points he made in his excellent contribution—he spoke with great knowledge about equine subjects—have been answered by the drafters of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) made a point which has been answered, about muck deposited on fields. That can already be dealt with by section 148 of the Highways Act 1980.

The hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned resources. The point that we have to make again and again is that by clarifying the law, the Bill will release resources that are often tied up at present in time-consuming prosecution mechanism. The Bill will release resources and improve the footpath network.

I have answered the main points about the Bill. I am anxious that it should proceed and I am grateful to all who spoke today. Everyone who has spoken has supported the Bill. How pleasant it is that on one day in this House, all hon. Members agree.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

Access to Health Records Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.30 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I thank my sponsors for helping me to prepare the Bill—both in the drafting process and in the meetings and consultations that have taken place. I understand better after that experience what an onerous task is borne by those regularly involved. I also thank the Clerks and others who have helped me with some of the legal niceties involved. Without their help, I do not think that I should have been able to prepare the Bill.

I had three principal reasons for introducing the Bill. First, it is an important principle in any democratic society that an individual should have the right of access to records held about him—in most cases by Government and local government institutions. I believe that the House has already recognised that principle by accepting a number of provisions in recent years. The Government themselves introduced the Data Protection Act 1984, which extended citizens' rights considerably. Another Government measure, as early as 1974, was the Consumer Credit Act, which again extended citizens' rights in relation to credit references held on their behalf. The Access to Personal Files Act 1987 extended important civil rights in relation to housing and social work records, and the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 extended rights in relation to records submitted by general practitioners and retained by employers or insurance companies.

The principle encompassed in the Bill has already been accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. That is a source of some pleasure, as there are not many issues on which hon. Members of all parties feel equally strongly. Those earlier measures have enjoyed considerable support, and I hope that my Bill will, too.

In practical terms, the Bill cannot cause difficulties for GPs, consultants or other medical people. Instead, it will help to foster the relationship between medical practitioners and their patients. Some GPs have gone along with the principle and for many years have opened their records to patients. Earlier this week I talked to a GP from the midlands who for the past 10 years has operated an open system. He had found that both he and his patients had benefited and that it had helped to improve trust and confidence between them. At the moment, however, doctors are privileged to operate such a system and patients are privileged to attend a surgery that operates it. But such a system is operated on a voluntary basis and, although voluntary codes have been considered, they have not had the desired effect and we need legislation to extend that privilege and make it a right that all of us can enjoy.

The Greater London Association of Community Health Councils has been active in surveying opinion on this matter. It surveyed its general practitioners, who stated without equivocation:

"Complete access to the records gives the patients trust and confidence in their general practitioners. Good general practice is a partnership between patients and doctors."

I believe that patients increasingly want to know details of their medical condition. By and large people do not want to be kept in the dark. They want to know about their health so that they can face realistically treatment or any change in life which may be necessary if they are to maintain their health and enjoy the rest of their lives. It helps most people enormously—although perhaps not everyone—if they have that right to access.

I shall now consider the evidence of the demands for access by patients. One study has shown that only 40 per cent. of people recovering from heart attacks had been told the cause of their illness while 90 per cent. of those people said that they could have faced up to their illness and dealt with the suggested treatment better if they had been told of the cause in the first place.

Another telling study was carried out among sufferers of multiple sclerosis. Hon. Members who know sufferers of MS will be aware that it is a very debilitating disease, especially in its more advanced stages. The survey showed that 83 per cent. of MS sufferers who were asked believed that they could have faced up to the treatment, the change in lifestyle and the things that had to be done much better had they been told about their condition much earlier. Only 30 per cent. of those people said that they had been told by their GPs sufficiently early to face up to the illness properly.

More evidence can be found in a written answer in *Hansard* on 1 February. The Under-Secretary of State for Health said that the Department's consultation exercise had revealed

"a clear balance of opinion in support of a right of access."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. *354*.]

All that evidence reinforces a point which most hon. Members and people outside this place recognise—that there is an increasing demand for access to information. I have occasionally heard a general practitioner or consultant claim that the Bill is all very well, but there may be terrible repercussions with medical people being inundated by people crying out to see their medical records. I understand some of those fears, but I do not believe that they are realistic. I do not believe that the Bill will lead to a flood of requests for information. That is not its intention.

The Bill's intention is to change the general climate of the relationship between a medical practitioner and a patient so that the practitioner will err on the side of telling the patient more about his disease and so that records will more accurately reflect the patient's medical problems and the proposed treatment.

There are safeguards in the Bill, but I am happy to consider others if it receives a Second Reading and goes into Committee. The Bill contains provision for a small charge to be made for a photocopy of a patient's medical records. That charge would deter a frivolous application to see records. If hon. Members feel that other means might deter the frivolous application, but at the same time strengthen genuine applications, I should be happy to consider their suggestions.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does my hon. Friend accept that obtaining the rights for people to see records has been a slow process? Fears that revealing records will cause a great deal of extra work have been expressed by many people. However, in education and other areas where rights to access have been granted, the problem of many people making frivolous applications has not occurred.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that point. His helpful intervention reinforces the point that I was attempting to establish. My hon. Friend has a special interest in many of these matters.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing a widely welcomed Bill. Will the Bill benefit one of my constituents who, for about 10 or 15 years, has been attempting to get access to his medical files? An early diagnosis was that he was virtually an invalid for the whole of his life, and a later diagnosis proved that the first was erroneous.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Unfortunatelly, I cannot assure him about historical medical records. This Bill applies to medical records from January 1991.

The Bill would change the general nature of the doctor-patient relationship. Perhaps my hon. Friend's constituent would have voluntary access to his medical records. If that is one by-product of the Bill, it would be helpful.

Another reason for introducing the Bill is that many records are inaccurate and incomplete. A general practitioner told me that when records are transferred from one general practitioner to another—a fairly frequent occurrence as people move house—one in four records is found to be either incomplete or wrong. I have no reason to believe that that is an unrealistic assessment. That general practitioner often had to refer to a previous medical practitioner and ask for clarification. The Bill would encourage medical practitioners to have accurate complete records that a second medical practitioner could consult when providing treatment. That is a practical benefit.

Many people have complained to me about misfortune that they have suffered because of erroneous medical records. We live in a society in which there is an increasing number of records for all sorts of things. That is inevitable and we must face it. That is one reason why the Data Protection Act 1984 was such an important move forward. It is inevitable when records are kept that errors will be made from time to time. I do not claim that my Bill will ensure that there are no errors in the future, but it will concentrate the minds of those who keep records to make sure that they are accurate if a patient is likely to ask for access. That is one of the most important by-products of the Bill.

Many people have approached me to complain of their predicaments. Hon. Members will recognise that it would not necessarily be in my interest or that of the sponsors of the Bill to catalogue those cases, but I shall illustrate my point by referring to two. A lady approached me and told of her terrible mental difficulty when she was told that she had cancer of the ovaries. She had intense problems because of that information. By accident, she happened to come across her medical record. Hon. Members can imagine her joy when it was explained to her that she was actually in the early stages of pregnancy and was not suffering from cancer. If she had had access to her medical records and if they had been kept more accurately, the pain and suffering that that lady experienced could have been avoided.

In another case, a record was filed under the wrong street number. The gentleman who contacted me was suffering from terrible mental depression. The doctor had told him that he must get his act together quickly because, if he did not, there would not be much of his life left. He was told that his problems of alcoholism were having a damaging effect on his whole life. Hon. Members may see a similarity with the conditions which some hon. Members perhaps face, but I assure them that this gentleman was not a Member of the House. He was a teetotaller who lived at No. 28; the alcoholic lived at No. 26. Again that was discovered by accident. The treatment that he was receiving was completely unrelated to the cause of his depression.

Such errors are bound to happen in a complicated and mobile society. As I said, the Bill will not necessarily illuminate all errors but it will help to concentrate the minds of people who are responsible for the retention of records.

There are many other examples of errors. I am astounded by the number of letters and telephone calls that I have received from people, especially since the Bill received some publicity earlier this week. That shows the strength of feeling of people who have been victims—who have had a raw deal and hope that others will not face the same trauma and problems as they did.

A third reason for introducing the Bill is that it would create consistency. Currently, if medical records are maintained on computer, a patient has access to them under the Data Protection Act 1984. The British Medical Association believes that the vast majority of medical records, especially those of general practitioners, are kept on a manual, not a computerised basis. It is difficult to be accurate on the exact proportions, but the House would not be far out if it recognised that 75 per cent. of medical records are maintained manually.

I am aware that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) is present and may seek to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. She is something of an expert on computers and may be able to enlighten those of us who are till in the dark.

Some people may argue that there are circumstances in which it would not be proper to provide access to medical records. I acknowledge that that is the case. Where the GP believes that to provide information would cause damage to the patient, a third party or the doctor, he must be able to say that it is not appropriate to provide the information. The Bill makes provision for that.

Similarly, if the provision of medical information would implicate another person, perhaps a spouse, the Bill provides for the medical practitioner to say that the information should be held back. Similar protections are included in the case of children who have given information in confidence to a doctor and whose parents subsequently seek that information. There are exceptions to that where the child is too young or too ill to give consent.

The Bill has a wide base of support. Hon. Members from all parties have said that they personally support it. A poll by the Consumers Association showed that 91 per cent. of the public believes that there should be access to medical records. I have had representations from over 70 organisations, including important bodies such as the Law Society, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the Health Visitors Association and the Consumers Association. Many patients have rung me to tell me of their support. An increasing number of doctors recognise that it is important that their relationships with patients are seen to be open and above board. They are beginning to believe that it is an important matter which should be approved by the House.

There is an overwhelming case for the Bill. There is a democratic case. In the latter years of the 20th century people should have the right of access to records held on

[Mr. Henderson]

their behalf by the state, local government and other institutions. There is a practical case for ensuring that errors do not occur and that records are kept more accurately. There is also a case based on consistency so that people whose records are held manually have the same rights as people whose records are held on computer.

The measure can be approved by the House at no cost to the Government and at little cost to citizens. Where a copy of a record is required the cost will be borne by the person seeking the information. The Bill will not eliminate all errors, nor will it help everyone to come to terms with his problem. It will not guarantee that every medical practitioner will be more open in his dealings with patients. However, it will help to generate a new climate in which medical practitioners will be more open, records will be kept more accurately and more people will have trust in their doctor. If employers, insurance companies, other doctors and Government Departments can see our medical records, I can think of no reason why we should not be able to see them. I commend the Bill to the House.

1.50 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): If the Bill does not go through we shall compound a situation that results in misdiagnosis, mistreatment, and inefficiency. One case shows clearly how the refusal to disclose medical records to the patient resulted in misdiagnosis. The case is one of many.

A lady called Diane Carlston was defined as having Munchhausen syndrome—the fabrication by an itinerant malingerer of a clinically convincing simulation of disease. The unreasonableness of that suggestion can be gathered from the following. She had been operated on four times in the preceding four years and was ill enough to have been retired as a district nurse on grounds of ill health. She was given an invalidity pension by the health authority, and I do not suppose that such a pension is easy to come by. She was receiving invalidity benefit from the DHSS and had twice been certified as unable to work by a DHSS doctor who had told her, "There is no question of your working at present."

The most conclusive evidence that Diane Carlston was not malingering was that she had already taken herself off invalidity benefit and was working again part time as a general practice nurse. The Munchhausen diagnosis came after she had had a hysterectomy and her own general practitioner questioned whether she was genuinely ill at all. In fact she had a wretched condition, one that may make some hon. Members rather ill when I discuss it, but that is what I have to do. It is called endometriosis, and is an especially horrible condition that affects the lining of the womb. The lining works loose and becomes attached to other parts of the body. By the time she was operated on half the lining of her womb was attached to her bladder. She had been in great pain and misery, and had a most unhappy and wretched time. Her general practitioner had said she wanted a hysterectomy despite medical advice to the contrary and that she had got it because she manipulated people. He concluded with the devastating comment:

"In view of her multiple complaints I almost suspect that she is a case of Munchhausens syndrome."

It is interesting that at that time the lady was able to find her own record simply because she was in the medical field. Because she discovered that comment, she was finally able to see how poorly she was being cared for by her general practitioner. She confronted him with the letter and asked him to justify it. He said that he did not know much about endometriosis. She left his practice and signed on with another general practitioner and is delighted with his care. She has given me permission to quote her case.

That was a case of misdiagnosis, and the lady was not given the best treatment. I am aware of another case of mistreatment that would have been corrected had the patient seen her medical records earlier. Ms. B was diagnosed as suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis or post-viral fatigue syndrome. She was questioned by a psychiatrist to whom her general practitioner had referred her. He asked her many questions about her youth, her parents, and so on. She said that he was very sympathetic "until I mentioned how my problems started after I'd contracted glandular fever".

Any hon. Member who has suffered from glandular fever knows that it is a pretty hefty disease, from which it takes months to recover. Not unnaturally, one feels pretty poorly for a long time afterwards. Ms. B. continues:

"However, before I could finish what I wanted to say, he stood up, walked towards me and repeated that I had not suffered from glandular fever. He had spoken to the GP and read my notes. He told me I was lying!"

Mercifully, she was studying psychology at the time. Although her psychiatrist was telling her that she had "a hysterical personality", she was considered by the remainder of society to be psychologically trustworthy enough to be studying psychology. She managed to see her medical records. It is clear to me that if one wants to see one's medical records, one needs to be working in the Health Service. She saw a tiny comment in the corner of a page that she had had a recurrence of glandular fever, but that knowledge had not been carried forward. She wrote to the GP who had diagnosed the glandular fever and received a letter from him confirming his diagnosis. He added that his blood test had demonstrated the presence of antibodies to the Epstein-Barr virus, which causes glandular fever. She was misdiagnosed and then mistreated. Presumably, she must have added to the welter of prescriptions that general practitioners dish out every year for anti-depressant drugs.

May I raise a third case, in which the failure to disclose medical records led to inefficiency and mistrust? The parents of Jenny Shaw, who is now aged six, noticed that she had a severe squint when she was less than two years old. Sometimes, it is difficult surgically to correct squints in children. Her parents, following guidance from their general practitioner, regularly took her to the local hospital. It said that an operation would not help and should not be tried for some time. There were two sets of records—one with the GP and one with the hospital. As the child was attending the hospital, the record on her squint was built up by the hospital.

Her parents moved from the constituency of the sponsor of the Bill the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), to St. Albans. The child is just six, and when she started school the school medical officer noticed her squint and referred her to the local health centre. Her parents went with her, delighted that someone should be picking up the problem, and an ophthalmologist saw her.

Those parents were accused of neglecting their child. They are very intelligent people. The father is an independent television producer of international note.

They were quick enough off the mark to dispute that and to ask, "What do you mean?" Eventually, they got to the bottom of the story. The hospital records had not arrived, many months after they had moved, at the health centre, which was working only on the GP's records. As I have said, for good reasons that record showed little information. Less articulate parents could have had their relationship with their child damaged by that accusation, which was carried forward and held to be consistent. More important, a wrong decision could have been taken as the consultant was quite naturally recommending an immediate operation. After many more weeks of endless telephoning, the record has still not arrived at St. Albans.

Is it any surprise, therefore, that the Royal College of Nursing—I have the honour of being on its parliamentary panel—wrote to me yesterday urging me to support the Bill and saying that it was delighted that I was a sponsor of it?

On balance the RCN has concluded that the damage to patients incurred through non-disclosure of medical records far outweigh the damage occurring through disclosure of medical records. The letter adds that the voluntary code, which was entered into recently, had proved inadequate and that people in the medical profession were not honouring it.

Patients quite clearly want access. It is to the credit of the GPs that nearly all of them in the Greater London area, for example, when polled on the subject, in support of the Bill, wanted it—80 per cent. of them said yes; they felt the benefits outweighed the dangers.

Of course, there is a downside to this subject. GPs and consultants worry that their work may be hampered. To help us consider that point of view, and to weigh it properly, we must consider that these are health care experts of great renown, intelligence and experience—some in my own constituency. Perhaps we should consider what the record contains about us as patients of the National Health Service. It contains three elements. I postulate that it contains fact, opinion and fiction. I make the last suggestion, because we need to consider who provides the information.

A health care record is not how one would imagine it to be. It contains information provided by all and sundry, and let me identify our friend sundry. I shall give an accurate list of what a medical register entry in a hospital includes. This is taken from an actual health authority registration—forests have to be cut down in Brazil regularly to keep this hospital going and I do not think that it is alone.

The list falls into three parts, with data initiated by three categories: first, individuals or organisations directly associated with the data subject—not a patient, but a data subject—family, relatives, guardians, trustees, other members of their households, friends, neighbours, employers—past, current or prospective—legal representatives, financial representatives, doctors, dentists, other health advisers, social, spiritual, welfare, advice workers—what is an advice worker? The list continues with other professional advisers and landlords. The second category includes individuals or organisations directly associated with the data user: employees, agents, suppliers, providers of goods or services, persons making an inquiry or complaint. The third category includes general and sundry organisations: the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health, the Department of Employment, the Ministry of Defence, including armed forces, local authority hygiene, education, social services, electoral registration and valuation departments, prosecuting authorities, police forces, courts, magistrates, the prison service, the probation service, public utilities, employment and recruitment agencies, voluntary, charitable and religious organisations, education or training establishments, examining bodies, survey or research organisations, suppliers of computing hardware and software, and patient support organisations. Those are sundries.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Is my hon. Friend emphasising that the need for the Bill is caused by the fact that the majority of the organisations that she has mentioned would have supplied information for the health records that would never have been known to the individual concerned? The individual would not previously have had an opportunity to check the accuracy of that information before it found its way on to the health records.

Miss Nicholson: Yes, who checks it? Nobody? Who could check it? Under the Data Protection Act the patient could check it if the knowledge or information was stored on an electronic record. A fee would be payable, which I regard as disgraceful, but nevertheless that is the way the Act works. However, under the Lloyd George system with paper records—an excellent system dreamt up with a unique patient number in 1907—the answer is no, the patient is not allowed to check it. We should not run away with the idea that the information is confidential in the way normally associated with knowledge so vital to the individual.

I am referring now to the paper record—the Lloyd George record—which is seen by, for instance, medical receptionists. I have a list of worries expressed by patients whose notes have been seen by receptionists. According to *Doctor*,

> "Most practices allow receptionist relatively unrestricted access to notes—arguing that this is essential in the interests of efficiency."

It is clear from the welter of statements that I have received that, although that practice may increase efficiency from the doctor's point of view, it has made patients uneasy and unhappy and has destroyed their sense of privacy and security. Information has been given out that they assumed to be confidential to the health care professionals. Anyone who sits in the cloisters here will know that cleaners, and anyone else who happens to walk through, can see such material—although that is no reflection on the quality of service provided by our staff.

I do not suppose that many hon. Members who are present today—if any—have seen the form that accompanies a smear diagnosis. Such forms contain a good deal of information. That little piece of paper floats around quite openly, and it is possible for laboratory assistants to track down the person to whom it relates and to learn whether she has cervical cancer.

There is also the problem of computerised records. Understandably, GPs have entered into contracts with drug companies to obtain free software and hardware—for they are rapidly entering the modern world. In return for what they have obtained, which they could not have obtained from other sources, GPs are passing to drug companies—on a regular, permanent, contractual basis—a vast stream of information about patients' prescriptions and drug-taking habits. That is of major importance

[Miss Nicholson]

to the future of the drug companies, and, therefore, to ourselves. The data are depersonalised, in that people's exact details are removed, but none the less the practice is a new development in the distribution of, and access to, medical records data.

Worrying things are also happening in the hospital world. In one London hospital alone, 800,000 records are on line on mainframe computers. Under a new Bill that is now in Committee, when medical services are contracted out to different parts of Britain—which, incidentally, I support, because it will be the most effective way of cutting waiting lists and providing early care for patients—the receiving hospital must know the patient's full medical details. The material is passed not by doctor to doctor, but by clerk to clerk, on an open network. Confidentiality means something very different today.

Perhaps the best concept is the smartcard, which is part of the new method of accessing and storing material. It is a small plastic card, the same size as those cards that we put into the wall—only to be told by the bank that there is nothing in the account, or that it is the wrong card or the wrong wall. The smartcard, however, is much better: it contains a microchip that plugs into a mainframe computer through a personal computer, providing access to all our health care data. The data is partitioned, which means that different health care professionals have access to different parts of the card and the mainframe data.

When the then Health Minister—the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—launched the card last March, he declared that the data belonged to the patient. The smartcard therefore allows the patient access to and ownership of the data, which is a welcome development.

There is conflict between the Department of Health and the Treasury, which has stated that data on a patient belong to the Secretary of State for Health. That adds 54 million medical records to the already heavy burdens that are carried by my right hon. and learned Friend. Therefore, he farms out the work to the local general practitioner committees.

The Lloyd George mechanism is wholly outdated. By far the most outdated concept is lack of access to data held on paper records. Whether it is a smartcard, or hospital data, or general practitioner computerised data, the patient has access to that information and significant rights. My aim is to enhance patient rights.

Logically, the Government ought unhesitatingly to support the Bill. The patient has access to computer records under the Data Protection Act 1984. Social work records are also accessible by means of the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. People have access to housing records by virtue of the same Act. It will soon be possible to gain access to school records. From September 1990 those records will be available to parents and older pupils. Doctors' reports on employees, which are provided to insurance companies, have become available under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. Credit reference records have been ours to look at under the Consumer Credit Act 1974. Whether we like it or not, we are being dragged into allowing individuals to have access to information about themselves.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Dos the hon. Lady accept that she is in danger of talking out the measure? If she would like it to reach the statute book, ought she not enable us to give the Bill a Second Reading by 2.30?

Miss Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman reminds me that I am on my last sentence.

The Bill is a small but crucial element in a much larger puzzle. The puzzle is about information, access, distribution and ownership. If the Bill is passed, the patient will be the beneficiary.

2.12 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on introducing the Bill. It concerns an important subject.

We have to ask whether there should be a statutory or voluntary right to access to medical records. The Opposition believe that by law people should be granted access to medical records. If patients were allowed only voluntary access to medical records, it would be difficult for them to exercise that right. The public are desperate for change. They are impatient to have this information. People ought to have the right to see their medical records. A minority of doctors should not be able to frustrate their demands. A voluntary code would allow doctors to frustrate their demands.

Britain must become a more open society. If we give the Bill a Second Reading, we shall be taking an important step in the right direction. The principle that there should be access to medical records is irresistible. If the Bill is not passed, the matter will inevitably be raised again and again.

I am sanguine about the prospects for success. From the information that I have received, it would seem that a large majority of doctors support the idea of patients having access to their files. Some doctors already discuss with their patients details of their medical records quite openly, and have been doing so successfully for some years.

An opinion poll carried out by the reputable Campaign for Freedom of Information, as reported in *General Practitioner* on 3 November 1989, shows the results of a survey on the attitudes of general practitioners. The article states:

"More than half (580) of the 1,085 GPs who responded said they would not object to a legal right of access, though this might be time consuming and affect their style of note-taking. Over a quarter (281) said they would welcome such a right and some thought patients should keep their records . . . Only 17 per cent. (171) said they would not normally allow patients to see their records and objected to a legal right of access."

There appears to be good support from the medical profession at grass roots level for more openness. The Bill merely extends in principle what already exists under the Data Protection Act 1984.

The Bill would pave the way for more efficiency in the medical profession. In a very illuminating article in *General Practitioner* on 14 October 1988, Dr. Elizabeth Scott wrote that access to files would make GPs smarten their diagnosis and files. Clearly that would be good for patients. She commented on why she feels that there is still some opposition to openness:

"In time gone by when doctors spoke only to doctors there were elements of prose that, although expressive, would not please. I have now edited and destroyed these unnecessary

missives. So consultants who may panic at the idea of some of their sallies coming home to roost can sleep easy. I have always suspected that this is the main reason that doctors are shy of letting their patients roam about their notes."

That is a doctor's views about why some in her profession do not support the idea of openness.

I do not think that anybody inside or outside the medical profession can justify allowing medical records to be prepared in a slapdash way. Clearly that can lead to errors with possible serious consequences. The Bill therefore would create a valuable incentive in eliminating such bad practices.

There is much to say and others may want to say a word or two, but I believe that the Bill is long overdue. It is very welcome in the House and in the country generally as a progressive and irresistible step in openness.

2.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I shall set my prepared speech on one side because there clearly is no time to develop my remarks. The most appropriate way to proceed is to confine my comments to a few general principles.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on introducing the Bill and on the courtesy that he has shown during its preparation. Although he came only 12th in the ballot, he has chosen well. The hon. Gentleman raised six points in his concise speech and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) raised a seventh. Although there is considerable agreement on the Bill—with important exceptions, to which I must refer—we should not consider this matter too quickly because important points of principle are involved.

First, there is the principle of access. There is no difference between the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and the Government on this principle. My predecessors and I have made it plain that we accept the principle of access to medical records. I have stated that important principle many times, as have the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) when he was Minister of State, Home Office in 1987. So far, no hon. Member has sought seriously to question that general principle.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said that he had found general practitioners who felt that it was useful to share patient data directly with patients. I can confirm that as a Health Minister who has been to general practitioners' surgeries and seen for himself that some have been only too willing to share data —perhaps on a computer screen or perhaps manually— directly with patients. The general practitioners who have done that have clearly done so after considerable thought, having weighed the consequences for patients and themselves.

The third point concerns openness about disease. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West touched on that point. Irrespective of the Bill—although the principles enshrined in it reflect that general theme—it is important that doctors should be as open as possible about disease. It is, of course, for each doctor to weigh how far he goes in telling a patient. Safeguards have been built into the Bill. There are circumstances in which the information can be withheld. I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman about some of them. On three, there is no difference of view between the Government and the hon. Gentleman. The explanatory memorandum refers to them:

"(1) information whose disclosures would be likely to cause serious harm to the applicant or someone else;

(2) information about another individual or which would identify an individual acting in a personal capacity (such as a family member) who has supplied information in confidence;

(3) where a parent has access to a child's record, information which the child provided in the expectation that it would remain confidential from the parent".

There may be other appropriate grounds on which to withhold information, and the Government may wish to add more categories when the Bill is given detailed consideration, but at least we agree with those three safeguards.

The fourth point concerns the value of correcting errors on records. We have heard some sad, but eloquently and concisely expressed, examples, and we share the concern that has been voiced.

Fifthly, this legislation is consistent with existing statutes. The Data Protection Act 1984, as clarified by the orders that followed it, spelt out clearly which information could be withheld. Nevertheless, the law of the land is that patients have the right of access to data held electronically by general practitioners. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North is therefore right to say that his measure is consistent, in the sense that it will open up the right of access to records held manually. His safeguards are broadly consistent with those in existing legislation governing access to electronically held data.

Sixthly, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) said, there is public support for the Bill. There is no question but that the weight of correspondence that my office and hon. Members received clearly supports the principles behind the Bill. However, it is important in the minute or two left to me to put on record the concern of senior representatives of the medical profession. It would not be right to fail to record, albeit briefly, their concerns.

The medical profession has said that it believes that "introduction of the Code of Practice"—

it is referring to the voluntary code of practice that we have been seeking to introduce over the past two years—

"could seriously undermine the relationship of confidence between doctor and patient. It is an important part of a doctor's professional duty to inform the patient about his condition and to communicate this information in the way that he judges will be most helpful to that patient. . . .If patients were to come to rely on their own interpretation of doctors' notes rather than on the professional advice of their medical practitioner, the existing doctor-patient relationship would alter fundamentally. . . .One foreseeable problem would be the difficulties in interpreting for the patient in a meaningful manner complex medical terminology from a multiplicity of disciplines, eg radiology, histopathology, bacteriology."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West will forgive me if I do not answer her points. In summary, we already have legislation giving access to electronically held data. The Bill is consistent with that legislation in terms of safeguards, but would open up access to manually held records. We accept that principle. Serious concern has been expressed by senior representatives of the medical profession about the whole principle of access. Nevertheless, over the past two years, following the commitment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley, we have been consulting on a non-statutory code of practice. We have

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

reached the conclusion that as, after two years, the medical profession essentially says, "We do not accept the principle. We do not believe that a code of practice, whatever it says in detail, is acceptable", we have reached an impasse. For those reasons, we do not object to the Bill. It is consistent and we accept it.

2.27 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). He has raised some important principles in which many of my constituents, and no doubt his, have taken great interest.

The House should discuss the principle of the Bill and it is a more than appropriate subject for a Friday. I also pay tribute to one of the sponsors of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) who, with her customary clarity, has given some moving examples of cases in which patients have had severe trouble as a result of inadequate or misunderstood records. The proposals for health reform will, of course, allow patients to change their doctors more readily. In many cases—perhaps even in cases such as my hon. Friend mentioned—that will come at an earlier stage, with or without access to records, if the patient understands that it is important. In passing, I also compliment her on her facility in pronouncing medical terms, with which I have always had enormous difficulty.

The principle behind the Bill is very welcome. However, I have some concerns about it proceeding in its present form, first, because I am still uncertain about the statutory principle in relation to manually prepared records and, secondly, because once again we appear to be approaching the issue of access to records piecemeal. As my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West said, there are many pieces of legislation on this matter. The Data Protection Act 1984 was initiated partly by a ruling from the European Community and did not so much give protection to data as provide the ability to see electronically stored data so that records could be corrected.

Many other efforts have been made to give people access to records—even to medical records. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) did a good a job in introducing the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, concerning access to reports for employment or insurance purposes only by the person's general practitioner——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put; *but* MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *withheld her assent and declined then to put that Question.*

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Shepherd: But my hon. Friend is talking out the Bill.

Mr. Taylor: This creates an admitted anomaly as patients have a right of access to computer records but not to manual records that are stored——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 2 March.

Private Members' Bills

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not utterly disgraceful that the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) should stand up to support a Bill and then proceed to talk it out? It is time that all his constituents knew of the game that he has played this morning.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman knows that the Chair has no authority over such matters.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred until Friday 4 May.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Today's business has been delayed by a number of factors, not least the intervention of the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who prevented the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) from completing its Second Reading. My Bill on eliminating poverty in retirement—or a similar Bill—has appeared on the Order Paper for the past seven years, but it has always been denied a debate, usually by the Trappist tendency on the Treasury Bench. I should be grateful if, in the new spirit of glasnost throughout the House, you would be prepared to reveal the identity of the Trappist who objected, so that my Bill, which would help millions of pensioners, might be debated in the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Chair has no authority to identify hon. Members who object to Bills.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that we are both getting on a bit, you and I——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Certainly not. The hon. Member for Bolsover may be getting on a bit, but the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West is not. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Skinner: I shall rephrase my remarks if you resist those blandishments, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am concerned, not about myself and other hon. Members who get a good fat pension when they retire, but about all those pensioners who would have been helped by the Bill tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) had the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) not prevented that Bill from having a Second Reading.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

MOTOR TRADE (CONSUMER PROTECTION) (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 30 March.

RECYCLING OF PLASTICS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

GREYHOUND BETTING LEVY BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [16 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 2 March.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 2 March.

REGISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL LOBBYING INTERESTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 2 March.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 2 March.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have just heard the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) ostensibly speaking in favour of a Bill that the Minister said the Government supported but in fact deliberately talking it out. It appears from the Register of Members' Interests that the hon. Member has a number of interests in the medical industry. In the interests of honesty and straightforwardness, and so that we might all know the position when the hon. Member for Esher supposedly speaks in favour of a Bill but is quite obviously trying to talk it out, he should have declared his interest initially; otherwise we must suspect his motives.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The point has been noted, and it is a matter of concern.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I have no representation for doctors and I have no representation which is relevant for declaration. All my interests are duly declared in the Register of Members' Interests. May I clarify the point? I welcomed the principle of the Bill——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot continue to debate the Bill.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that he had no representation for doctors. However, in his declaration of interests, he is——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We have been through all that. The hon. Member for Esher has made his position clear.

Romania

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

2.35 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I am delighted to have this opportunity to raise in the House the question of the relationship between the United Kingdom and Romania. I want to begin by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the appointment of our ambassador in Bucharest. We are singularly fortunate that in that little backwater of the diplomatic service, where one would expect to find less able ambassadors, we have someone who is rising to the challenge.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): There are no backwaters in our diplomatic service.

Mr. Thorne: I am glad that my right hon. Friend has such confidence. I am afraid that I have met less able ambassadors in other posts. I wanted to say that we are very lucky to be represented in Bucharest by Michael Atkinson, our ambassador. His ability to deal with the situation is outstanding.

The last election in Romania was held in the 1940s and the winning party received 71 per cent of the vote and gained 71 of the seats in Parliament. Within a matter of weeks, that party was overturned by the Communists who have retained control ever since. That control culminated in the repressive reign of the dictator Ceausescu who was so hated throughout the world.

Ceausescu had built up a very efficient dictatorship ably supported by the Securitate which was largely composed of orphans and others who had been educated within his system and brought up to give him undying support. Such a situation is a threat to a country of that kind.

The Securitate was represented everywhere in Romania. It was not until I had the honour to visit Bucharest as a member of a very small Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation between 10 and 13 February that I had an opportunity to see exactly what had happened in that country. I discovered that the Securitate was represented in all walks of life including the corps de ballet. I had wrongly assumed that the Securitate was a full-time uniformed force which perhaps worked out of uniform at times. However, that was not the case and there were representatives in all walks of life, including the newspaper industry and, in fact, all other industries.

On 17 December, following the arrest of a Protestant priest who was ministering to the Hungarian minority in Timisoara, there was an uprising and a number of people were killed. The revolution spread to Bucharest on 22 December when Ceausescu appeared on the balcony of the Communist party headquarters. For the first time in his life Ceausescu was heckled. Many of us will remember seeing television pictures of the heckling and will recall how he reacted to what he must have thought was a terrible situation.

A student who shouted "Timisoara" was shot dead by Securitate members who were watching the rally from the buildings surrounding the square. Because most demonstrations in Romania were organised by the ruling party, the crowd at the back started to take up the cry of

"Timisoara." That led, first, to the fleeing and, subsequently, to the execution of Ceausescu at the end of December last year.

The dictatorship in Romania had been extremely efficient and had repressed any activities by any other party. While we were in Bucharest, we met a journalist who had had the temerity to speak out mildly against the regime in early 1989. He had been arrested and held in the most appalling conditions for 11 months, which he described to us. He is now the editor of the main free-thinking newspaper in Bucharest. That editor told us that he was quite confident that, even among his staff he still had some representatives of the Securitate, which was extremely worrying. We must realise that, although there has been a revolution, the situation in Romania still leaves a lot to be desired.

During his reign, Ceausescu was inclined to have Cabinet reshuffles at regular intervals. During the reshuffles, people were put out of the Government, but, nevertheless, they were brought back sometimes five or 10 years later, provided that they behaved themselves. It was not unexpected that, on the shelf, were several people who had been active in supporting the Ceausescu regime but who were no longer in the Government and were available and willing to serve in the National Salvation Front, which also comprised certain other people who had taken part in the revolution. Many of them have now left. It is my distinct impression that the National Salvation Front is certainly controlled by, if it does not exclusively consist of, members who have been active Communists and supported the previous regime in Romania.

That means that the elections that are scheduled to take place on 20 May leave a short time for the electorate to be given an appropriate choice. The emerging political parties include the National Peasants party, which has joined forces with the Christian Democrats, and is the nearest akin to our own Conservative party. That party was put out of power back in the 1940s.

The Romanian Liberal party is very close to the National Peasants party, which is not surprising as the general secretary of the Liberal party and the president of the National Peasants party had the honour of sharing a cell together for about eight years after they were arrested by the Communist regime in the 1940s. Therefore, they get on with and understand one another very well. They could well form an alliance for the election, if not permanently.

The Social Democrat party, which was absorbed into the Communist party in the 1940s, has also re-emerged. There are two other fairly active and substantial parties. One is the Ecology party. The world knows that ecological problems in Romania are probably more serious than anywhere else. The intellectuals were anxious that note be taken of that and have formed their own party. The other substantial party, the Republican party, is in the course of being formed. In addition, there are no fewer than 40 parties. Any group of 251 people can form a nationally registered party. It is believed that a number of those 40 parties include ex-members of the Securitate, and that is also worrying.

The main difficulty is that the National Salvation Front took over at the end of December and still retains control. It controls the means of transport, production and distribution. Apparently the main Communist newspaper is a subscription newspaper. The subscription had to be paid if people hoped to get on in their jobs, to be promoted and even to retain their jobs. The subscriptions are collected in December each year and the collection was made at the end of last year. People who subscribed will receive the Communist newspaper for the whole of this year, whether they want it or not. The queues for the uncontrolled newspapers were extraordinary. They were usually a 100 or more yards long. People were hungry for real news of what was happening in the world and in particular in Romania.

That paints a difficult picture for parties trying desperately to reform and reorganise. There is so much for them to do. They have to recruit members, elect officers, write manifestos, choose candidates and publish their election addresses all before 20 May, less than 20 weeks from the beginning of the year. That is an impossible task if the process is to yield free and fair elections.

I understand that all the parties except the National Salvation Front believe that the election should be postponed until September. That would be a much more realistic date. The National Salvation Front is not so keen to postpone the election because it realised that a number of chickens will come home to roost between now and September, in particular the gross overmanning of industry. Three or four people often do one person's job.

The demonstrations that we have seen in recent weeks were often by people who were bussed in from the mines and elsewhere. People are genuinely worried that if there is a change of Government and the new Government believe in free enterprise, many will lose their jobs. They are anxious to carry on in the same old way as during the Communist regime.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office knows about the know-how fund which has been set up to educate people in the political system that we run in the West and in particular in our country. I understand that a group of 12 Romanians is due to come to Britiah from 10 to 17 March. Again, I am worried that if the people who come are aligned to the National Salvation Front, we shall be disappointed that we have not had the opportunity to put our message over to people who are genuinely trying to learn how to build a party on which a free democracy and market economy can grow.

The French, Germans and Japanese are all anxious to take their business men into Romania to look into possible joint enterprises. That is certainly something which we shall have to do. But the lack of resources among the parties that have emerged since the beginning of this year is serious.

While we were in Romania obstructions were caused by the authorities. Some French MPs tried to take in photocopying equipment but were prevented from doing so by the customs and excise, who raised all sorts of problems which were sorted out only by a telephone call to the Prime Minister. We were told about demonstrations in which the National Peasants party was harassed and about attacks on cars driven by members of the Liberal party, while the police stood by and did nothing. All those are worrying signs.

The only real solution to the problem is that the election should be put off until September. We should do everything possible to encourage that. We should also encourage joint ventures and especially small businesses to grow and flourish so that they can lay the proper foundations for a true democracy and a genuine free market economy. Unless we give Romania help and

[Mr. Thorne]

encouragement to achieve those things, I fear that life in that country this time next year is likely to be very much as it was this time last year.

2.50 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): As the other vice-chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation that went to Romania, I support the comments of the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne). Anyone who has been to Romania since the overthrow of the brutal Ceausescu regime must pay the deepest tribute to those Romanian men and women, many of them very young, who died fighting to try to ensure freedom and democracy in their country.

We have seen major events in the last two months. As the hon. Member for Ilford, South said, we have seen the emergence of major new political parties. Romania has a much freer press and churches are open and packed with people who wish to worship. However, as we were told and as we saw, there is still a deep fear about how much real democracy will be established in the run-up to the May elections and after them. There is clear evidence that many of the old Ceausescu guard are now making many of the day-to-day political decisions.

Britain and the EEC must use their power and contacts to ensure that the elections are free and that all parties contesting the elections, especially the four major ones, will have the same rights as the National Salvation Front. The West must not allow the price that the Romanian people paid to overthrow Ceausescu to have been paid in vain. It would be interesting to hear from the Minister the Government's attitude to the day-to-day accounts that we read and see on television about events in Romania.

We all know that Romania needs massive help. It needs financial help and technical know-how, training schemes for its work people and open markets in which to trade. If the elections are rigged and the Ceausescu gang returns under another guise, what do we do? We asked the Romanian people that question against the background of their needs. We were repeatedly told that in no way should we help to sustain the National Salvation Front in Power. The West must take account of that.

The people of Romania showed great friendship towards Britain and the British people. I repeat the question asked by the hon. Member for Ilford, South. What discussions are the Government having with British industry about the setting up of trading information offices in large cities in Romania? If that were done we could discuss with the Romanians the sort of trading that we are prepared to do. That is already being done by many of our European competitors. Major industries here have said that they are not prepared to put much money into Romania because of the uncertainty. However, that should not stop the beginning of trade discussions or the exchange of schemes through which the two countries could start to work together.

The British Council and the overseas service of the BBC are held in the very highest esteem by Romanians. What action do the Government intend to take to extend those services? We saw the work of the British Council at the embassy. On the day on which we were there we saw 20 or 30 people and we were told that this was a repeated occurrence, now that the people who wish to use the facilities of the British Council no longer have their passports checked, which is what used to happen. We saw the many English language books and tapes that were used by Romanians, the English language newspapers that people were reading. The facilities of the British Council are limited, yet there is massive goodwill towards it. What extra funding will be made available to develop its work?

What discussions are taking place with the BBC overseas service? We were told that during the days of Ceausescu the people of Romania listened to it because they believed that what it said was true. The hon. Member for Ilford, South and I discussed with BBC representatives talks on elections and democracy, such as those that the IPU is trying to establish in the seminars that it is running in London, and the possibility of that being given greater coverage by the overseas service. We need to study closely the possibility of that service being extended in Romania, and possibly in other central European countries.

I close my remarks by echoing what the hon. Member for Ilford, South said at the beginning of his speech. I pay the warmest tribute to our ambassador in Romania and to his staff. They were superb. They showed us kindness, despite the difficult conditions in which they operate. One can judge the status of diplomats from the reception shown to them. Wherever we went, warmth was shown to the ambassador and his staff. I hope that we shall pay them the tribute that they richly deserve. I am sure that the ambassador would say that he is the captain of an superb team—the hon. Member for Ilford, South and I agree about that—but I hope that the Minister and the Foreign Secretary note their views, because the information that they send back gives the true picture of what is happening in Romania today and shows the hopes of many people who belong to political parties or are members of organisations hoping to become democratic political parties.

Let us try to work together and ensure that the old guard, under whatever name it tries to surface, will not once again hold the reins of power and destroy that country and its people, as, sadly, it has done over the past 40 years.

2.57 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am delighted to have been asked to surrender a little of my time to allow for the excellent speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and of the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). They have put on record the up-to-date and accurate account of the situation in Romania. I say that I have surrendered my time, because *The Observer*, which does not understand the procedures of the House, once put me in the "quote of the year" for saying that I had only five minutes to speak in an Adjournment debate on Cambodia.

This has been a short debate, but it is important that both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member should have put their views to the House. There is little that I can add to the historical background that was put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South. Both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member spoke of the admiration of the British people for those young people and students who stood up to the authorities in Romania. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South said, I do not think that we fully understood the extent of the security

apparatus that the Ceausescu regime had established. It was not like a normal secret police force. It penetrated every area of national life and had a network of informers everywhere. We now know that football teams were members of the Securitate. There was almost a state within a state, which condemned the country to live in perpetual fear. The country was right to live in fear because the slightest sign of dissidence was ruthlessly punished. Western diplomats were roughed up and mistreated in various ways.

I was glad to hear the warm tributes paid by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the embassy staff and to the ambassador. I should also mention the ambassador's wife and children, who went through extreme peril when, in the middle of the fighting, the embassy residence was destroyed after Securitate people put machine gun posts on the roof. I am glad to record that tribute, and we will pass it on.

We share the hon. Gentleman's view of the horrors uncovered at the end of the regime. I do not think that anybody has guessed their extent, in human rights terms or in the scale of the disaster.

My hon. Friend referred to the ecological and environmental disaster which has resulted in the establishment of the Ecology party, whose representatives I met. I found it impressive that they could get an environment movement going from a standing start.

The health horrors that have been uncovered were also mentioned. We have seen the appalling account of the AIDS-infected children, abandoned to die without any care. Britain and other countries are taking emergency steps to try to get help. The last time that I spoke to the House about Romania I announced that we were sending disposable syringes. I am happy to announce that we are doing more. We are to contribute another £20,000, which has been requested for training in the handling of AIDS patients. These are small matters, but help has been requested, and we are able to get it there quickly.

I pay tribute to the work done by my local television company, HTV, which filmed some of the so-called mental asylums—they are not asylums but prisons in which brain-damaged children were left to die. The brain damage is largely the result of environmental pollution on the one hand—heavy metals have damaged children—and on the other Ceausescu's appalling and mad policies to make all forms of contraception illegal, and to make abortion illegal. That meant that there was a huge back-street abortion industry, which produced many more abortions every year than live births, and left many brain-damaged live children.

I am happy to announce that we have responded to a project suggested to us by the Marie Stopes International Institute for a programme of family planning, to try to deal with the extraordinary situation in which there were 300,000 live births in Romania last year and some 1·2 million abortions. It would be awful if, as I fear has happened in some other eastern countries, abortion became the recognised method of family planning. Therefore, we will fund emergency training by the Marie Stopes institute. A project, costing £53,000, is to go ahead straight away. Again, that is a small thing, but it is something that we can do quickly.

My hon. Friend and the hon. Member were quite right in saying that first, major programmes of emergency aid should be put in place, and they have been, largely by the European Community which sent £7·5 million worth of help quickly, and another £27 million package has been agreed since.

All those steps will help with the emergency, but the hon. Member and my hon. Friend are absolutely right. The long-term future of Romania depends on the building of free, democratic and genuine institutions. We cannot run Romania from here and we should not try. The Romanian people must have the democratic institutions to deal with the problem in the long term.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Tooting, who used exactly the words that I would have used, when he said that we should not be squeamish about using our power. It would be a betrayal of those people who fought so bravely if we were to allow the gains to be lost and the old gang—as he put it—to get back into power. We have been a little anxious about some of the symptoms of that which appeared during the past few weeks, and we have made our views clear, both bilaterally and through the European Community, whose medium-term economic aid, like our own, is conditional on steps towards the establishment of free economies, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. Commissioner Andriessen has been very good and very stalwart about making it clear that that is so, as did Secretary of State Baker in his brief visit to Bucharest, and so have we. The whole of the western world should make that clear. I entirely agree with what has been said on the subject.

Not everyone in the Salvation Front should be regarded with suspicion. We have had talks with Pastor Tokes, who still allows his name to be lent to that organisation. On the other hand Doina Cornea, who is someone that we greatly rspect, has resigned from it. It is not for us but for the Romanian people to choose who represents them. However, we have the legitimate right under the Helsinki Final Act to insist that those elections are properly conducted and that there is equal and proper access to the media before those elections take place.

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 February 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Budgets

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many authorities' aggregated schools budgets have been rejected by his Department and will not be implemented in 1990; and if he will give the reason in each case.

Mrs. Rumbold: Determination of the aggregated schools budget in each local education authority is a matter for the authority itself and is not subject to approval by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations from Nottinghamshire county council requesting exceptional treatment for its aggregated school budget because of the size of its nursery provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has received a number of representations from Nottinghamshire county council about nursery provision and its scheme for local management of schools. My right hon. Friend has announced his intention to approve the scheme submitted by Nottinghamshire county council subject to a number of modifications. The council is currently being consulted on the proposed modifications.

Scientists

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many scientists are leaving the United Kingdom now; and how many left in each year since 1978.

Mr. Jackson: Available data relate to the number of full-time university academic staff in all disciplines leaving the United Kingdom for employment or study abroad. The numbers of non-clinical staff leaving since 1980 (the earliest year for which comparable data are available) are as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Outflow	249	203	214	153	138	154	204	191	160
Inflow	276	183	118	220	318	292	260	199	244
Net intake	27	−20	−96	67	180	138	56	8	84

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the number of non-British scientists working in United Kingdom institutions.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally.

Brain Drain

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has as to whether a brain drain exists from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: No firm evidence exists of a 'brain drain' from this country. The best information currently available shows that there has been a net inflow to the United Kingdom of full-time non-clinical academic staff in universities in every year since 1983. I announced in July 1989 that I had requested the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals to monitor flows of university staff in and out of this country and to ensure that data about this are reliable.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish for each local education authority his estimate of its outturn expenditure for 1989-90 on a basis comparable with its standard spending assessments for education for 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: No information about outturn expenditure for 1989-90 at LEA level is yet available centrally.

Departmental Running Costs

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what real increases in his Department's running costs are planned to occur in 1991 and 1991-92; what steps will be taken to ensure that the increases represent value for money; and if he will deposit a copy of the relevant management plan in the Library.

Mrs. Rumbold: As announced in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1011), DES running costs net of receipts are planned to be £78·985 million in 1990-91 and £89·192 million in 1991-92. The figure for the latter year includes provision of £5·9 million for the additional recurrent costs in 1991-92 of the Department's new London headquarters. Excluding this sum, the planned increase in real terms in the Department's running costs provision from 1990-91 to 1991-92 will be 1·9 per cent.

The Department is committed to achieving the maximum possible value for money from its running costs expenditure and has achieved significant increases in efficiency, for example from its investment in information technology. Future plans will concentrate on securing continuing improvements in value for money. It is not, however, our practice to publish internal management planning documents.

Colleges and Polytechnics

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many advanced further education students were in colleges and polytechnics in 1988-89; how many higher education students were in colleges and polytechnics in 1989-90; and how many

higher education students are proposed to be funded in colleges and polytechnics by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council in 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: The public expenditure White Paper (Cm 1011) published on 30 January 1990 indicated that there were 240,000 home full-time and sandwich higher education students in the PCFC sector in the academic year 1988-89. The numbers were projected to increase to 251,000 and 260,000 respectively in the following two years. My right hon. Friend announced to the House on 8 February that the numbers of home full-time and sandwich higher education students in the PCFC sector in the 1989-90 academic year were now provisionally estimated to be 261,000.

The PCFC allocations for 1989-90 and 1990-91 were on the basis of 240,000 and 254,000 home full-time and sandwich students. Institutions will also benefit from tuition fee income at the rate of £1,675 for each student with a mandatory award from September 1990.

St. Mary's Trinity and St. Bridget's Schools

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision will be made for the education of children at St. Mary's Trinity and St. Bridget's Church of England primary schools, Liverpool, following their proposed closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No statutory proposals have yet been published to cease to maintain these schools. Provision for the education of the children concerned is the responsibility of the Liverpool education authority.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how the education component of SSAs for inner London in 1990-91 will support a percentage increase to London weighting for teachers greater than the general percentage increase to teachers' pay; what is the expected cost of this measure; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how the education component of SSAs for inner London in 1990-91 will support the use of new pay flexibility in enhancement of incremental points and extension of incremental scales as a response to shortage of teachers; what is the expected cost of these measures; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how the education component of SSAs for inner London in 1990-91 will support the introduction of the proposed new £750 discretionary pay addition to teachers in inner London; what is the expected cost of this measure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated cost to the inner London councils of the increase in London weighting in respect of 1990-91 is £2·2 million; the corresponding cost of the new £750 inner London supplement, on the assumptions made in the IAC report, is £6·9 million. The use of the other local flexibilities from 1 January 1991 is a matter for individual LEAs. Education standard spending assessments include an area cost adjustment which reflects general labour cost differentials between London, the south-east and other areas of England. This provides the inner London councils with the basis to meet the costs of implementation of the IAC recommendations.

Student Loans

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to publish an information leaflet for students on top-up-loans.

Mr. MacGregor: I have published a leaflet giving details of top-up loans. It is intended to indicate to students, potential students and others how the student loans scheme should operate, and the terms on which the loans will be offered, if the Education (Student Loans) Bill is enacted. Copies have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

Grant Programmes

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish the report of the efficiency scrutiny of his Department's specific grant programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr MacGregor: I am today publishing the report of the efficiency scrutiny of my Department's two main specific grant programmes, education support grants and the local education authority training grants scheme. The scrutiny was undertaken as part of the efficiency unit's scrutiny programme.

I welcome the report's conclusion that both grants are meeting their objectives, and have promoted important and beneficial developments which would not otherwise have happened. The evidence received by the scrutiny provides overwhelming support for the two schemes, and I readily accept the recommendation that they should continue.

The main recommendation for change is that we should move to bring the two grants together into a unified scheme. I endorse this in principle. It should promote better co-ordination between the grants, with training needs being considered alongside other forms of support, such as materials and advisory staff. This should be particularly valuable for activities supporting the implementation of the education reforms. It should also offer administrative savings.

Ministers will be giving further consideration to the legislative and practical implications of this change, taking account of the views of the local authority associations. We shall also consider, with a view to implementation, the other recommendations for improving the administration and evaluation of the grants. I would hope to begin to take account of them in drawing up proposals for the grant programmes for 1991-92, which I shall be announcing in the spring.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. They are also being sent to all local education authorities and other interested bodies.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the corporate plans of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council will be published.

Mr. Macgregor: The National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council are today publishing their corporate plans for the period 1990-91 to 1992-93. I have agreed their expenditure proposals for 1990-91, subject to parliamentary approval

of the Estimates in due course. The two councils' expenditure proposals for 1991-92 and 1992-93 will be subject to review in the course of this year's public expenditure survey. I have arranged for copies of the plans to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sentencing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek the standardisation of court sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our proposals for achieving greater consistency in sentencing practice are set out in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public' (Cm 965), published on 6 February. Sentences need to take account of the differences in the circumstances of offences and offenders: the aim is consistency of approach, rather than uniformity of outcome.

Crack (Merseyside)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to launch any new initiatives to reduce the increases in use of crack in Merseyside.

Mr. Mellor: We already have in place a strategy for tackling drug misuse aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for all drugs, including cocaine and crack. Over £2 million is being made available in 1990-91 for a new drug prevention initiative which will involve the setting up of local drug prevention teams in a number of areas at risk from drugs and in particular from the threat of crack. Areas in Merseyside are among those being considered for the possible location of one of the initial teams.

Police Expenditure

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of available information on the new system of capital expenditure control for the police service, which is to become operative from 1 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office circular 35/1989, issued last July, gave early information about the new arrangements. Further details have been circulated to local authorities, including police authorities, by the Department of the Environment, in a consultative circular issued on 11 January 1990 and in the draft Local Authorities (Capital Finance) Regulations 1990 issued on 2 February. Police authorities will be informed of their allocations of capital grant and supplementary credit approvals for 1990-91 as soon as possible.

Human Rights

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government will introduce legislation to incorporate the European convention on human rights into domestic law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of the Police of Metropolis as to how many children and how many adults respectively, are known to have gone missing in the Metropolitan police district each month of the past two years for which records are available; and how many were subsequently traced *(a)* within a week, *(b)* within a month, *(c)* within three months, *(d)* within six months and *(e)* not for over six months of report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to give monthly figures in relation to persons reported missing in the Metropolitan police district, and statistical information is not kept regarding the periods of time within which missing persons are traced. However, the following annual figures are given in relation to persons reported missing in the Metropolitan police district in 1988 and 1989.

	1988	*1989*
Males		
Under 14 years	486	2,955
14 to 17 years	937	5,661
18 years +	2,710	4,566
Females		
Under 14 years	421	1,587
14 to 17 years	1,091	6,078
18 years +	2,500	4,413
TOTAL	8,145	25,260

Of the 8,145 persons reported missing during 1988, 1,075 were shown centrally as being still missing at the end of the year. Of the 25,260 persons reported missing during 1989, 315 were still missing at the end of the year. The figures for 1989 are not comparable with those of previous years owing to new recording procedures having been introduced.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many inquiries the Metropolitan police received from other forces in respect of missing persons during the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of missing persons reports received by the Metropolitan police from other forces during 1989 was 6,913.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has consulted the European Economic Community countries which operate a national register for missing persons with a view to setting up such a register in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are not consulting EC member states direct. We hope instead to build on existing arrangements for the exchange of information internationally about missing persons, via the International Criminal Police Organisation (ICPO).

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now make it his policy to comply with the recommendation of the Association of Chief Police Officers to create a national register for missing persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are investigating the best and most cost-effective means of establishing a national missing persons register. A feasibility study has been commissioned to examine the possibility of putting missing persons data on the planned replacement for the police national computer system. We expect to receive the report on this study next month.

Condoms (Prisons)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on the distribution of condoms and safer sex information in prisons.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our policy to make condoms available to prisoners. An important consideration is that they afford less protection against HIV infection when used for anal sex. We cannot be certain that a change of policy would not encourage significantly more sexual activity of a kind which, even with a condom, carries a particularly high risk of HIV infection. If that were to happen the result might be to increase rather than reduce the spread of infection.

Advice on safer sex is included in the AIDS/HIV education programme for prisoners and is addressed to the need for safe behaviour after release as well as during custody. The part which condoms can play in reducing risk and how they should be used to achieve maximum protection is explained.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of claims outstanding for criminal injuries compensation at the beginning of each year since 1974; and what is the total number of such claims which are presently outstanding.

Mr. John Patten: On 1 February 1990, a total of 97,045 applications were awaiting resolution by the board. The other information requested is given in the table:

Year beginning 1 April	*Applications outstanding*
1974	9,118
1975	10,839
1976	13,930
1977	17,937
1978	23,331
1979	24,684
1980	26,372
1981	24,795
1982	28,738
1983	32,040
1984	34,235
1985	41,685
1986	51,420
1987	64,115
1988	77,965
1989	82,520

Batons

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received from the public regarding the use of martial-arts type batons for controlling violent or potentially violent individuals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None of which I am aware.

Bail Hostels

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to allow bail hostels to be run by private operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are examining how private sector involvement in the provision of bail accomodation, including bail hostels, can be increased but no decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he gives on the establishment of bail hostels in communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The role of the Home Office in the setting up of individual bail hostels is confined to approving a proposal for funding. It is for local probation committees to decide the location of a bail hostel, obtain the appropriate planning consents and negotiate the purchase.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of money made available for bail hostels in west Yorkshire for the years 1989-90 to 1990-91.

Mr. John Patten: Capital provision of up to £735,000 has been made available for additional bail and probation—bail hostel places in west Yorkshire in 1989-90. The allocation for 1990-91 is not yet decided.

Rape

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to review the law in England and Wales on rape within marriage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This aspect of law was last considered by the Criminal Law Revision Committee as part of its 1984 report on sexual offences. The committee recommended, by a narrow majority, that the law should not be changed to cover all subsisting marriages. It pointed out that where a husband commits assault or indecent assault, he can be prosecuted for these offences and that the question raises issues about the nature of marriage and about violence in the domestic context which go beyond the scope of the criminal law.

Domestic violence is one of the subjects being considered by the ministerial group on women's issues. The rate of reporting of incidents of domestic violence has increased in recent years, and this may in part reflect greater awareness by the police, victims' organisations, other services and the public of the difficulties some women face.

The Government believe that legislation in this area should proceed from a broad measure of agreement after careful examination of the wider issues such as those identified by the Criminal Law Revision Committee. We therefore welcome the Law Commission's agreement to carry out a joint criminal law and family law project in the context of its work on domestic violence. I understand that the aim is to produce a working paper, for consultation, early next year. The Government will consider the conclusions most carefully in deciding whether to change the law.

WALES

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation in his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the year 1988-89 there were two cases of theft or misappropriation in the Welsh Office totalling £1,255. Any loss from theft or misappropriation is examined thoroughly and the lessons learned are used to strengthen systems to deter further fraud.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss-prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is the responsibility of all staff to prevent the misappropriation of funds. The following staff in my Department have a major role in aiding loss prevention through audit work.

2 FCA
3 CIPFA
1 AAT
4 MIIA
10 BATS

Baby Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the report on baby services in Wales chaired by Professor Sir Eric Stroud.

Mr. Grist: The Department proposes to publish shortly the report of the advisory group on perinatal intensive care.

Special Needs Housing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many units of accommodation for disabled people he estimates will need to be provided in Wales by the year 2010;

(2) how many units of sheltered accommodation for *(a)* elderly people over 75 years and *(b)* very elderly people over 85 years he estimates will need to be provided in Wales by the year 2010;

(3) what categories of accommodation he has identified as required in order to meet the needs of disabled people in Wales *(a)* now and *(b)* over the next 20 years;

(4) what categories of accommodation he has identified as required in order to meet the needs of *(a)* elderly people over 75 years and *(b)* very elderly people over 85 years in Wales (i) now and (ii) over the next 20 years.

Mr. Grist: The Government attache high priority to the provision of all types of special needs housing. It is for local authorities in conjunction with other housing providers to assess current and future housing needs within their areas. It is essential that housing authorities play a major role in the production of social care plans as part of the care in community strategy to assist this process.

Disabled People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the circulars issued by his Department between 1 January 1987 and 31 January 1990 regarding the needs of, and provision for, disabled people in the fields of *(a)* health, *(b)* social services, *(c)* housing, *(d)* education and *(e)* transport.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the table:

a. Health and (b) Social Services	
WHC(87)19	Health Service Development. Review of pre-discharged; of supervision and aftercare arrangements for conditionally discharged restricted patients.
WHC(87)49	Revised cost allowances for health buidings
WHC(88)30	and residential accommodation for staff and
WHC(89)30	small mental handicap community units.
WOC3(88)(1/88)	Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986—Implementation of Sections 5 and 6.
WOC20/87(4/87)	Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986—Implementation of Sections 4, 8(1), 9 and 10.
WHC(88)57	Accommodation for people with mental illness.
WHC(89)9	Health Building Note 40: Volume 3—Lifts and stairways
	Volume 4—Designing from Disabled People
WHC(89)23	Nursing in the Community—a team approach for Wales
WHC(89)40	Mental Illness Services: A Strategy for Wales. Submission of 3 year Joint County Plans: 1990/91 to 1992/93.
WHC(90)1	Discharge of Patients from Hospital.
c. Housing	
WOC(24/87) (Paragraph 27)	Changes of Use of Buildings and other Land: the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.
d. Education	
WOC(54/89)	Assessment and Statements of Special Educational Needs. Procedures within the Education, Health and Social Services.
WOC(61/89)	Special Schools for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.
e. Transport	
None.	

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to formulate and implement a disablement strategy for Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Department has recently consulted health and local authorities and voluntry and professional organisations on a draft circular giving advice on good practice in the provision of services for people with physical and or sensory disabilities. It is intended to publish the final version next month. That will be followed by further guidance when the results of current reviews of existing services and consultation have been analysed.

Elderly People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what basis and information sources he used in reaching his estimate of the increase in the number of elderly people in Wales over the next 20 years; and what research his Department has undertaken to verify this prediction;

(2) what basis he used in reaching his estimate of the number of very elderly people in Wales over the next 20 years; and what research his Department has undertaken to verify this prediction.

Mr. Grist: Annual estimates of the population including age structure are made by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) using:

(i) the results of the 1981 census;
(ii) registration of subsequent births and deaths; and
(iii) estimates of migration derived from electoral rolls, the National Health Service Central Register and the International Passenger Survey.

National projections produced by the Government Actuary's Department take the OPCS annual estimate as the base and apply assumptions on future mortality, fertility and migration patterns. Such assumptions, developed in consultation with relevant Departments, are described in "Population projections 1987-2027" series PP2 No. 16, OPCS, and a copy is in the Library. Current population projections can only be verified when the results of future censuses become available.

Business Growth

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he has received from employers under the business growth training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Training Agency has received over 3,000 applications to participate in the business growth training programme in Wales.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the position in Wales and Scotland with respect to the responsioilities that employers will have for collecting cash from poll tax defaulters.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989, a Welsh charging authority that has obtained a liability order from a magistrates court may make an attachment of earnings order. This is an order instructing the debtor's employer to make deductions from the debtor's earnings and pay the amounts deducted to the charging authority. The amounts to be deducted will be specified in the attachment of earnings order. The employer may deduct £1 from the debtor's earnings to cover his administrative costs in respect of each deduction. The employer is required to notify the charging authority if the debtor leaves his employment.

The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Commonwealth Games

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask the chairman of the Sports Council for Wales for a report on the reasons why the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales did not institute random drug testing on members of the Welsh team selected for the Auckland Commonwealth games.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Commonwealth Games Federation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask the Sports Council for Wales to report to him on the circumstances in which the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales was given a grant of £40,000 towards the cost of sending the Welsh team to the Auckland Commonwealth games.

Mr. Grist: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the chairman of the Sports Council for Wales to discuss the most appropriate form of inquiry into the disqualification for drug-taking of medal-winning weight-lifters at the Auckland Commonwealth games.

Mr. Grist: It is for the Commonwealth Games Federation to set up the procedures to detect misuse of drugs and related substances and for the federation, together with the relevant governing bodies for weightlifting, to impose sanctions against the offenders.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek a report from the Sports Council for Wales on the prevalence of the use of anabolic steroids in sports in Wales receiving public money from the Sports Council.

Mr. Grist: The Sports Council for Wales has been providing information to the Welsh Office on the results of its drug-testing programme, covering 57 sports governing bodies since testing began in 1985. No cases of steroid abuse have been detected in Welsh competitors as a result of the tests.

Health Projects

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce allocations for 1990-91 for health projects under the programme for the valleys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: District health authorities and the University of Wales college of medicine have today been informed that the following allocations are to be made under the programme for the valleys for projects in 1990-91. The allocations are set out in the table. The £9·738 million allocation approved for the coming year represents an increase of over 60 per cent. on the budget for the present financial year and demonstrates a continuing commitment to improving health care provision in the valleys.

In particular, the allocation to Mid Glamorgan health authority should accelerate the development of a new district general hospital to serve Taff Ely and Rhondda. Subject to the normal detailed approval procedure, a programme for the valleys investment of £8 million over the coming three years is planned towards the total cost of this major development.

Programme for the Valleys health schemes to be funded in 1990-91
New developments and existing commitments

DHA/health interest	*Funding 1990-91 £ million*
ON-GOING PROJECTS	
Gwent	
Ebbw Vale Community Hospital [commitment]	1·13
Mid Glamorgan	
Ystrad Fechan Community Hospital [commitment]	2·4
Aberdare Elderly Unit [commitment]	0·2
Know your Midwife, Rhondda [commitment]	0·06
Community Nursing (Valleys) [commitment]	0·085
Bargoed Ambulance Station [commitment]	0·27
West Glamorgan	
Pontardawe Psychiatric Day Centre [commitment]	0·11

DHA/health interest	Funding 1990-91 £ million
UWCM/Mid Glamorgan/Gwent	
Domiciliary Ante-natal Care Project [commitment]	0·085
UWCM/Mid Glamorgan	
Myocardial Infarction Project [commitment]	0·008
Sub-total of DHA commitments	4·348
UWMC	
Teamcare Valleys [commitment]	0·5
Sub-total of commitments	4·848
NEW PROJECTS	
Mid Glamorgan	
New DGH, Taff Ely/Rhonnda [development]	2·65
Improvement to East Glamorgan Hospital [development]	0·35
East Dyfed	
Amman Valley Hospital Development [development]	0·12
West Glamorgan	
Pontardawe Psychiatric Day Hospital [development]	0·084
Gwent	
Child Development Centre for North Gwent [development]	0·25
Day Hospital for Chronically Mentally Ill Tredegar [development]	0·19
West Glamorgan	
Valleys Communities Dental Health Project [development]	0·108
Powys	
Dental Health Project (Upper Swansea Valley) [development]	0·071
Mid Glamorgan	
Mobile Dental Clinic for Merthyr Cynon and Rhymney Valleys [development]	0·033
West Glamorgan	
Share and Care Scheme, Neath and Port Talbot [development]	0·002
Redevelopment of Gellinudd Hospital [development]	0·680
Mid Glamorgan	
Project to combat Drug Misuse	0·05
Gwent	
Project to combat Drug Misuse	0·062
UWCM	
Team Care Valleys [development]	0·24
Sub-total of new developments	4·89
Total of commitments plus new developments = 4·848 + 4·89 =	9·738

PRIME MINISTER

Green Currencies

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *1047*, what are the reasons why all green currencies could not be dismantled in 1990; and if she will list the member states which are opposed to such dismantlement.

The Prime Minister: The Council of Ministers has agreed that all monetary gaps should be dismantled by the end of 1992 at the latest. Because of the effects of very large devaluations on prices, public expenditure and the rate of inflation, it has been generally accepted Community practice that large monetary gaps should be dismantled in stages. Reflecting this, the Commission has not proposed the complete elimination of monetary gaps in 1990, and a majority of member states could be expected to resist such a proposal.

African National Congress

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to her reply about the African National Congress to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton on 16 January, *Official Report*, column *160*, whether the African National Congress has since that reply removed what she referred to as an ambiguity; and whether, in the light of developments since that reply, she continues to regard the African National Congress as a terrorist organisation.

The Prime Minister: We have welcomed the South African Government's decision to lift the bans on the African National Congress and other political organisations. We look to them to make a correspondingly positive response. As yet, the ANC has not committed itself unambiguously to the pursuit of a peaceful solution to South Africa's problems through negotiation. We continue to urge it to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service

104. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase or decrease in *(a)* the work undertaken by the Civil Service and *(b)* the number of civil servants (i) since 1974 and (ii) since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The information on workload changes is not available in the form requested. However, it is estimated that, between 1979 and 1988, the workload for new and existing activities increased by the equivalent of 85,000 posts. This was, of course, more than fully offset by efficiency improvements and cost-effective transfers outside the Civil Service.

The changes in the number of civil servants are as follows:

(i) 692,036 at 1 April 19744
(ii) 732,275 at 1 April 1979, an increase of 40,239 (5·8 per cent.))
(iii) 565,075 at 1 October 1989, a decrease of 167,200 (22·8 per cent..

Inland Revenue Documents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many different standard forms, letters and notices are currently being used by the Inland Revenue; and if he will list the 20 most frequently used of these documents, and the approximate annual usage of each of these.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue has approximately 8,200 different forms, notices and so on in use, of which

2,500 are used in correspondence with persons outside the Department. The 20 external documents most frequently used are as follows:

Form	*Type*	*Approximate annual usage (millions)*
P3(T)	PAYE Coding Notes	28·0
P2(T)	PAYE Coding Notice	26·0
P46	Notification: new employee	19·0
Tax Return	Notes: simple profit statement insert	16·4
P30B(Z)	Payslip	16·0
P11	PAYE Working Sheet	15·0
P14	Statement of employee's pay etc	15·0
300 Coda	Schedule D assessment	14·7
MIRAS 70	Application to pay mortgage interest under the MIRAS Scheme	14·0
P15	Employee's PAYE coding claim	13·0
P45	Employee's leaving certificate	11·5
11 Notes	Tax Return: Notes	11·2
P6(T)	Employers PAYE coding notification	8·5
64D	Schedule D assessment: Notes	7·2
64	Appeal notification	6·7
P1	Tax Return: employee earning below £8,500	6·5
P1 Notes	Tax Return Notes employee earning below £8,500	6·5
11	Tax Return—self employed taxpayer	5·7
P70(T)	Schedule E assessment	5·6
11P	Tax Return—employee	5·5

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax yield from the tax on workplace nurseries for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: There is no separate tax on workplace nurseries. I regret that information on which to base a reliable estimate of the tax liability on the benefit of subsidised workplace nurseries provided by employers is not available.

CBI

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be addressing the CBI annual dinner on 17 May this year.

Banks (Third World Debts)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current policy of the Inland Revenue in relation to the tax treatment of United Kingdom banks which make provision against Third world debt.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current policy of the Inland Revenue in relation to the tax treatment of United Kingdom banks which make provision against Third world debt.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue operates the test laid down by law. This provides tax relief to the extent that the principal is estimated to be irrecoverable.

Income Tax

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received any recent representations about the level of income tax.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a large number of representations regarding the level of income tax.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many bands of marginal income tax rates exist in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* other Group of Seven countries and *(c)* other EEC countries.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is as follows:

Country	*Number of bands of income tax rates*
(a) United Kingdom	2
(b) Other Group of Seven countries	
Canada	3
France	12
Germany	2,119
Italy	7
Japan	5
United States of America	2
(c) Other EEC countries	
Belgium	7
Denmark	3
Greece	9
Ireland	3
Luxembourg	24
Netherlands	3
Portugal	5
Spain	16

Notes:

1. The figures given refer to the bands of national income tax rates only. In some countries additional local income tax is imposed.
2. In Germany there is no system of tax bands: rates rise gradually from 19 per cent. to 53 per cent. according to a 2,119-stage table.
3. In the United States of America there is an additional intermediate income tax rate band for some taxpayers.
4. The figure given for Belgium applies to taxpayers with an income of over £10,873 (at the latest available purchasing power parity). For income below this amount a tax table of gradually increasing rates is used.

Building Society Accounts

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many building society accounts are subject to the composite rate; how many of these would be wholly liable to tax in the absence of the composite rate system; how many would not be liable for tax at all; and how much tax each group pays.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information of this kind distinguishing accounts held by building societies is not readily available.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals are currently receiving mortgage interest tax relief; what were the comparable figures for 1973-74, 1978-79, 1983-84, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what is the current cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of the numbers of tax units receiving mortgage interest relief in the years requested are as follows:

	Million
1973-74	4·5
1978-79	5·6
1983-84	7·5
1988-89	9·1
1989-90	9·3

The cost of providing mortgage interest relief in 1989-90 is estimated to be £7 billion.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the levels of mortgage interest tax relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the ceiling on mortgage tax relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations concerning the levels of mortgage interest tax relief.

Company Car Parks

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue would be raised if company car parks in inner London were taxed as a benefit in kind; and what information he has on the income distribution of the people affected;

(2) how much revenue would be raised if company parking spaces were taxed as a benefit in kind in all major cities in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the income distribution of those people affected.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the points on the income scale for a single man with the standard allowance at which the combined national insurance and marginal rates alter and those rates.

Mr. Lilley: Information for 1989-90 is given in the table. The calculations use the class 1 national insurance contribution rates introduced in October 1989.

Levels of income at which the marginal rate of income tax and national insurance contributions of a single person[1] changes, 1989-90

Weekly Income	*Marginal rate of income tax and national insurance contributions[2]*
£	*per cent.*
43·00	9
53·56	34
325·00	25
451·63	40

[1]. Assumed to be non-aged with no reliefs or allowances other than the single person's allowance.

[2]. Class 1 national insurance contributions for an employee contracted in to the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS).

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the overall revenue from taxation plus national insurance contributions in cash terms, real terms and as a percentage of gross domestic product both including oil and excluding oil in each year since 1978-79 and in each five-year period working back from the present for as much of the last 30 years as possible.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Such information as is readily available is included on the CSO database in the following series (identified by their database code):

GTEA: total general Government revenue from taxes, social security contributions and royalties
ABLG: total North sea taxes
CAOB: GDP *(a)* at market prices.
DJDT: implied GDP (at market prices) deflator

The database can be accessed on-line by the House of Commons library.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the regional distribution of *(a)* the personal tax burden and *(b)* the overall tax burden.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that estimates of total personal taxes and total taxes are not made on a regional basis. However, in 1987-88 the regional distribution of income tax liabilities is estimated to have been as follows:

Region	*Amount of income tax liability of residents (£ billion)*
North	1·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·3
North West	4·3
East Midlands	2·5
West Midlands	3·6
East Anglia	1·6
South East	18·4
South West	3·5
Wales	1·5
Scotland	3·4
Northern Ireland	0·8

Members of Her Majesty's forces and the Merchant Navy are excluded.

Mortgages

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of *(a)* a 1 per cent. increase in mortgage lending rates, *(b)* the cumulative cost since mortgage rates began to rise in June 1988 up to the end of 1989-90 and *(c)* the estimated cost for 1990-91.

Mr. Lilley: An increase of 1 percentage point in the current level of mortgage interest rates would increase the annual cost of mortgage interest relief by about £550 million. The estimated additional cost of mortgage interest relief, resulting from the increases in mortgage interest rates above their 10 per cent. level of June 1988, will be £2·4 billion by the end of 1989-90. This cost will to a large extent be offset by an increase in the tax yield on interest from deposits. The cost of relief in 1990-91 will depend on the levels of borrowing and interest rates.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of increasing all personal allowances by the current increase in average earnings of 9·25 per cent.

Mr. Lilley: At 1990-91 levels of income, the direct revenue cost in a full year of increasing all personal allowances by 9·25 per cent. on their 1989-90 levels is estimated to be about £2,240 million. The additional cost of increasing the basic rate limit by 9·25 per cent. is about £430 million in a full year. The costs falling in 1990-91 would be £1,720 million and £250 million respectively. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Nursery Vouchers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies currently provide nursery vouchers; and how much money is raised from taxing these as a benefit in kind.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that this information is not available.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the level of corporation tax in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have received a number of representations concerning the level of corporation tax in the United Kingdom.

Construction Companies

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual increase in net income of large construction companies between 1974 and 1979, and since 1979, after deducting from net income as defined in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 15 January, *Official Report*, column 97, either actual or estimated amounts for both tax and employers' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Based on figures extracted from published accounts, the average annual increase in net income in nominal terms for large construction companies after deducting tax (both United Kingdom and overseas) was 24·3 per cent. between accounting years 1974 and 1979 and 8·4 per cent. between accounting years 1979 and 1988. Employers' national insurance contributions will already have been deducted in the calculation of net income. The underlying figures are published in the MA3 series of business monitors "Company Finance".

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Shops Act 1950

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been brought for breaches of the Shops Act 1950 since the recent judgment of the European Court; and if he will name the local authorities concerned.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on 29 January 1990 at column 13.

Land Registry

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General what were the charges for a land registry search when purchasing or selling domestic property for each of the years since 1979 at constant prices.

The Attorney-General: Pre-completion official searches of the register with priority have attracted no fee during the period. Pre-contract inquiries attracted the fees set out in the table in the financial years indicated. The first column (1979) indicates the actual fee in that year. The following columns show the comparable fees by reference to constant prices based on the 1979 fees.

	1979 £	*1980* £	*1981*[1] £	*1982* £	*1983* £	*1984* £	*1985*[2] £
Office Copy Register	0·75	0·63	0·75	0·70	0·66	0·63	0·60
Office Copy Filed Plan	0·75	0·63	0·75	0·70	0·66	0·63	0·60
Search of the Index Map	1·00	0·84	1·50	1·40	1·33	1·27	1·20

[1] From 1 April 1981.
[2] To 31 May 1985.

Since June 1985 there has been no direct charge for these pre-contract inquiries. From 2 April 1990 charges will be reintroduced for those items as follows, with constant price equivalents shown in brackets:

Office Copy Register
Office Copy Filed Plan } £12·00 (£5·54).

Search of the Index Map £6·00 (£2·77).

Dr. K. Siddiqui

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the decision not to prosecute Dr. K. Siddiqui under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions gave very careful consideration to all evidence made available to him, including video evidence, concerning the remarks and actions of Dr. Siddiqui at a public meeting at Manchester city hall on 21 October 1989, and he instructed leading counsel to advise him with regard to any criminal liability, especially for incitement to murder. The Director concluded that the evidence was insufficient to render it appropriate to institute criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, the Director regards as a matter of extreme gravity any conduct on the part of any person within this jurisdiction which does amount to the offence of incitement to murder. It will remain his policy, with my full agreement, to deal accordingly with evidence establishing such conduct that may be placed before him.

HEALTH

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation in his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's assessment of preventable loss arising within the Department in the year 1988-89 is nil. Internal management and financial control procedures are under continuous scrutiny to ensure, as far as possible, that no preventable loss arises.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss-prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to give an answer in the form requested as the Department does not employ a specific class of loss-prevention officers. There is a general exhortation to all staff to take proper care of property and services for which they are responsible and for line managers to ensure that there is sound management of such resources. Internal audit procedures are undertaken by staff with appropriate training and security guard services are provided by a mixture of departmental staff and private companies.

Eye Surgery, Rochdale

Sir Cyril Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time in the Rochdale health authority for eye operations; how many persons are awaiting such surgery; and how many of those persons are over the age of 75 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the age and specific medical condition of patients on hospital waiting lists is not collected centrally. The latest available information about numbers of persons awaiting treatment in the ophthalmology specialty is given in the table.

In-patient waiting list, Ophthalmology specialty, Rochdale District Health Authority, as at 31 March 1989

Patients waiting	*Percentage breakdown by months waiting*				
	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12+
860	21	21	14	14	31

Source: KHO7 return.

The percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has any evidence of general practitioners refusing to take groups of disabled people who are residents leaving long-stay hospital on to their lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no such evidence and I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 8 February at column 769.

Practice Nurses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what ratio of practice nurses per head of population his Department recommends in order for general practitioners to carry out all the services indicated in the new contracts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not plan to recommend norms for the employment of practice nurses. The extent to which general practitioners employ practice nurses and other types of health care professional staff to carry out services under the new contract is essentially a matter for local decision.

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of staff in his Department have been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data held by his Department within the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: No cases have occurred since 1 April 1989 when Department of Health records began. Records on any cases before this date are held by the Department of Social Security.

New Hospitals

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out in detail the mechanism by which health authorities will be able to calculate the capital contribution from central Government sources that will apply to any new hospital project in advance of making their detailed submission and explain how he intends to ensure that the price of land on sale or on purchase does not distort the planning in health provision.

Mr. Freeman: Capital planning is carried out on the basis of the best resource assumptions available. It is necessary to plan flexibly to cope with unavoidable uncertainties, and order schemes to match service priorities. Detailed approval in principle submissions are made on this basis.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state what further representations he has received from hospitals to opt out of the existing National Health Service management structure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The proposals in the White Papers, "Working for Patients" and "Caring for Patients", and the NHS and Community Care Bill suggest wide ranging changes in the way the whole NHS is managed. Since May last year, a total of 190 units have expressed an interest in NHS trust status, including a number with more than one hospital. The units are as follows:

Northern RHA
Aycliffe Hospital and Mental Handicap Services
Blood Transfusion Service (Northern RHA)
Darlington Hospital and Community Services
Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
Hartlepool District
Mental Illness Services in Gateshead
Newcastle General Hospital
Newcastle Mental Health Services
Northumbrian Ambulance Service

Northgate Hospital
North Tyneside District
North West Durham hospital and community services
South West Durham Community Services

Yorkshire RHA
Bradford Acute Services
Bradford—Psychiatric Unit Hospital Trust
Calderdale Hospitals, Calderdale HA
Leeds General Infirmary and associated Hospitals
Grimsby DGH and associated services
High Royds Hospital Mental Health Services, Leeds Western
St. James's University Hospital, Leeds
Seacroft and Killingbeck Hospitals, Leeds Eastern
Wakefield District—Mental Health Unit
Wharfedale General Hospital, Leeds Western

Trent RHA
Bassetlaw
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital
Lincolnshire Ambulance Service
Nether Edge Hospital, Sheffield
Northern General Hospital, Sheffield
University Hospital, Nottingham
Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
Children's Hospital, Sheffield
South Lincolnshire Mental Handicap Services

East Anglian RHA
East Suffolk Community Services
East Suffolk Psychiatric Services
Great Yarmouth and Waveney Priority Services
Newmarket General Hospital
Norfolk Ambulances
Peterborough DGH, Edith Cavell DGH, Stamford and Rutland Hospital
West Norfolk and Wisbech Acute Services
West Norfolk and Wisbech Community Services

North West Thames RHA
Central Middlesex Hospital
East Hertfordshire Acute Services Unit
East Hertfordshire Priority and Community Services Units
Harefield Hospital
Hillingdon Hospital
Mount Vernon Hospital
North Hertfordshire Acute and Community Services
North West Hertfordshire Priority Services Unit
Northwick Park Hospital
Westminster and Westminster Children's Hospitals

North East Thames RHA
Basildon and Thurrock HA
Brentwood Community Hospital
Central North London Mental Health Unit
The London Hospital Group
Mid Essex Acute Unit
The Royal Free Hospital
North Middlesex Hospital
Royal London Homeopathic Hospital
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital
The Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital
City and Hackney (St. Bart's, Homerton and St. Marks Hospital Trust
St. Bartholomew's Hospital
St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping
St. Peter's Group of Hospitals
Southend District Services
Tavistock and Portman Clinics
Harwich Hospital
North East Essex Acute Unit
North East Essex Mental Handicap Unit
North East Essex Mental Health Unit
Waltham Forest Mental Health Unit
Waltham Forest HA
West Essex Priority Care Services

South East Thames RHA
Bexley HA—Mental Health Community Services
Brighton Acute Services
Bromley Acute Services
King's/Camberwell and associated Community Services
Conquest Hospital, Hastings HA
Dartford and Gravesham HA—Proposed DGH
Eastbourne Acute Services
Guy's (and Lewisham Hospitals and associated MI Services)
Lewisham and North Southwark HA—Mental Illness Services
Lewisham Hospital Unit
Maidstone DGH
Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup + Erith and District Hospital + Community
Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead
St. Thomas' Hospital (and associated Community Services)
Sevenoaks Hospital
South East Kent HA—Community Services
South East Thames RHA Commercial Services Directorate
Tunbridge Wells Mental Handicap Unit
West Lambeth HA—Priority Care Unit
William Harvey and Buckland Hospitals—South East Kent HA

South West Thames RHA
Croydon Community Unit
Croydon Mental Handicap Unit
Croydon HA—Mental Illness Unit
East Surrey HA—Acute and Community Services Unit
East Surrey HA—Combined MI/Mental Handicap Unit
Kingston Hospital
Mid Downs East Unit
Mid Downs West Unit
Mid Surrey General Unit
Mid Surrey HA—Mental Illness Unit
North West Surrey HA—Acute Unit
North West Surrey HA—Mental Handicap and Mental Health Units
St. George's Group Trust, Wandsworth HA
St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals
South West Surrey Acute Unit
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals, Worthing HA
Weybridge Hospital

Wessex RHA
Bournemouth Acute Unit, East Dorset HA
Christchurch Hospital, East Dorset HA
Ilymington Hospitals
Mental Health Services, East Dorset HA
North West Wiltshire Community Service, Bath HA
Psychiatric Division, Basingstoke HA
Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases
Swindon HA—All District Services
Treloar Chase Unit, Basingstoke HA
West Dorset Community and General Hospital Services
West Dorset Mental Health Services

Oxford RHA
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

South Western RHA
Avon College of Health
Bristol
Bristol Paediatric Services
Bristol Homoeopathic Hospital
East Gloucestershire NHS Trust
Cornwall Mental Handicap Services
Cornwall Community Services
Royal Cornwall Hospitals
East Somerset
Exeter Community Services
North Devon
Plymouth Acute Services
Supplies Function—Regionwide (South Western RHA)
South Devon Health Care Trust
West Cornwall [Acute Services]
Weston (Unit, Bristol and Weston HA)
West Somerset Acute and Community Unit
Wonford Acute Services

West Midlands RHA
Alexandra Hospital
Bridgnorth Cottage Hospital (incl. community) (Shropshire)
Bromsgrove Community Unit (Bromsgrove and Redditch)

Mid Staffordshire Community Unit
Coventry and Warwick Hospitals (incl. Paybody) (Coventry)
Ellesmere Cottage Hospital (Shropshire)
Good Hope DGH/Northcroft/Jaffray/Community (North Birmingham)
[Hayley Green Hospital (Dudley) (Withdrawn 26 June 1989)]
Highcroft, Mental Illness Hospital (North Birmingham)
Lady Forrester Cottage Hospital (Much Wenlock, Shropshire)
Walsall Acute Services [Manor DGH]
Oswestry and District Hospital (incl. Community) (Shropshire)
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (Shropshire)
Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (South Birmingham)
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (Shropshire)
Rugby District Services
Mid Staffordshire Mental Health Unit [St. George's Hospital]
St. Margaret's, Mental Handicap Hospital (Walsall)
Walsgrave DGH, Coventry

Mersey RHA
Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge Hospitals
Broadgreen Hospital, exc. Mersey Regional Cardio-Thoracic Unit
Cranage Hall, Crewe
Crewe, Psychiatric and Community Services
Halton, combined Hospital and Community Services
Halton Community Services
Leighton Hospital, Crewe (Acute Services)
Liverpool Community Health Services
Liverpool Dental Hospital
Liverpool Mental Health Services
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services
Regional Adult Cardio-Thoracic Unit (RACTU), Liverpool
Macclesfield Community and Mental Handicap Services
Macclesfield DGH (Acute Services)
Macclesfield Mental Health Services
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey)
Royal Liverpool Hospital
St. Helens and Knowsley Community Health Services
Southport DGH (Acute Services)
Southport and Formby Psychiatric/Community Services
Walton and Fazakerley Hospitals, South Sefton
Warrington DGH
Whiston and St. Helen's Hospital
Wirral Community and Support Hospitals

North Western RHA
Christie Hospital [South Manchester HA]
Central Manchester Hospital and Community Services
Royal Preston Hospital, Preston HA
South Manchester HA Community Unit
Stepping Hill Hospital + Stockport Infirmary, Stockport HA
Wrightington Hospital, West Lancashire HA

SHA
Eastman Dental Hospital

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the agendas, papers and lists of participants for the meetings organised by his Department on the subject of National Health Service trusts on 23-24 October, 14-15 December and 22-23 January.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Income Generation Unit

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in the past year on the work of the income generation unit.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Hospital Attendance (Funding)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about funding arrangements for patients in Denton and Reddish who wish to attend hospitals in Manchester rather than Stockport or Tameside.

Mr. Freeman: General practitioners in Denton and Reddish, as elsewhere, are able without restriction to refer patients to consultants working in hospitals in Manchester and no funds are transferred between district health authorities as a result. Special financial arrangements have been made over access to the regional health authority funded lithotripter service in south Manchester.

Nurseries

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children attend private and public nurseries; and what is the income distribution of their parents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information available centrally about the total provision relates to the number of places in local authority and in registered voluntary and private day nurseries. This information is published annually in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March", copies of which are available in the Library. No information is available centrally about the income of parents.

Foster Care

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has proposals for changes in the foster care system specifically aimed at putting an end to the high incidence of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Foster parents are a valuable community resource who at times have to look after very difficult children. They need adequate support and supervision. The small numbers of recent tragic cases does not lead us to believe that the incidence of child abuse by foster parents is high. The regulatory framework has been tightened up with the introduction of the Boarding Out of Children (Foster Placement) Regulations 1988, which came into force on 1 June 1989. Copies of the regulations can be found in the Library. Implementation of the Children Act will be accompanied by new regulations and guidance to local authorities on a number of foster care issues.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths occurred in 1989 which were attributed to food poisoning.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional number of deaths for which food poisoning[1] was stated as the underlying cause in England and Wales in the first nine months of 1989 was 40.

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, codes 003 and 005.

General Practitioners

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications he has received for the establishment of fund-holding practices from general practitioners' practices in Leeds.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Formal applications cannot be made until there is legislative provision for fund holding. Practices have been invited to return forms to their RHAs registering their interest in fund holding. We do not have details of the numbers of interested practices in individual FPCs.

Paramedic Skills

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are trained nationally in paramedic skills to the National Health Service training authority standard; and how many to the National Health Service modular scheme standard.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are about 2,000 ambulance staff who hold the full NHSTA Certificate in Extended Training. In addition there are another 2,000 staff who have either received extended training on some of the three NHSTA modular or under local training schemes.

Mr. Bradley To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the qualitative differences between the two National Health Service standards of paramedic training for ambulance staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service training authority certificate is the only national training standard for paramedics. Some authorities have elected to train in one or two of the three training authority modules, for example, cardiac care, and others provide training to local standards.

Ambulance Workers

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish statistics for the levels of stress and the mortality rate of *(a)* the ambulance workers' profession and *(b)* the national average.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held by the Department. General responsibility for the recording of incidents of occupationally induced injuries and diseases resulting in absences of more than three days duration rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

General Practice Formularies

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that general practice formularies should originate with the individual practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: General practice formularies will be voluntary and will be organised in the way most suited to local circumstances. It will be for general practitioners individually to determine the degree of compliance where they adopt a formulary. Whilst we expect that many formularies will be practice based, there is nothing to prevent a group of practices or an FPC developing a common formulary should they wish.

Prescription Products

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he intends to take to ensure that all new prescription products are made available to patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject only to the provisions of the selected list scheme, doctors will continue to be able to prescribe any drugs, including new drugs, that they consider to be necessary for a patient's treatment.

AIDS

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the work of his Department on AIDS and the work of the AIDS unit within his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) on 23 November at column *11*, the Department published the Government's response to the report from the Social Services Committee on AIDS (Cm. 925). That sets out the strategy which we have adopted to meet the challenge of AIDS. The AIDS unit is a multidisciplinary team of officials within the Department who work on HIV infection and AIDS.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to implement the Montreal charter on the universal rights of people living with HIV disease agreed at the World Health Organisation conference in June 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have endorsed all the official resolutions of the conference on AIDS organised in Montreal by the World Health Organisation. These do not include the charter to which the hon. Member refers. The strategy which the Government have adopted to meet the challenge of AIDS is set out in our response to the report from the Social Services Committee on AIDS (Cm. 925).

Hertfordshire FPC

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Hertfordshire family practitioner committee about the circumstances surrounding the removal of 16 patients in the last three weeks from the list of Doctor Mir of Prestwick road, Watford.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on 30 January at column *130*. The administration of the contract of service of general medical practitioners in Hertfordshire is a matter for the Hertfordshire family practitioner committee, 14 Parliament square, Hertford, SG14 1ED.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the range of expenditure per patient in each family practitioner committee.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 January 1990]:* Family practitioner committees manage expenditure on all

four family practitioner services; the general medical, dental and opthalmic services, and the pharmaceutical service. The aggregate expenditure on these in each FPC in 1988-89, expressed as the total of payments per 10,000 registered population, is set out in the table. Information about the range of expenditure per patient, within each FPC and for all services, is not collected.

FPC	FPS payments in £000s/10,000 Registered Population (1988-89)
Cleveland	904·9
Cumbria	943·0
Durham	903·4
Northumberland	929·6
Gateshead	874·9
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	899·3
North Tyneside	955·6
South Tyneside	883·3
Sunderland	905·8
Humberside	896·4
North Yorkshire	932·1
Bradford	883·9
Calderdale	891·5
Kirklees	828·4
Leeds	937·3
Wakefield	962·3
Derbyshire	847·6
Leicestershire	819·0
Lincolnshire	958·8
Nottinghamshire	816·3
Barnsley	904·4
Doncaster	925·8
Rotherham	809·4
Sheffield	905·9
Cambridgeshire	838·9
Norfolk	968·2
Suffolk	918·8
Bedfordshire	821·0
Hertfordshire	864·3
Barnet	762·0
Brent and Harrow	757·6
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	734·0
Hillingdon	797·8
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	804·6
Essex	851·0
Barking and Havering	777·7
Camden and Islington	808·9
City and East London	829·1
Enfield and Haringey	684·1
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	803·4
East Sussex	942·8
Kent	853·6
Greenwich and Bexley	796·6
Bromley	793·6
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	732·0
Surrey	800·5
West Sussex	919·1
Croydon	795·4
Kingston and Richmond	849·0
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	760·5
Dorset	982·1
Hampshire	866·9
Wiltshire	836·4
Isle of Wight	1,000·8
Berkshire	823·2
Buckinghamshire	812·6
Northamtonshire	818·7
Oxfordshire	845·3
Avon	843·5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	984·2
Devon	970·0
Gloucestershire	888·1
Somerset	917·5
Hereford and Worcester	834·7
Shropshire	886·3
Staffordshire	834·8
Warwickshire	855·4
Birmingham	905·4
Coventry	895·3
Dudley	789·7
Sandwell	943·6
Solihull	875·2
Walsall	949·5
Wolverhampton	874·4
Cheshire	883·4
Liverpool	1,005·1
St. Helens and Knowsley	926·4
Sefton	897·6
Wirral	949·0
Lancashire	922·5
Bolton	852·9
Bury	935·2
Manchester	988·4
Oldham	860·9
Rochdale	895·6
Salford	1,024·8
Stockport	908·3
Tameside	930·3
Trafford	944·7
Wigan	910·3
ENGLAND	868·7

Notes: Gross payments for general medical, dental, and ophthalmic services, and the pharmaceutical service, inclusive of superannuation contributions but net of patient charges, in thousands of £s per 10,000 registered population.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UNESCO

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will publish the report of the proceedings at the recent biennial general conference of UNESCO; what organisations in Britain he is consulting; when he expects to publish his assessment of the conference; and whether he will make it his policy to consult *(a)* the United Nations Association of Great Britain and *(b)* the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House before coming to any conclusions.

Mr. Sainsbury: UNESCO has just adopted a new medium term plan for the period 1990-95 and a programme and budget for the period 1990-91. These documents provide us with our first real opportunity to assess what progress the organisation has made since we left it in 1985. We will therefore now be making a detailed review of UNESCO with a view to deciding what our future relationship with the organisation should be. As part of this review we will be consulting a wide range of bodies with interests in the educational, scientific and cultural fields covered by UNESCO's mandate. The United Nations Association will be one of the organisations consulted. A final decision will be announced after we have considered all the evidence. We understand that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House intends to conduct hearings in early March on our policy towards UNESCO.

African Elephant

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional measures he intends to take to enhance elephant protection schemes in those African countries currently receiving assistance from Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: The position remains as stated in the answer that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave the hon. Member on 29 November 1989. We remain willing to consider any new requests for help.

Kashmir

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives of other Governments concerning the implementation of the United Nations declaration No. 261.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of India to implement the United Nations resolution calling for a referendum in the disputed territories of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Sainsbury: Britain voted in favour of the various United Nations resolutions on Kashmir. Much has happened since, including the 1972 Simla agreement on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. We believe that the status of Kashmir can be settled only by agreement between the two sides.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Governments of India and Pakistan concerning Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have made clear in our regular contacts with the Indian and Pakistani Governments that we believe that the status of Kashmir can be settled only by agreement between the two sides. We have also made it clear that we have no sympathy with those who espouse violence for political ends.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has recently made concerning civil rights in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In our recent contacts with the Indian Government we have recognised the serious problems of violence they face in Jammu and Kashmir, and expressed our hope that they will deal with the situation with restraint. We have also made clear that we have no sympathy with those who espouse violence for political ends.

Foreign Aid

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer in the *Official Report*, 31 January, column *190*, what funds are included under the heading United Kingdom gross bilateral aid.

Mr. Waldegrave: Gross bilateral aid comprises financial and technical co-operation provided to recipient countries on a government-to-government basis for agreed projects and programmes, investments by the Commonwealth Development Corporation, support for British institutions concerned with overseas development, including support for the voluntary agencies working overseas, food aid and humanitarian assistance, and aid debt relief.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last five years *(a)* the flows of aid from the United Kingdom to (i) Argentina, (ii) Brazil, (iii) Colombia, (iv) El Salvador, (v) Mexico, (vi) Nicaragua, (vii) Panama and (viii) all remaining South American nations and *(b)* the proportions in each case of this aid tied to trade deals involving United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is as follows:

Gross bilateral aid 1984-1988

£ thousand

		Of which ATP	*ATP as per cent.*
LATIN AMERICA			
1984			
Bolivia	1,182	—	—
Brazil	7,780	6,279	80·71
Chile	257	—	—
Colombia	460	5	1·03
Costa Rica	1,666	—	—
Cuba	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	61	—	—
Ecuador	916	—	—
El Salvador	205	—	—
Guatemala	—	—	—
Haiti	8	—	—
Honduras	3,446	—	—
Mexico	517	—	—
Nicaragua	9	—	—
Panama	49	—	—
Paraguay	207	125	60·08
Peru	476	18	3·81
Uruguay	14	—	—
Venezuela	—	—	—
Total	17,255	6,427	37·25
1985			
Bolivia	1,421	—	—
Brazil	4,014	3,417	85·13
Chile	334	—	—
Colombia	838	148	17·17
Costa Rica	12,685	—	—
Cuba	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	24	—	—
Ecuador	909	—	—
El Salvador	103	—	—
Guatemala	—	—	—
Haiti	3	—	—
Honduras	3,653	—	—
Mexico	773	—	—
Nicaragua	116	—	—
Panama	67	—	—
Paraguay	51	—	—
Peru	928	148	15·95
Uruguay	7	—	—
Venezuela	1	—	—
Total	25,926	3,713	14·17
1986			
Bolivia	1,953	—	—
Brazil	880	213	24·26
Chile	373	—	—

		Of which ATP	ATP as per cent.
Colombia	1,018	5	0·45
Costa Rica	10,038	—	—
Cuba	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	42	—	—
Ecuador	836	—	—
El Salvador	239	—	—
Guatemala	10	—	—
Haiti	331	—	—
Honduras	1,258	—	—
Mexico	803	—	—
Nicaragua	86	—	—
Panama	70	—	—
Paraguay	221	—	—
Peru	1,214	235	19·40
Uruguay	13	—	—
Venezuela	10	—	—
Total	19,395	453	2·34
1987			
Bolivia	1,748	—	—
Brazil	766	—	—
Chile	261	—	—
Colombia	762	—	—
Costa Rica	2,772	—	—
Cuba	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	34	—	—
Ecuador	2,560	—	—
El Salvador	411	—	—
Guatemala	1	—	—
Haiti	7	—	—
Honduras	811	—	—
Mexico	630	—	—
Nicaragua	—	—	—
Panama	72	—	—
Paraguay	277	—	—
Peru	1,012	85	8·36
Uruguay	38	—	—
Venezuela	24	—	—
Total	12,186	85	0·70
1988			
Bolivia	2,953	—	—
Brazil	1,443	—	—
Chile	306	—	—
Colombia	1,822	434	23·80
Costa Rica	1,550	—	—
Cuba	2	—	—
Dominican Republic	114	—	—
Ecuador	1,515	—	—
El Salvador	154	—	—
Guatemala	4	—	—
Haiti	9	—	—
Honduras	1,212	—	—
Mexico	1,249	—	—
Nicaragua	180	—	—
Panama	988	854	86·48
Paraguay	497	—	—
Peru	1,363	—	—
Uruguay	18	—	—
Venezuela	10	—	—
Total	15,390	1,288	8·37

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretry of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last five years *(a)* the flows of aid from the United Kingdom to (i) Algeria, (ii) Chad, (iii) Egypt, (iv) Nigeria, (v) Sudan and (vi) all remaining north and western African nations, listing those classified under this grouping and *(b)* the proportions in each case of this aid tied to trade deals involving United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is as follows:

Gross bilateral aid 1984-1988

		of which ATP	ATP as percentage
1984			
West and North Africa and Mediterranean			
Algeria	14	—	—
Benin	166	—	—
Burkina Faso	120	—	—
Cameroon	5,605	—	—
Cape Verdi Islands	16	—	—
Central African Republic	29	—	—
Chad	31	—	—
Cyprus	368	—	—
Egypt	19,404	2,483	16·12
Equatorial Guinea	14	—	—
Gabon	5	—	—
Gambia	3,638	—	—
Ghana	3,765	—	—
Greece	—	—	—
Guinea	89	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	16	—	—
Israel	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	1,624	—	—
Jordan	6,105	3,440	56·35
Lebanon	34	—	—
Liberia	1,536	—	—
Mali	533	—	—
Malta	91	—	—
Mauritania	387	—	—
Morocco	208	—	—
Niger	79	—	—
Nigeria	5,584	—	—
Oman	570	—	—
Portugal	861	—	—
Senegal	356	—	—
Sierra Leone	2,858	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Syria	568	—	—
Togo	94	—	—
Tunisia	2,162	—	—
Turkey	407	—	—
West Bank and Gaza	—	—	—
Total	53,038	5,923	11·17
1985			
Algeria	96	—	—
Benin	187	—	—
Burkina Faso	276	—	—
Cameroon	7,460	143	1·94
Cape Verde Islands	27	—	—
Central African Republic	38	—	—
Chad	1,448	—	—
Cyprus	606	—	—
Egypt	19,101	2,251	11·79
Equatorial Guinea	—	—	—
Gabon	14	—	—
Gambia	3,613	—	—
Ghana	11,683	—	—
Greece	—	—	—
Guinea	296	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	—	—	—
Israel	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	2,615	—	—
Jordan	2,332	—	—
Lebanon	34	—	—
Liberia	1,035	—	—
Mali	744	—	—
Malta	91	—	—
Mauritania	888	—	—
Morocco	91	—	—
Niger	331	—	—
Nigeria	6,240	—	—
Oman	300	—	—
Portugal	83	—	—
Senegal	1,025	—	—

		of which	
		ATP	ATP as percentage
Sierra Leone	3,626	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Syria	2,779	—	—
Togo	112	—	—
Tunisia	1,380	—	—
Turkey	10,280	—	—
West Bank and Gaza	—	—	—
Total	79,053	2,395	3·04
1986			
Algeria	169	—	—
Benin	158	—	—
Burkina Faso	131	—	—
Cameroon	3,744	508	13·58
Cape Verde Islands	24	—	—
Central African Republic	42	—	—
Chad	89	—	—
Cyprus	400	—	—
Egypt	15,746	1,688	10·73
Equatorial Guinea	1	—	—
Gabon	23	—	—
Gambia	9,897	—	—
Ghana	19,454	—	—
Greece	—	—	—
Guinea	268	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	62	—	—
Israel	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	7,440	—	—
Jordan	5,641	—	—
Lebanon	12	—	—
Liberia	904	—	—
Mali	1,188	—	—
Malta	74	—	—
Mauritania	212	—	—
Morocco	157	—	—
Niger	83	—	—
Nigeria	5,580	—	—
Oman	610	—	—
Portugal	14	—	—
Senegal	4,938	—	—
Sierra Leone	3,845	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Syria	324	—	—
Togo	142	—	—
Tunisia	483	—	—
Turkey	4,650	—	—
West Bank and Gaza	—	—	—
Total	86,502	2,197	2·54
1987			
Algeria	208	—	—
Benin	137	—	—
Burkina Faso	155	—	—
Cameroon	6,804	1,541	22·65
Cape Verde Islands	38	—	—
Central African Republic	−1	—	—
Chad	179	—	—
Cyprus	940	522	55·47
Egypt	7,865	1,151	14·64
Equatorial Guinea	205	—	—
Gabon	22	—	—
Gambia	7,197	—	—
Ghana	20,153	—	—
Greece	46	—	—
Guinea	453	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	30	—	—
Israel	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	4,546	—	—
Jordan	4,809	130	2·70
Lebanon	10	—	—
Liberia	913	—	—
Mali	982	—	—
Malta	81	—	—
Mauritania	177	—	—
Morocco	180	—	—
Niger	184	—	—
Nigeria	6,584	—	—
Oman	457	—	—
Portugal	—	—	—
Senegal	1,798	—	—
Sierra Leone	2,652	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Syria	102	—	—
Togo	120	—	—
Tunisia	743	585	78·75
Turkey	3,041	559	18·39
West Bank and Gaza	363	—	—
Total	72,173	4,487	6·22
1988			
Algeria	465	—	—
Benin	340	—	—
Burkin Faso	314	—	—
Cameroon	5,379	13	0·24
Cape Verde Islands	50	—	—
Central African Republic	31	—	—
Chad	252	—	—
Cyprus	743	137	18·40
Egypt	18,657	528	2·84
Equatorial Guinea	17	—	—
Gabon	7	—	—
Gambia	6,530	—	—
Ghana	32,861	—	—
Greece	—	—	—
Guinea	655	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	51	—	—
Israel	13	—	—
Ivory Coast	7,177	—	—
Jordan	4,091	400	9·79
Lebanon	21	—	—
Liberia	858	—	—
Mali	1,195	—	—
Malta	98	—	—
Mauritania	184	—	—
Morocco	657	—	—
Niger	365	—	—
Nigeria	7,503	—	—
Oman	964	—	—
Portugal	1	—	—
Senegal	1,008	—	—
Sierra Leone	3,677	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Syria	20	—	—
Togo	280	—	—
Tunisia	471	47	10·01
Turkey	2,536	1,044	41·16
West Bank & Gaza	1,028	—	—
Total	98,498	2,168	2·21

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last five years *(a)* the flows of aid from the United Kingdom to (i) Mozambique, (ii) Namibia, (iii) the Republic of South Africa, (iv) Zambia, (v) Zimbabwe and (vi) all remaining southern African nations, listing those classified under this regional grouping and *(b)* the proportions in each case of this aid tied to trade deals involving United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer for central and southern Africa is as follows:

Gross Bilateral Aid 1984-88

£ thousand

		Of which ATP	*ATP as percentage*
1984			
Central and Southern Africa			
Angola	146	—	—
Botswana	15,975	2,716	17·01
Burundi	75	—	—
Comoros	—	—	—
Congo	62	—	—
Lesotho	5,233	—	—
Madagascar	363	175	48·21
Malawi	12,959	—	—
Mauritius	1,437	—	—
Mozambique	4,182	318	7·61
Mayotte	—	—	—
Namibia	313	—	—
Reunion	—	—	—
Rwanda	29	—	—
Sao Tome and Principe	21	—	—
Seychelles	1,623	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—
Swaziland	5,626	—	—
Zaire	1,253	—	—
Zambia	32,901	—	—
Zimbabwe	15,062	289	1·92
Total	97,260	3,498	3·60
1985			
Angola	164	—	—
Botswana	8,775	257	2·94
Burundi	81	—	—
Comoros	—	—	—
Congo	120	—	—
Lesotho	2,382	—	—
Madagascar	469	—	—
Malawi	22,356	143	0·64
Mauritius	2,187	—	—
Mozambique	8,366	322	3·86
Mayotte	—	—	—
Namibia	605	—	—
Reunion	—	—	—
Rwanda	94	—	—
Sao Tome and Principe	—	—	—
Seychelles	1,136	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—
Swaziland	3,469	—	—
Zaire	738	—	—
Zambia	25,552	—	—
Zimbabwe	23,636	69	0·30
Total	100,130	792	0·80
1986			
Angola	317	—	—
Botswana	12,328	105	0·86
Burundi	95	—	—
Comoros	—	—	—
Congo	127	—	—
Lesotho	3,784	—	—
Madagascar	514	—	—
Malawi	15,346	87	0·57
Mauritius	5,779	4,202	72·72
Mozambique	7,424	118	1·59
Mayotte	—	—	—
Namibia	733	—	—
Reunion	—	—	—
Rwanda	115	—	—
Sao Tome and Principe	4	—	—
Seychelles	2,519	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—
Swaziland	6,402	—	—
Zaire	285	—	—
Zambia	35,351	—	—
Zimbabwe	12,503	3	0·03
Total	103,628	4,516	4·36
1987			
Angola	261	—	—
Botswana	12,219	6	0·05
Burundi	90	—	—
Comoros	—	—	—
Congo	179	—	—
Lesotho	3,942	—	—
Madagascar	551	—	—
Malawi	24,865	1,657	6·67
Mauritius	8,107	1,961	24·20
Mozambique	22,798	661	2·90
Mayotte	—	—	—
Namibia	969	—	—
Reunion	—	—	—
Rwanda	191	—	—
Sao Tome and Principe	—	—	—
Seychelles	1,689	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—
Swaziland	3,514	—	—
Zaire	3,112	—	—
Zambia	25,349	—	—
Zimbabwe	12,498	—	—
Total	120,334	4,285	3·57
1988			
Angola	505	—	—
Botswana	8,251	—	—
Burundi	116	—	—
Comoros	1	—	—
Congo	296	—	—
Lesotho	4,898	—	—
Madagascar	434	—	—
Malawi	46,494	1,410	3·04
Mauritius	6,374	—	—
Mozambique	30,512	—	—
Mayotte	—	—	—
Namibia	2,033	—	—
Reunion	—	—	—
Rwanda	291	—	—
Sao Tome and Principe	16	—	—
Seychelles	1,716	—	—
South Africa	—	—	—
Swaziland	5,058	—	—
Zaire	595	—	—
Zambia	16,683	—	—
Zimbabwe	24,127	4,041	16·75
Total	148,401	5,451	3·68

Footnote:

The United Kingdom does not provide aid to the Government of South Africa but does give aid to black South Africans disadvantaged by apartheid, through the TC programme for black South Africans. It is excluded from gross public expenditure as South Africa is not classified by OECD as a developing country. The amounts given through this scheme were as follows (in £ thousands): 494 in 1984, 691 in 1985, 772 in 1986, 1,577 in 1987, 4,288 in 1988.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last five years *(a)* the flows of aid from the United Kingdom to (i) Angola, (ii) Ethiopia, (iii) Kenya, (iv) Tanzania, (v) Uganda, (vi) Zaire and (vii) all remaining central and eastern African nations, listing those classified under this regional grouping and *(b)* the proportions in each case of this aid tied to trade deals involving United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer for eastern Africa is as follows: the information requested on central Africa is given in the answer to the hon. Member's question on southern Africa.

Gross Bilateral Aid 1984-1988

£ thousand

	1984 of which ATP		*ATP as a Percentage*
Eastern Africa			
Djibouti	8	—	—
Ethiopia	7,004	—	—
Kenya	38,312	2,021	5·28
Somalia	2,058	—	—
Sudan	27,427	—	—
Tanzania	33,033	—	—
Uganda	7,081	—	—
Yemen North (YAR)	3,103	—	—
Yemen South (PDRY)	969	—	—
Total	118,995	2,021	1·70

Gross Bilateral Aid 1984-1988

£ thousand

	1985 of which ATP		*ATP as a Percentage*
Eastern Africa			
Djibouti	—	—	—
Ethiopia	28,058	—	—
Kenya	34,438	360	1·05
Somalia	1,737	—	—
Sudan	42,296	—	—
Tanzania	17,967	—	—
Uganda	9,171	—	—
Yemen North (YAR)	3,104	—	—
Yemen South (PDRY)	985	—	—
Total	137,757	360	0·27

Gross Bilateral Aid 1984-1988

£ thousand

	1986 of which ATP		*ATP as a Percentage*
Eastern Africa			
Djibouti	2	—	—
Ethiopia	9,627	—	—
Kenya	33,754	2,049	6·08
Somalia	3,941	—	—
Sudan	25,996	—	—
Tanzania	12,715	—	—
Uganda	8,576	—	—
Yemen North (YAR)	3,775	—	—
Yemen South (PDRY)	943	—	—
Total	99,329	2,049	2·07

		Of which ATP	*ATP as per cent.*
Eastern Africa			
1987			
Djibouti	168	—	—
Ethiopia	8,554	—	—
Kenya	28,513	2,972	10·43
Somalia	7,292	—	—
Sudan	20,327	—	—
Tanzania	28,789	—	—
Uganda	12,180	—	—
Yemen North (YAR)	5,168	—	—
Yemen South (PDRY)	1,157	—	—
Total	112,148	2,972	2·66
1988			
Djibouti	134	—	—
Ethiopia	19,174	—	—
Kenya	49,433	4,383	8·37
Somalia	6,675	—	—
Sudan	25,829	—	—
Tanzania	33,502	—	—
Uganda	28,589	—	—
Yemen North (YAR)	6,603	1,203	18·23
Yemen South (PDRY)	444	—	—
Total	170,383	5,587	3·28

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the chart printed in the *Official Report*, 31 January, columns *191-92*, in pounds sterling.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is as follows:

Disbursements of Net Official Development Assistance 1980-1988

	United Kingdom (a)		*EEC Countries[1] (including United Kingdom) (b)*		*EEC Countries[2] (excluding United Kingdom) (c)*	
	£ million	*per cent GNP*	*£ million*	*per cent GNP*	*£ million*	*per cent GNP*
1980	797	0·35	5,577	0·47	4,780	0·50
1981	1,081	0·43	6,264	0·53	5,183	0·56
1982	1,028	0·37	6,987	0·53	5,959	0·57
1983	1,061	0·35	7,605	0·51	6,544	0·55
1984	1,069	0·33	8,478	0·51	7,409	0·55
1985	1,180	0·33	8,964	0·51	7,783	0·55
1986	1,185	0·31	10,995	0·51	9,811	0·55
1987	1,142	0·28	11,651	0·49	10,509	0·53
1988	1,485	0·32	11,919	0·49	10,434	0·53

	United States of America (d)		*Japan (e)*		*Australia and New Zealand (f)*	
	£ million	*per cent GNP*	*£ million*	*per cent GNP*	*£ million*	*per cent. GNP*
1980	3,069	0·27	1,441	0·32	318	0·46
1981	2,851	0·19	1,564	0·28	354	0·40
1982	4,686	0·27	1,727	0·28	541	0·52
1983	5,327	0·24	2,479	0·32	537	0·46
1984	6,518	0·24	3,232	0·34	623	0·43
1985	7,253	0·24	2,929	0·29	619	0·46

	United Kingdom (a)		EEC Countries[1] (including United Kingdom) (b)		EEC Countries[2] (excluding United Kingdom) (c)	
	£ million	per cent GNP	£ million	per cent GNP	£ million	per cent GNP
1986	6,523	0·23	3,842	0·29	564	0·44
1987	5,458	0·20	4,480	0·31	436	0·32
1988	5,693	0·21	5,128	0·32	677	0·44

[1]EEC countries which are members of the DAC : Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland[2], Italy, Netherlands, United Kingdom.
[2]Ireland not included in 1980 and 1981 as figures not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, further to his reply, *Official Report*, 31 January, column *190*, he will list those countries included under the headings South America, Africa and Asia and the middle east as being beneficiaries of United Kingdom bilateral aid and trade flows; and if he will list any other beneficiaries not classified under these three groupings.

Mr. Waldegrave The following countries were beneficiaries of funds from the aid and trade provision in the period 1984-88:

South America
Brazil
Colombia
Paraguay
Peru

Africa
Botswana
Cameroon
Egypt
Kenya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Tunisia
Zimbabwe

Asia and Middle East
Burma
China
India
Indonesia
Jordan
Malaysia
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Yemen Arab Republic

Other Beneficiaries
Belize
Cyprus
Panama
Turkey
Leeward Islands

Further details can be found in "British Aid Statistics 1984-88," a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

1992

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement as to the anticipated consequences for developing and under developed countries of the European Communities 1992 programme, in respect of their aid and trade relations with *(a)* the European Community, *(b)* individual European Community nations and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The creation of a single market in 1992 will not affect the way the European Community and individual member states decide their aid programmes to developing countries. The United Kingdom maintains a substantial and effective aid programme and will continue to do so. The single market programme will integrate the economies of the EC member states more closely. By removing barriers to trade and increasing the size of the market it should provide new opportunities for those of our trading partners outside the Community.

Cambodia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the Australian proposal to partition Cambodia into two zones, one held by the Khmer Rouge and the other by Phnom Penh.

Mr. Waldegrave: Senator Evans' proposal for a UN-administered interim authority in Cambodia pending free and fair elections does not envisage the partition of Cambodia. We strongly support the Australian initiative which the permanent members of the UN Security Council are actively pursuing.

Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he hopes to meet non-governmental organisations on the rain forest; and if he will make a statement to the House subsequent to the meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has regular contact with representatives of the non-governmental organisations on environmental matters including the rain forests. She or ODA officials are ready to meet NGO representatives at short notice if issues arise which require this.

South Africa

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African authorities concerning the human rights implications of the continued imprisonment of those persons who have refused to serve in the South African defence forces for reasons of faith.

Mr. Waldegrave: The South African Defence Act makes provision for conscientious objection on religious grounds. We understand why some young South Africans choose to refuse military service and we respect the strength and sincerity of their views. Such decisions are, however, a matter for the individuals concerned.

CIVIL SERVICE

Code of Practice

98. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many complaints were made to him during 1989 about the operation of the Civil Service code of practice.

Mr. Luce: Individual complaints about the operation of the conduct provisions of the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code are dealt with by the Department concerned. I receive representations of a more general nature from time to time.

Trade Unions

101. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Racial Discrimination

102. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how he intends to counter racial discrimination in appointments to the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer; selection is on merit by fair and open competition. Action to support this policy includes monitoring recruitment procedures, validating selection tests for different racial groups and equal opportunity training for those involved in selection.

Vetting

100. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the vetting procedures in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: The vetting system is an important element of the protective arrangements which exist to counter threats to security. It is not the practice to give detailed information about the system.

Obligations to the Crown

103. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service pursuant to his answer of 6 February, if he will make a statement on the meeting between the Civil Service unions and the head of the home Civil Service to discuss wider obligations to the Crown in Parliament.

Mr. Luce: The head of the home Civil Service met the Civil Service unions on 7 February to discuss a range of matters, including the proposed revision of the paragraphs of the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code which deal with the use of official information. He has undertaken to write to the unions confirming assurances given to them at the meeting that there is no inconsistency between proposed code revision and the note by his predecessor on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers, which was published in the *Official Report* on 2 December 1987, and in particular that the proposed revision does not impose duties and obligations on civil servants which conflict with any statutory or other responsibilities they may have.

Civil Service College

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the quality of service performance indicators that have been introduced into the Civil Service college since its establishment as an agency.

Mr. Luce: Since the beginning of 1990, ratings of the quality of the Civil Service college's training, accommodation, catering and support services have contributed to an overall value for money indicator. This new performance indicator complements the course evaluation indicator which was in operation before the transition to agency status.

Agencies

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the Civil Service agencies that have been established with the dates and the number of staff employed in each case.

Mr. Luce: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table.

Agency	*Established*	*Staff*
Vehicle Inspectorate	1 August 1988	1,550
Companies House	3 October 1988	1,150
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	14 December 1988	3,200
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	18 April 1989	50
Warren Spring Laboratory	20 April 1989	300
Resettlement Agency	24 May 1989	350
Civil Service College	6 June 1989	200
QE11 Conference Centre	6 July 1989	50
Historic Royal Palaces	1 October 1989	350
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	30 October 1989	300
Total 10 Agencies		7,700

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exports

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the action which he is taking to increase British exports.

Mr. Redwood: My Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide through the export initiative a package of measures offering a wide range of practical help, advice and support to United Kingdom exporters.

Our clear aim is to encourage potential exporters to consider selling overseas and existing exporters to sell more. The decision to export of course rests with individual firms: it is they who will determine whether they are successful. Our role is to help them in their decision-making and to provide the services they require to enter export markets. Our services are closely monitored to ensure they continue to meet the needs of exporters.

It is encouraging to see that the volume of exports, excluding oil and erratic items, was 10 per cent. higher in 1989 than in 1988.

Japan

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the steps being taken to open the Japanese market to exports from Britain.

Mr. Redwood: The Government have two main trade policy objectives with regard to further opening the Japanese market to exports from Britain. First, to encourage the Japanese authorities to pursue structural reforms to sustain the shift in the balance of their economy from growth led by exports to growth led by domestic demand. Secondly, to secure the removal of the remaining specific barriers to market access. We have been successful: few such barriers remain, and where they do the Government campaign vigorously for their removal in cooperation with the European Commission. We are also strenuously promoting business awareness of the opportunities in the Japanese market and the improvement of our businessmen's skills in the Japanese language. Last year United Kingdom exports to Japan increased by £525 million to £2·3 billion, an increase of 30 per cent. over 1988.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding access to the Japanese market for British exports.

Mr. Redwood: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 6 December. Last year, our exports to Japan increased in value by 30·1 per cent.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans his Department has to promote exports from the north-east to eastern European countries.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is encouraging business men to look hard at the new commercial opportunities in eastern Europe. DTI Ministers are playing their part both by receiving incoming delegations and by leading business missions themselves. At the end of last year the Minister for Trade and I led business teams to the USSR and Hungary respectively. In the course of the next two months the Secretary of State and I will be taking business men to the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania while the Minister for Trade will be visiting British stands at the Leipzig fair in the GDR.

My Department is also encouraging British business to take full advantage of the several United Kingdom, EC and multilateral assistance schemes becoming available to help explore the new opportunities for direct investment, joint ventures, and other forms of industrial cooperation. Potential exporters from the north-east can take advantage of the advice from my Department's export service staff in the regional office in Newcastle.

Leeds Task Force

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the work of the inner-city task force in Leeds with regard to securing jobs and training for local people and giving assistance to existing local firms and start-up businesses; and how many private sector companies have supported task-force projects in Leeds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's Chapeltown and Harehills task force has committed £5 million to support some 130 projects. These should create over 340 jobs and more than 3,500 training places for residents of the area. Seventy-three existing businesses and 137 new businesses have received assistance, primarily through the task force's development fund. More than 50 of the projects involve private sector funding.

Cosmetics (Additives)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what controls exist over the use of additives in cosmetics; if he will publish a list of those additives whose use is permitted in cosmetics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The ingredients of cosmetics are regulated by the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1989 SI 1989 No. 2233. Suppliers are permitted to use only those preservatives and colourants on the "permitted lists" in schedules 3 and 4, and in future no further anti-oxidants are to be prescribed by future directives.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on non-governmental research being carried out in the United Kingdom to develop road vehicles powered by electricity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Companies carrying out research into various aspects of electric vehicle (EV) technology include Chloride EV Systems which has a joint venture with General Motors to develop the electric "G Van" and Lucas Industries (UK) which is collaborating with United States and Swedish companies to develop traction batteries.

Garston Amhurst

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to exercise his powers under the Financial Services and Companies Acts to trace funds invested in the Garston Amhurst Associates Group *(a)* in an account at Barclays bank, Lewisham and *(b)* overseas.

Mr. Redwood: On 25 January 1990 the Official Receiver was appointed provisional liquidator of five companies in the Garston Amhurst Associates group, following petitions for compulsory winding-up orders to be made against the companies by the Securities and Investments Board. The Official Receiver's inquiries into the assets of the companies are continuing. I am satisfied that the Official Receiver has sufficient powers under the Insolvency Act 1986 to carry out his functions as provisional liquidator.

Television Sets

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many television sets were imported into Great Britain in 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of television sets imported into the United Kingdom in 1989 was 1,885,000.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many television sets were manufactured in Great Britain in 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of television sets manufactured in Great Britain in 1989 is provisionally estimated at 2·6 million.

Reeve Leisure Limited

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning timeshare promotion schemes of Reeve Leisure Ltd., of Kings avenue, New Malden; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Forth: I have received a number of complaints about the promotional activities of Reeve Leisure Ltd. as well as complaints about other timeshare companies. My hon. Friend will be aware that I asked the Director General of Fair Trading in June 1989 to undertake a review of the whole range of timeshare problems and to let me have his recommendations in the early part of this year.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the recycling of chlorofluorocarbons from the foam in refrigerators.

Mr. Forth: There are technical difficulties in extracting chlorofluorocarbons from the foam in refrigerators, and I know of no full-scale system operating anywhere at present. My Department has commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to carry out a wide-ranging study into chlorofluorocarbons use, including the technical and economic options for their recovery, recycling and destruction. That study is due to be completed shortly.

Loan Sharks

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the increasing activities of loan sharks on council estates in Manchester; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The only representations my right hon. Friend has received are those contained in the right hon. Member's letter of 1 February, to which a reply will be sent shortly. The law, in particular the consumer Credit Act 1974 and the Administration of Justice Act 1970, provides the enforcement authorities with appropriate powers to protect the public from loan sharks. The Director General of Fair Trading and local authorities have the duty of enforcing consumer credit legislation whilst enforcement of other relevant laws is a matter for the police.

Ferranti Defence Systems

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Office of Fair Trading began its investigation into the planned GEC acquisition of Ferranti Defence Systems; and when it hopes to report.

Mr. Redwood: The Director General of Fair Trading has submitted his recommendation on the merger to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who announced on 9 February 1990 that he has decided, in accordance with the director general's recommendation, not to refer the proposed acquisition by the General Electric Company plc of Ferranti Defence Systems Group and of Ferranti International plc's interests in Ferranti Italia SRL to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Japanese Car Plants (United Kingdom)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is aware of any requirement by Japanese car manufacturers in the United Kingdom for United Kingdom component manufacturers in future to enter into joint ventures with Japanese companies in order to be qualified to tender for work in United Kingdom-located Japanese car plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Japanese car manufacturers based in the United Kingdom operate no general rule of this kind. If there are any instances in which a Japanese car manufacturer has told a potential United Kingdom component supplier that a joint venture will be necessary, that is a matter for commercial negotiation between the parties.

Agencies (Performance Indicators)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quaity of service performance indicators that have been introduced into Companies House, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, the Warren Spring Laboratory and the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, respectively, since their establishment as agencies.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 15 January 1990.

Mining Engineering

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet the directors of mining engineering companies in the west Yorkshire area to discuss production and export drives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no present plans to meet the directors of mining engineering companies in the west Yorkshire area.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what have been the Government's contributions to the citizens advice bureaux in each of the past five years.

Mr. Forth: My Department does not fund individual citizens advice bureaux. However, my Department funds the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) which covers bureaux in England and Wales and Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS). Total grant-in-aid paid by my Department to NACAB and CAS during the last five years is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	7·993
1986-87	8·604
1987-88	8·954
1988-89	9·405
[1]1989-90	9·927

[1] Estimated.

ECGD Insurance Services Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department will only be privatised on condition that the purchaser is domiciled and registered in the United Kingdom and that all the directors are United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the insurance services group of the Exports Credits Guarantee Department, should not be sold in whole, or in part, to companies controlled outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Accounting Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether accountants employed by firms criticised by his Department will be appointed to the accounting standards task force.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that Sir Ronald Dearing has no present plans to make further appointments to the accounting standards task force.

THE ARTS

Arts Funding

80. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the plans to meet the chair of Greater London Arts to discuss the effect of the uniform business rate on arts funding in London.

90. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to meet the chair of Greater London Arts to discuss the effect that the uniform business rate may have on arts funding in London.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so. Greater London Arts is currently compiling information on the effects of the change and I am asking it to keep me informed.

84. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the effect of the uniform business rate on arts funding.

89. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the impact of the uniform business rate on arts funding.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so. I am asking the Welsh Arts Council to monitor the effects of the change and to keep me informed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the implications for arts funding of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council is assessing the implications of the uniform business rate on performing arts organisations, and I have asked it to keep me informed. There are no immediate implications for the national museums and galleries, since (except for the national museums and galleries on Merseyside) they do not at present pay rates. I am keeping the situation under review.

European City of Culture

81. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to attend any events connected with Glasgow's European City of Culture celebrations.

Mr. Luce: Yes, I shall be in Glasgow from 1-3 March for the official inauguration and associated events. I shall also be in Glasgow on 14 March, to open the Arts Council of Great Britain's conference, "Arts without Frontiers".

Autumn Statement

82. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following the settlement for the arts in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to say that I have received many letters of appreciation from chairmen and directors of institutions which benefited from revised allocations.

Business Sponsorship

83. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made with the business sponsorship incentive scheme in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am delighted that the business sponsorship incentive scheme has brought over £1 million of new money to the arts in the north-west since it began in 1984. (Fifty arts organisations have won awards and 54 first-time and 20 existing sponsors have supported the arts.)

85. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to change the rules and funding of the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: I recently announced changes in the rules of the business sponsorship incentive scheme to enable it to focus on companies considering arts sponsorship for the first time. Under the new rules, which will operate from 1 April 1990, first-time sponsors will continue to be matched pound for pound. However, existing sponsors will be matched in the ratio of £1 for every £4 of additional sponsorship and businesses which have sponsored the arts for more than three years will no longer be eligible. The increased budget for the scheme of £3·5 million will be divided into six bi-monthly budgets in order to spread these resources more evenly throughout the year. Arts organisations will continue to be eligible for two awards each financial year up to the maximum of £25,000.

Leicester

86. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit the city of Leicester.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans at present to visit Leicester, which I last visited in September 1988.

Arts Council

87. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the allocation to the Arts Council in current prices for each year since 1985.

Mr. Luce: The grant-in-aid to the Arts Council in 1985-86 was £105 million, which at 1989-90 prices, using the GDP inflator, is equivalent to £131 million. The figures for the following years were: 1986-87 £135·6 million (£163·9 million at current prices); 1987-88 £139·3 million (£159·9 million); 1988-89 £150 million (£160·5 million); and 1989-90 £155·25 million. The figure for next year will be £175 million, equivalent to £166·7 million at today's prices, using the GDP forecast. Over the next three years, the compounded increase will be 22 per cent., compared to a projected compound increase of 12 per cent. in the GDP inflator over the whole of that period.

Youth Arts Organisations

88. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage the work of the national youth arts organisations.

Mr. Luce: It is the role of the Arts Council to encourage such bodies. However, I understand that it has decided to allocate £3,000 next year to each of four youth organisations, the National Youth Theatre, the National Youth Orchestra, British Youth Opera and the National Youth Music Theatre. These grants are intended to help the companies with the professional aspects of their work.

Ballet

91. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last attended the ballet in an official capacity.

Mr. Luce: I last attended the ballet in an official capacity on 30 October 1989, when I went to a performance of "Swan Lake" at the Royal Opera House.

Admission Charges

92. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent studies he has commissioned of the consequences of compulsory charges to enter galleries and museums.

Mr. Luce: The Government's repeatedly stated policy is that the decision whether or not to operate a system of admission charges, or voluntary donations, should be for the board of trustees responsible for each institution.

Similarly, it is for the trustees of each institution to decide whether or not to commission studies into the consequences of charges.

Merseyside Arts

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of Merseyside Arts to discuss the Wilding review on the funding of the arts in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: I discussed Mr. Wilding's report with the chairman and representatives of Merseyside Arts on 1 December 1989. I also discussed the report with the chairman of the Arts Council and the chairmen of the regional arts associations on 1 February 1990.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Creches

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by location, where creche facilities are provided for working mothers employed in his Department; and if they have to make any payment for this service.

Mr. Cope: There are no creche facilities provided by the Northern Ireland Civil Service or the Northern Ireland Office.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service and the home Civil Service are, however, considering how child care arrangements for staff could be improved. Two holiday playschemes have been established, on a pilot basis, within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. One scheme, based in Londonderry, ran during the 1989 summer school holidays, whilst the scheme based in the Stormont estate ran during the 1989 summer and Christmas holiday periods. The schemes were also open to home Civil Service staff in Northern Ireland. A holiday playscheme in Westminster, Elephant and Castle, Kensington and Croydon was available to London-based staff during 1989.

In the Northern Ireland Civil Service a joint management and trade union side working group on childcare, which is responsible for the holiday playscheme initiative in the Province, is considering the feasibility of providing creches for the children of civil servants. In view

of the small number of London-based staff in the Northern Ireland Office, it would be impracticable to organise a separate creche. Nevertheless, creche facilities are being sought with larger Government Departments.

Fire Service

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what training, advice and guidance is given to members of police forces from Great Britain who may be visiting or seconded to the Royal Ulster Constabulary regarding fire safety and prevention; and what arrangements exist for liaison with the Northern Ireland fire service for this.

Mr. Cope: No formal training programme is given by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to visiting or seconded police officers. Most visiting officers would normally have already received some form of fire prevention training within their own force. Visitors staying in police establishments are briefed on fire exits and so on to be used in the event of a fire or terrorist attack. Liaison with the Northern Ireland fire authority is carried out through the police authority and the works service of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland).

Meetings

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list any meetings involving Sir Robert Andrew, Mr Colin Sampson and Sir Philip Myers on matters relating to Northern Ireland which took place in 1986.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 January 1990]:* There was one such meeting, on 12 June 1986, involving Sir Robert Andrew, Mr. Colin Sampson and Sir Philip Myers, and also Sir Lawrence Byford.

Life Sentence Review Board

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals for change in the structure of remit of the life sentence review board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No. We shall, however, be examining our life sentence review procedures in the light of the Government's response to the recently published report of the House of Lords Select Committee on murder and life imprisonment, which included recommendations about the review system in Great Britain.

Fine Default

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to abolish imprisonment for fine default; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There are no such proposals at present.

Republic of Ireland (Economic Co-operation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of moves towards increased cross-border economic co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Cope: The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference initiated last year a systematic programme of assessment of all the main sectors, to determine where the process of social and economic co-operation can most fruitfully be expanded. A joint Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland paper on cross-border matters has been prepared for presentation to the EC under its cross-border programme and it is hoped to submit this shortly.

Stormont

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what purpose the new construction work is being carried out in the Stormont complex; and at what cost.

Mr. Cope: A variety of work is in progress for the purpose largely of relieving pressures on accommodation, modernising telecommunications and pursuing maintenance programmes. The final cost is not available.

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. McMamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what attempts have been made by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to question Mr. F. Holroyd about his knowledge of events at the Kincora boys' hostel.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* I understand that Mr. Holroyd has been inteviewed by officers of the Royal Ulster Constabularly on a number of occasions. During those interviews he was questioned about, inter alia, the extent of his knowledge of events at the Kincora boys' hostel.

Devolution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on plans for devolution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 1 February. I expect to have further discussions with the leadership of the main consitutional political parties in Northern Ireland in the near future.—(*Official Report*, Vol. 166, No. 42, col. 417).

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on proposals for the Ulster Defence Regiment to carry plastic bullets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* A decision was taken last year that plastic baton round equipment could be made available to the Ulster Defence Regiment for use in carefully prescribed circumstances. There has been no change in the role of the regiment, which will continue not to be employed on crowd control duties.

ENVIRONMENT

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been provided in the private rented sector as a result of the assured tenancy initiative, both in total for the United Kingdom and by region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is too early to assess the overall impact of deregulation on the supply of rented accommodation, but there are clear signs of increased interest in residential lettings. In particular, over £370 million has been invested in business expansion scheme companies letting on assured tenancies, which will provide some 7,000 new homes to let in Great Britain. In addition, some 18,000 homes will be completed by housing associations in England in the current financial year, for letting on assured tenancies.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dover of 29 January, if he will take steps to speed up the programme of works for cleaning and restoring the inner courtyards in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: I shall keep the programme under review.

Quangos and Advisory Bodies

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all the quangos and advisory bodies he has established since July 1989, the membership of each body, the rate at which the members are remunerated, whether they are full or part-time, the number of civil servants attached to each body, their grades and salary level, the number of quango and advisory bodies he has abolished since July 1989, and the consequential saving to the Exchequer.

Mr. Chris Patten: The following table lists the current membership of the authorities and members' remuneration of bodies established since July 1989. All posts are part-time. There are no civil servants attached to either body.

National Rivers Authority

	Remuneration
Chairman: Lord Crickhowell	Remuneration per annum £42,210
Members: P. Brandt J. P. Coverdale Lady Dione Digby (appointed by Welsh Office) Professor R. Edwards Sir Hugh Fish D. Kinnersley Lord Mason (appointed by MAFF) D. Mitchell Mrs. K. Morgan (appointed by MAFF) J. H. M. Norris W. J. Rogers-Coltman R. J. F. Taylor J. Wheatley	£6,450-£15,050 depending of time commitment.

Chief Executive and ex-officio member: Dr. John Bowman (not paid as board member).

London Pensions Fund Authority

	Remuneration
Chairman: Sir George Blunden	The post attracts a remuneration of £9,600 per annum but the Chairman is currently serving without payment
Deputy Chairman: M. C. Roberts	£8,000
Members: Sir Nigel Althaus Councillor E. D. Barkway Councillor S. Bullock Professor R. Franklin Councillor A. King Councillor A. S. Lourie C. J. Messer	£3,000

The following public bodies have been abolished since July 1989; New Towns Staff Commission, South Yorkshire Residuary Body and Greater Manchester Residuary Body. The Merseyside Residuary Body will be formally wound up on 30 March 1990. The residuary bodies were not funded by the Exchequer; the abolition of the New Towns Staff Commission has led to a saving of the order of £800 a year for the fees and travelling and subsistence expenses of members.

House Purchases and Sales

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to seek to reduce the costs of *(a)* buying and *(b)* selling a home.

Mr. Chope: We want house buying and selling to be as simple, inexpensive and as fair as possible to both parties involved. This is best achieved by healthy competition between those offering services to house buyers and sellers, and by the development of efficient practices. For further information, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 6 February 1990 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, col. *545*.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the increased rate levy on business under the uniform business rate over previous rate charges on business in *(a)* central London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* the west midlands and *(d)* the south-east; and what research studies he has commissioned into the economic and social consequences of taking out these extra sums each year on (i) prices in the areas concerned, (ii) rents and (iii) attraction of the areas to inward investment.

Mr. Chope: As a result of the 1990 revaluation and the introduction of a uniform business rate on 1 April, the aggregate change in rate bills before taking account of the transitional arrangements will be:

(a) Inner London—an increase of £610 million.
(b) Outer London—an increase of £20 million.
(c) West Midlands—a reduction of £220 million.
(d) South East—an increase of £250 million.

The total amount payable by businesses as a whole will be broadly the same in real terms in 1990-91 as in 1989-90: but there will be a shift in the burden of rates of around £900 million from the north and the midlands to London and the south.

This will give a boost to existing businesses and stimulate investment in areas such as Grimsby, where rates will fall on average by 21 per cent. in cash terms without transition.

Because at national level the effect of the new system is broadly neutral the changes will not be inflationary. Where properties face large increases in rate bills there will be consequential downward pressure on rents.

Rent Revisions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received for amendments to landlord and tenant legislation to prohibit contracts which allow only upward rent revision and to make provision for both upward and downward revision mandatory; what proposals he has for legislation in the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We have received three representations about upward-only rent reviews since the main legislation for business tenancies, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 part II, was reviewed in 1985. Following consultation it was concluded that the balance between tenant and landlord rights and obligations was being maintained and that overall the Act continued to work well. That remains the position and the Government do not intend to intervene further in the business lettings market.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of net weekly income a household in each of the regions on a weekly net income of *(a)* £100, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £200, *(d)* £250, *(e)* £300, *(f)* £400 and *(g)* £500 will pay in poll tax in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93;

(2) what percentage of net weekly income a household in Greater London on a weekly net income of *(a)* £100, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £200, *(d)* £250, *(e)* £300, *(f)* £400 and *(g)* £500 will pay in poll tax in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93;

(3) what percentage of net weekly income a household on a weekly net income of *(a)* £100, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £200, *(d)* £250, *(e)* £300, *(f)* £400 and *(g)* £500 will pay in poll tax in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested are not available.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made as to the amount towards the cost of local government that will be contributed under the community charge system by the top 10 per cent. of all households by income, taking tax payments to central Government into account, and the amount that will be contributed by the poorest 10 per cent. of households by income.

Mr. David Hunt: About 15 times as much will be contributed to the cost of local government by the top 10 per cent. of households by income compared with the poorest 10 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what poll tax payments are due from a full-time mature student on a full grant but with no other source of income who owns his own home, which has no other occupants, and who is living and studying away from home.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]*: A person who is following a full-time course of education for the purposes of the student relief will be liable to pay 20 per cent. of the personal community charge at his term-time address. If that person also owns domestic property in which there is no person solely or mainly resident, he will be subject to the standard community charge in respect of that property. However, guidance already issued by the Department has suggested that local authorities should use the wide discretion available to them to specify this class of circumstance as one where the standard community charge multiplier is zero.

Council Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in the north-west have privatised council services; which authority has privatised the most services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Local authorities are required to put certain of their services out to competitive tender under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 in accordance with a timetable prescribed in the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Competition) (England) Regulations 1988, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. These require those authorities which were not able to claim exemption on de minimis grounds to put one specified service out to tender by 1 August 1989 and a second service by 1 January 1990. Different services were prescribed for different authorities. In addition, all authorities which were not subject to a de minimis exemption were required to put at least 20 per cent. of their ground maintenance work out to tender by 1 January 1990.

The results of a questionnaire on the first round of tendering under the 1988 Act are not yet available. Information about tendering for services not covered by the Local Government Act 1988 is not collected centrally.

Community Charge (Nurses)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been issued to community charge officers on levying of the community charge on nurses living in hostel accommodation during the week and returning to their own homes at weekends.

Mr. Chope: Guidance on determining an individual's sole or main residence for the purposes of registration for the personal community charge is contained in community charge practice note No. 9. Where an individual is regarded as solely or mainly resident will depend on the facts of each case. Advice to charging authorities on the standard charge in respect of unoccupied property has recommended them to consider a special class for property which is empty because the owner is required to live elsewhere as a condition of his or her employment.

Waste Disposal, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences relating to waste disposal facilities have been issued by Bradford council; how many licence applications have been refused; how many inspections are made annually of waste dumps in

Bradford; and how many operators have been prosecuted for breach of licence conditions in respect of waste dumps in Bradford;

(2) how many waste dumps there are within the area of Bradford metropolitan district council; how many have been abandoned; how many are safely capped; and what information he has on plans issued by Bradford council for dealing with wastes;

(3) if he will arrange for all waste dumps in Bradford to be inspected and action taken to stop waste contaminating ground water and drinking water supplies; and if he has received any representations expressing concern about the risks of waste dumping in Bradford contaminating drinking water supplies.

Mr. Trippier: These are matters for the West Yorkshire waste management joint committee as waste disposal authority for the area. Details of current licences are contained on registers held by the waste disposal authorities.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to ban co-disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. Co-disposal of wastes is a recognised landfill technique which, in suitable circumstances, can offer environmental benefits. It requires careful site assessment and operational control and these are matters for site operators and regulatory authorities to consider within the waste disposal licensing system.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to require companies that dump waste to pay the costs of making waste dumps safe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection Bill contains provision that a licence shall remain in force after the final deposit of waste until a certificate of completion is obtained which certifies that the waste regulation authority is satisfied that the land is unlikely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. The licensee will remain responsible for the land until that time and will have to bear the costs of any work that needs to be carried out.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will establish as a matter of urgency a ministerial working party charged with recommending a national waste disposal policy and ensure that the working party represents all interested parties and receives evidence on the widest possible basis;

(2) if he will introduce a national waste disposal policy.

Mr. Trippier: No working party is required to prepare national policies in this area.

Co-ordinated central Government advice and guidance on waste management is given to local authorities to assist them in determining, in accordance with their statutory duties, local waste disposal strategies for their areas, consulting other bodies as necessary. Additional guidance is being prepared in relation to the proposed duties for local authorities under part II of the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a new national survey of waste tips in England and Wales; if he will take steps to establish a register of old waste dumps; and what action he is taking to tell the National Rivers Authority the location of waste dumps which pose a risk or serious risk of contamination to drinking water supplies.

Mr. Trippier: A national survey is not required. The Environmental Protection Bill contains proposals for waste regulation authorities to seek out and keep records of any land which has ever been used for waste disposal and to inspect and monitor closed sites.

Waste disposal authorities are required to consult the NRA over all applications for waste disposal licences, and the NRA has extensive programmes for monitoring ground and surface waters, which are currently being reviewed.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when was the list of waste dumps near water supplies first received by his Department; what prompted an examination of 19 of the tips on the list; what were the conclusions of that investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The recently publicised survey was a desk assessment carried out with the co-operation of local authorities and the then river authorities during 1973 and 1974. Subsequently, as part of a research programme, detailed investigations were undertaken by independent consultants at 19 representative sites. The research report was published in 1978 and concluded that controlled landfill was acceptable in a range of geological circumstances and confirmed previous experience with this disposal method.

Control of Pollution Act

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to bring the first section of the Control of Pollution Act into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: It is no longer appropriate to seek to bring section 1 of the 1974 Act into force in view of the proposed replacement of part I of that Act by the provisions in part II of the Environmental Protection Bill.

Gipsy Sites, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet reached a decision under the Caravan Sites Act on the recent application of Bradford metropolitan district for designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the application submitted by Bradford council to designate traveller sites within the metropolitan district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider the city of Bradford metropolitan council's application for designated status when the local authority submits the outstanding response to its consultation exercise. The matter will then be dealt with as speedily as possible.

Private Landlords

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that landlords reduce rents by an amount equivalent to the rates element after the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 8 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, column *756*.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on whether Nirex or any other statutory body plans to dispose of nuclear waste *(a)* at or near Parys mountain or *(b)* any other location in the constituency of Ynys Môns.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no information about any plans to dispose of nuclear waste in the constituency of Ynys Môn. If the investigations being carried out by United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. at Sellafield and Dounreay are favourable, the company intends to develop a repository at one of these two sites. If both sites prove unsuitable Nirex will look elsewhere, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Agencies

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the quality of service performance indicators that have been introduced into the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre and the historic royal palaces, respectively, since their establishment as agencies.

Mr. Chris Patten: Quality of service indicators are being finalised and will be included in the corporate plans of both agencies which I shall be considering shortly. On the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, Vol. 165, col *369*, which sets out the targets presently approved.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites in total are protected as scheduled ancient monuments.

Mr. Trippier: At present, approximately 13,000 monument sites in England are included in the Secretary of State's schedule of ancient monuments.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend circular 8/87 to detail the ways in which local authorities can apply the principle of recognising the preservation of monuments as a material consideration in the planning process.

Mr. Trippier: No; but we shall shortly be issuing draft planning policy guidance on "Archaeology and Planning" for public consultation, which will include advice to local authorities on the weight to be given in planning decisions to the preservation of archaeological remains.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to instruct local authorities to include archaeological policies in their local and district.

Mr. Trippier: We will shortly be issuing a consultation paper on Archaeology and Planning. This will incorporate advice on development plan policies for archaeological sites.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue a planning circular giving guidance to local authorities about their use of planning conditions *(a)* to preserve and *(b)* to investigate archaeological sites.

Mr. Trippier: I hope shortly to announce the issue for public consultation of draft planning policy guidance on "Archaeology and Planning". This will include advice to local planning authorities on the use of planning conditions in this context. Some guidance is already extant in circular 1/85 on the use of planning conditions to allow archaeologists access to sites for the purposes of recording remains in advance of development.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to give ancient landscapes the status of scheduled ancient monuments.

Mr. Trippier: This is not simply a question of policy. Any decision to schedule ancient landscapes would involve a number of considerations. The term "monument" is defined in section 61(7) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Assuming an ancient landscape falls within this definition, it would also need to be of national importance judged against the criteria to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) on 29 January 1990, *Official Report*, col. *67-68*.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table detailing the sites designated as scheduled ancient monuments in each of the past five years.

Mr. Trippier: The following is a table detailing the number of sites scheduled in each of the past five years.

1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
49	49	10	31	30

Standard Spending Assessments, Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the constituent parts of the standard spending assessment for the Harrogate borough council, York city council and Scarborough borough council.

Mr. Chope: The table sets out the elements of the standard spending assessments for the three authorities:

£ million

	Harrogate	York	Scarborough
Other services:			
District level services	8·13	7·57	6·71
County level services	0·07	0·06	0·06
Flood Defence	0·08	0·11	0·03
Coast Protection	0	0	0·19
Interest Receipts	−0·24	−0·22	−0·20
Total other services	8·04	7·51	6·79
Capital Financing			
Debt Charges	0·96	0·83	0·92
Capital Expenditure charged to Revenue Account	0·05	0·01	0·07
Interest on Capital Receipts	−0·38	−0·33	−0·36
Total capital financing	0·63	0·51	0·63
Total SSA	8·68	8·02	7·42

Hertfordshire County Council

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will set out the number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employees of Hertfordshire county council for the most recent date for which the county council has filed a manpower watch return.

Mr. Chope: Hertfordshire county council employed *(a)* 20,077 full-time and *(b)* 20,856 part-time staff in March 1989, the latest available date.

Common Land

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to introduce legislation to safeguard common land on the basis of the common land forum.

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 4 December 1989, *Official Report*, Vol 163, c. *35*.

Right to Buy

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the results of his survey of right to buy performance in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Last November I announced that I would be reviewing the extent of right to buy delays in London and the effect of the tenant's sanction measures which came into force in March 1989.

The tables show London boroughs' right to buy activity during September 1989. A total of 21,886 cases were awaiting completion and boroughs had failed to issue 12,811 RTB2 and S125 notices within the statutory time limits. More than half the overdue notices were in Lambeth, Hackney, Brent, Southwark and Hounslow.

The information collected about the use of the new tenant's sanction measures shows that 12 boroughs received no notices of delay, but tenant's sanction notices have been used extensively in boroughs where the number of overdue cases is high. In a single month, 18 boroughs received 271 initial notices (RTB6) and 53 operative notices of delay (RTB8). Another borough estimated that it had received 1,305 initial notices and 780 operative notices between March and November.

The most common reason for serving initial notices was delay in completing sales, followed by delays in advising tenants of the price and other terms of sale (S125 notice) and by delays in confirming the existence of a right to buy (RTB2 notice).

The Department has been receiving monthly reports from 12 monitored boroughs. The number of overdue RTB2 and S125 notices in these boroughs fell by 25 per cent. between March and September. The measures introduced last March have not only given tenants a sanction against unreasonable delays, but they have encouraged local authorities to improve their right to buy performance.

I have decided that monthly monitoring should continue for Brent, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Richmond, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. Hammersmith, Waltham Forest, Ealing and Hillingdon, not monitored at the moment, are being asked to provide right to buy information for three months so that I can decide whether they should be monitored.

Right to buy survey of London boroughs
(i) Right to buy caseload September 1989

Borough	New Applications	RTB2 Notices Outstanding	S125 Notices Outstanding	Completed Sales	Completions Outstanding	Memo: RTB Sales 1979-89 (Sep)
City	7	0	5	17	242	1,160
Barking	108	0	11	103	900	[1]9,730
Barnet	65	0	13	56	381	[1]5,073
Bexley	29	0	20	30	949	n/a
Brent	56	79	1,184	65	262	[2]2,107
Bromley	65	0	10	56	205	[1]6,963
Camden	127	0	674	67	1,352	[1]1,224
Croydon	67	0	0	49	195	[1]5,673

Borough	New Applications	RTB2 Notices Outstanding	S125 Notices Outstanding	Completed Sales	Completions Outstanding	Memo: RTB Sales 1979-89 (Sep)
Ealing	59	69	322	67	605	[1]2,451
Enfield	93	11	41	93	n/a	6,212
Greenwich	54	7	180	88	900	[1]2,551
Hackney	104	705	1,338	98	n/a	[1]1,828
Hammersmith	57	0	474	37	1,585	[1]1,993
Haringey	122	91	37	81	507	[1]3,741
Harrow	30	0	0	26	60	[1]2,347
Havering	96	0	0	48	171	[1]2,944
Hillingdon	69	25	334	40	221	[1]1,852
Hounslow	64	101	808	39	539	[1]3,289
Islington	148	45	248	112	1,451	[1]2,297
Kensington	21	0	83	26	280	[1]679
Kingston	17	0	19	22	135	[1]1,515
Lambeth	173	1,085	1,899	31	1,861	[1]1,211
Lewisham	118	111	415	157	1,833	[1]4,987
Merton	35	0	n/a	31	387	[1]2,534
Newham	76	70	650	87	706	[1]3,915
Redbridge	90	n/a	n/a	49	431	n/a
Richmond	26	0	35	24	137	[1]2,394
Southwark	258	80	913	119	98	[1]3,205
Sutton	31	0	141	37	165	2,865
Tower Hamlets	84	n/a	n/a	65	n/a	[1]1,242
Waltham Forest	39	2	427	71	n/a	[1]2,790
Wandsworth	103	0	4	132	2,393	[1]7,576
Westminster	46	16	29	132	2,935	[1]3,233
Total	2,437	2,497	10,314	2,155	21,886	[1]101,581

n/a = Not available.
[1] Denotes an incomplete total.

Notes
(i) Bexley and Redbridge sell properties under the general consent rather than the right to buy legislation. Information here is based on equivalent stages to the right to buy process.
(ii) Tower Hamlets were unable to provide complete information due to industrial action. Figures are for 4 of their neighbourhoods.
(iii) Cumulative right to buy sales are from the table 2 statistics on right to buy and other council house sales.

Right to buy survey of London boroughs
(ii) Right to buy delay notices

Borough	Reason for RTB6				Number Counter Notices Issued	RTB6s outstanding	RTB8s received	Number Counter Notices issued	RTB8s outstanding
	RTB6s received	RTB2 delay	S125 delay	Completion delay					
Brent	28	1	17	10	27	2	2	1	1
Bromley	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Camden	46	2	2	42	20	26	6	2	4
Ealing	11	1	2	8	11	0	1	1	0
Enfield	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Greenwich	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Hackney	70	4	30	36	18	95	23	6	49
Hammersmith	8	0	6	2	4	4	0	0	0
Hillingdon	8	0	8	1	3	5	4	0	0
Hounslow	12	1	5	5	6	16	10	10	12
Islington	30	0	5	25	10	29	2	3	9
Lewisham	30	1	1	28	24	6	3	2	1
Newham	7	0	6	1	7	0	1	0	0
Richmond	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Sutton	8	0	8	0	7	5	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
Waltham Forest	4	0	3	1	4	2	0	0	0
Wandsworth	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Total	271	10	95	165	147	190	53	26	77

Notes:
(i) the following boroughs received no delay notices: City, Barking, Barnet, Bexley, Croydon, Harrow, Havering, Kensington, Kingston, Merton, Redbridge and Westminster.
(ii) Lambeth estimated that 1,305 RTB6s and 780 RTB8s were received between March and November 1989, ie 145 and 65 per month on average respectively.
(iii) Haringey and Southwark were unable to provide information in the form requested.
(iv) The figures for Tower Hamlets relate to 4 of their 7 neighbourhoods.

Radioactive Waste

292. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the advisability of co-disposal of radioactive waste with pig slurry infected with anthrax spores.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 5 February 1990]:* There would be no practical advantages in combining such disposals.

Rugby Borough Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will receive a reply to his letter dated 27 November 1989 referring to Rugby borough council.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 1 February 1990]:* I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Cornwall County Council

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1984-85 the expenditure of Cornwall county council in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Rate fund revenue account net current expenditure—Cornwall CC

	Cash	*Real (1) (1984-85 prices)*
	£m	*£m*
1984-85	144·6	144·6
1985-86	152·8	145·0
1986-87	169·4	155·5
1987-88	187·8	163·7
1988-89	202·5	164·6
1989-90	218·2	165·8

(1) using GDP deflator.

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1984-85 the manpower watch return for Cornwall county council for the third quarter of each year.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The available information is as follows:

Cornwall County Council (including the Isles of Scilly) All Services (excluding Police[1]) at September

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1984-85			
General Services	7,738	6,127	13,865
Magistrates Courts	65	22	87
Probation Staff	68	31	99
Total	7,871	6,180	14,051
1985-86			
General Services	7,815	5,775	13,590
Magistrates Courts	64	21	85
Probation Staff	64	24	88
Total	7,943	5,820	13,763
1986-87			
General Services	7,880	6,478	14,358
Magistrates Courts	71	20	91
Probation Staff	68	27	95
Total	8,019	6,525	14,544
1987-88			
General Services	7,964	6,980	14,944
Magistrates Courts	68	20	88
Probation Staff	67	28	95
Total	8,099	7,028	15,127
1988-89			
General Services	7,924	6,888	14,812
Magistrates Courts	66	24	90
Probation Staff	65	29	94
Total	8,055	6,941	14,996
1989-90[2]			
General Services	7,999	6,951	14,950
Magistrates Courts	65	24	89
Probation Staff	69	30	99
Total	8,133	7,005	15,138

[1] Devon and Cornwall have a joint police authority
[2] Figures for September 1989 are in fact the latest available.

Mortgages

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average outstanding mortgage in 1989-90 in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The estimated average balance outstanding on building society mortgages in the United Kingdom at the end of 1988 was £21,000. Comparable information is not available for other lenders or below national level.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the problems in financial control systems which have led to the overspend by the Housing Corporation in 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 30 January (*Official Report*, column *175*) that the capital resources available to the Housing Corporation in 1989-90 would be increased by £120 million, with a corresponding reduction in 1990-91, to reflect a greater speeding up of housing schemes by housing associations than had been forecast. This adjustment is not expected to affect the Housing Corporation's total expenditure and output over the two years taken together.

An independent examination of the Housing Corporation's financial systems in the autumn of 1989 found that the corporation's expenditure forecasting model was soundly based. The model has now been updated to take account of faster development times. The Housing Corporation will also be introducing cash plannning targets for associations in 1990-91 which will enable the corporation more accurately to predict and control the flow of expenditure.

SCOTLAND

Local Enterprise Councils

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the procedures to be used to monitor expenditure by local enterprise councils.

Mr. Lang: Once in operation, local enterprise companies will work to annual budgets agreed initially with the Training Agency and the Scottish Development Agency, and subsequently with Scottish Enterprise. Monitoring of expenditure within the agreed budgets will primarily be the responsibility of the local enterprise company itself. In addition, prior to the vesting of Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency will jointly monitor local enterprise companies' performance through the local enterprise company unit; and thereafter, Scottish Enterprise will have this function. Such monitoring will be selective and will focus on propriety and whether management arrangements agreed with the local enterprise company in its business plan are functioning effectively and are promoting value for money.

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he has made of the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation in his Department;

(2) whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss-prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Office has developed and maintains controls to prevent fraud and to ensure that if it does occur it will be detected promptly. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that departmental funds are not misappropriated. The activities of the Scottish Office audit unit include responsibility to satisfy the accounting officer for Scottish Office administration costs that financial management and control systems are adequate. Nine of the audit unit staff hold professional qualifications and a further 15 are qualified to Treasury-approved training standards. No specific assessment of preventable losses has been made.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in manufacturing industry in 1979; how many there were at the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total labour force they constituted on each occasion.

Mr. Rifkind: The table gives the number of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Scotland in September 1979 and 1989, the latest date for which information is available. The figures are also shown expressed as a percentage of all employees in employment and as a percentage of the civilian work force in employment on these dates.

	September	
	1979	*1989*
Employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Scotland—thousands	602	419
Scottish manufacturing employment as a percentage of:—		
all employees in employment	29	22
the civilian work force in employment	27	19

Source:
Department of Employment.

Note:
The civilian work force in employment comprises employees in employment, the self-employed and those on Government work-related training schemes.

Earnings

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing gross average weekly earnings for full-time male employees on adult rates in Scotland for every year from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is given in the table.

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time male employees on adult rates in Scotland, in April of each year

	£ per week
1979	101·2
1980	123·1
1981	140·0
1982	154·5
1983	167·5
1984	178·7
1985	189·7
1986	201·3
1987	214·6
1988	233·3
1989	251·2

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Service Industries

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of employees in service industries in Scotland in June 1979 and at present, broken down into separate totals for men, women, full-time employees, part-time employees and those on Government training schemes.

Mr. Rifkind: The table gives the number of employees in employment for June 1979 and September 1989, the latest available date. Figures are given separately for all men and for women working full time and part time. Information on the number of men working part time is available only for years for which there is a census of employment. Estimates of employees in employment include those with a contract of employment who are on Government work-related training schemes. There is no separate information available on the number of employees in Scotland in the service industries who are also on Government work-related training schemes.

Employees in employment in the service industries in Scotland
Thousands

	June 1979	*September 1989*
Males[1]	544	562
Female full-time	385	415
Female part-time	295	320
Total	1,224	1,297

Source: Department of Employment.
[1] Includes full and part-time male employees. The latest census of employment shows that in September 1987 there were 62,000 part-time male employees and 486,000 full-time male employees in the service industries in Scotland.

Industrial Output

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table with an index of industrial output for Scotland, taking 1979=100, giving a separate breakdown for production industries, divisions 1-4, energy and water supply and manufacturing, divisions 2-4 and showing the changes for each year from 1979 till the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is in the table.

Output of Production Industries—Scotland

	Index (1979=100)			*Annual percentage change*[1]		
	Production	*Energy and water*	*Manufacturing*	*Production*	*Energy and water*	*Manufacturing*
1979	100·0	100·0	100·0	—	—	—
1980	93·9	96·8	93·3	−6·1	−3·2	−6·7
1981	91·9	97·2	90·8	−2·1	0·5	−2·7
1982	92·4	96·9	91·5	0·6	−0·3	0·7
1983	92·2	99·9	90·5	−0·3	3·0	−1·1
1984	95·9	102·2	94·4	4·0	2·3	4·4
1985	98·5	108·1	96·4	2·8	5·7	2·1
1986	96·2	105·1	94·3	−2·3	−2·8	−2·2
1987	98·2	102·4	97·2	2·1	−2·5	3·1
1988	105·7	108·4	105·0	7·6	5·8	8·0

Source: Index of Industrial Production and Construction for Scotland.
[1]Year on year change.

Manual Workers

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the average gross hourly earnings in Scotland for full-time manual workers, full-time non-manual workers, part-time manual workers and part-time non-manual workers at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest available information, for April 1989, is provided in the table:

Average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of employees in Scotland on adult rates

	£ per hour
Full-time manual employees	4·23
Full-time non-manual employees	6·28
Part-time manual employees	2·87
Part-time non-manual employees	4·33

Source: New Earnings Survey April 1989.

Private Schools (Rating)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to enact measures to bring the non-domestic rating system as it applies to private school accommodation in line with the practice south of the border.

Mr. Rifkind: Certain questions about the treatment for valuation and rating purposes of pupil accommodation at boarding schools in Scotland are currently the subject of appeal to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. Against the background of my general desire to secure harmonisation between Scotland and England, I am considering whether there are any steps I should take.

Prison Ombudsman

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to appoint a prison ombudsman; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. I and my Department will be considering the relevance to the Scottish situation of the recommendations, including the one relating to the creation of a prison ombudsman, contained in the recently published Home Office working group report on an improved system of grievance procedures for prisoners' complaints and requests.

Ambulance Dispute

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ask the chief constables for reports detailing the cost per policeman of deploying police officers on ambulance duties within their spheres of authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) is currently considering the basis on which forces should cost the assistance given in relation to the ambulance dispute and in the light of draft guidance prepared by the Scottish Home and Health Department which reflects previously agreed practice.

Beaches (Pollution)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a list of the 10 worst polluted beaches and give details of the most recent measurements of pollution on each of these beaches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The condition of beaches is a matter for the local district or islands council while river purification authorities are concerned with the quality of waters. River purification boards monitor waters for compliance with standards set in the EC bathing water directive. For details in respect of the 23 identified waters in Scotland, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 25 January 1990, at columns *844-45*.

Rivers (Pollution)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a list of the 20 worst polluted rivers and give details of the more recent measurements of pollution in each of these rivers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Day-to-day control of pollution of rivers is the responsibility of the river purification authorities. Annual reports of the seven river purification boards contain detailed information about pollution in their areas and are available in the Library. The Scottish Development Department, in co-operation with the river purification boards, publishes periodic reports which give a broad assessment of the condition of Scottish waters. The last of these, also available in the

Library, was produced in 1985, and the hon. Member may like to refer to the maps contained in it which show the lengths of rivers in each of four categories. A further report, based on conditions found during the current year, is now being planned.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what measures the accountant in bankruptcy assesses remuneration of a trustee in sequestration, in cases where the remuneration of the trustee is to be met from moneys provided by Parliament; and if there is any specific maximum hourly rate for chartered accountants and unqualified persons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In terms of section 53(4) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 the accountant in bankruptcy is required in assessing remuneration to have regard to the work which was reasonably undertaken by the trustee in relation to the value of the debtor's estate and the extent of his responsibilities in administering that estate. There are no specific maximum hourly rates laid down for this work.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since the commencement of the Bankruptcy Scotland Act 1985 the total sum paid out of moneys provided by Parliament in terms of section 76 of the said Act.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gross expenditure, including payments to trustees and the administration costs of the office of the accountant of court and the office of accountant in bankruptcy, has been as follows:

Financial year	*Gross expenditure (£'000)*
1986-87	256
1987-88	706
1988-89	2,918

Sequestration

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many decrees of sequestration there have been in Scotland for each year since 1974.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of sequestrations registered annually by the accountant in bankruptcy until 1 April 1986 under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913 and thereafter under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 are as follows:

Year	*Number of awards registered*
1974	104
1975	148
1976	128
1977	132
1978	130
1979	105
1980	151
1981	185
1982	217
1983	280
1984	296
1985	298
1986	437
1987	826
1988	1,420
1989	2,294

The 1985 Act introduced in Scotland provisions for the public funding of bankruptcies where there are insufficient assets in the bankrupt's estate to meet the expenses of sequestration. No such facility was available under the 1913 Act, and this is reflected in the increase in sequestrations registered from 1986 onwards.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1974 the total sum paid out of moneys provided by Parliament for remuneration for trustees in sequestration.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The remuneration from public funds of trustees in sequestration was introduced by provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 which came into effect on 1 April 1986. Gross payments made these provisions to trustees are as follows:—

Financial Year	*Gross Payments (£'000)*
1986-87	13
1987-88	418
1988-89	2,415

Buses (Women Travellers)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will require bidders for bus companies to include in their bids their proposed policy on safety of women travellers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. In addition to necessary company and financial details, bidders will be required to give information on their general employment policy, their proposals regarding the disabled and elderly, and a statement of their future intentions for the company. There are already strict safety requirements governing all bus operators in the interests of all bus travellers. Bus operators require an operator's licence and buses must be tested annually and are also subject to spot checks on the road. If sufficient services are not available commercially local authorities have powers to subsidise those services they consider socially necessary, including, for example, late evening or night services.

Paedophiles

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will set up a special police unit or units specialising in the detection and elimination of the criminal activities of paedophiles.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware that chief constables place a high priority on investigations into criminal activities against children. The question whether a special unit or units would help in this task is an operational matter for them to decide.

Land Use

Mr McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Government will initiate a comprehensive review of public support for land uses such as agriculture and forestry in Scotland, and their effects on wildlife and the countryside, with a view to reducing conflict between conservation and these land uses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State in exercising his functions in relation to agriculture and forestry has a duty to take environmental considerations into account. The Government keep under review their various measures of support for agriculture and forestry and these are increasingly directed at conservation or enhancement of the environment.

Green Pound

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to arrange for the green pound to be introduced into the European monetary system in order to restrict the disadvantage of Scottish farmers from 20 to 6 per cent. and thereafter to parity.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The entry of sterling into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system would have no direct effect on green rates or agricultural support prices. The disadvantage to our producers will be overcome by reducing monetary gaps through devaluing the green pound. Green currency devaluations are normally considered in the EC price-fixing negotiations. In the current round we shall be seeking a substantial devaluation as part of our commitment to remove all monetary gaps by the end of 1992.

Flood Damage

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to recompense farmers of Scotland in the short term of flood damage and other losses caused by recent inclement weather.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have every sympathy for farmers who sustained damage from the latest storms and floods. Indeed, the floods are so recent that damage is still hidden by water so that many will not yet know the full extent of their losses. My noble Friend the Minister of State has called for full reports as soon as practicable. In the meantime, it is important to stress that successive Governments have followed well-established policy not to pay compensation to farmers for the effects of severe weather, particularly where risks are insurable. Assistance is however available under the farm capital grant schemes. These schemes will be operated as flexibly as the rules will allow to take account of the effects of the storms.

Medical Priority Status

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish a commission to examine the plight of elderly and disabled people who have top medical priority status and yet who cannot be immediately rehoused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Individual authorities are required by statute to consider the housing needs of their areas and to have regard to the special needs of chronically sick or disabled persons. My right hon. and learned Friend does not believe that a commission would assist authorities in this duty. Individual authorities are themselves best placed to determine particular needs and to identify solutions for meeting those needs either in council housing or other housing.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people on council waiting lists who have top medical priority status.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that councils have the resources to rehouse elderly and disabled residents with top medical priority status in suitable housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Housing capital allocations to local authorities take account of their overall housing needs as set out in their housing plans and capital programmes. Within the allocations made it is the responsibility of local authorities to decide how the resources should be used in the light of local priorities.

Training Agency Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the budget for each Training Agency scheme in Scotland in 1990-91; and what it was in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 February 1990]:* It is possible to provide full-year budgets for Training Agency schemes in Scotland only for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91. The planned expenditure for 1988-89 for the Training Commission was £210,083,000: a detailed breakdown of Training Agency scheme budgets in Scotland is not available for that year. The information available is set out in the table.

Training Agency Budgets (Scotland): £'000s

	Planned expenditure	
	1989-90	*1990-91*
Employment Training	130,154	112,850
Employment Rehabilitation	900	900
Residual and Other Training Schemes	1,945	145
Youth Training Scheme	104,550	87,757
Community Industry	[1]	2,879
Business Growth Training	4,240	5,436
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	[1]	14,722
School/Industry Compacts	[1]	1,453
Higher Education Programmes	869	1,207
Training and Vocational Education Initiative	12,020	13,409
Training and Education Support Programmes	5,483	5,168
Marketing, Advertising and Publicity	2,112	2,157
Research and Evaluation	674	686
Administrative Costs	13,752	18,516
Total	276,699	267,285

[1] Budget centrally administered 1989-90.

EMPLOYMENT

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how may workplace nurseries exist; and what is the regional distribution of these nurseries.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available. Figures in the "IMS Manpower Commentary No. 43, Retaining Women Employees" suggest that the percentage of organisations currently providing workplace nurseries is small, only about 3 per cent. However, indications are that the provision of such facilities is growing.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive inspectors have responsibility for the construction industry *(a)* now and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 December 1989, the latest date for for which figures are available, the Health and Safety Executive had 103 inspectors regularly engaged on the inspection of construction activities. On 1 January 1980, the total was 87.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the breakdown of expenditure within the Health and Safety Executive's latest budget by industry classification.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. The expenditure of the Health and Safety Executive is not broken down by standard industrial classification.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what functions of the Health and Safety Executive are currently being placed within the remit of local authorities.

Mr. Nicholls: Under the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1989, from 1 Apri 1990, local authorities will be responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation for certain additional activities including various leisure activities; cosmetic and therapeutic treatments, display or demonstration of goods at an exhibition; church worship and religious meetings; and certain internal construction work.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of the following departmental publications; and what was their intended respective purpose *(a)* "People and Companies, Employee Involvement in Britain", *(b)* "Small Firms in Britain" and *(c)* the "United Kingdom in Europe, People and Progress Fact Pack".

Mr. Eggar: The cost of producing "People and Companies, Employee Involvement in Britain", was £83,000 minus what has been recouped from this being a priced publication (HMSO £5); the cost of producing "Small Firms in Britain" was £77,000; and the cost of the "United Kingdom in Europe, People and Progress Fact Pack" was £9,000.

The purpose of "People and Companies" was to describe the British approach to employee involvement and explain Government policy on the subject.

"Small Firms in Britain" was produced to meet the needs of advisory agencies, chambers of commerce and other representative organisations, as well as professional and academic bodies for an authoritative report on the key statistics, issues and trends in the small business sector, and the basis of the Government's policies and programmes to support small businesses.

The purpose of the "United Kingdom in Europe Fact Pack" was to explain the Government's concerns about the European Commission's proposed social charter; and to set out the approach to encouraging employment, individual opportunity and enterprise the Government believe will best enable Britain, as a full and active member of the European Community, to prosper in a Europe without barriers.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to extend the remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications to Scotland.

Mr. Nicholls: The remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications is kept under review.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if employers' financial contributions to employment training are to be increased in 1990-91 to 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholls: Employers' financial contributions to employment training are for local negotiation. The Government aim to encourage more employers to participate in employment training and for employers to make a greater investment in training. The formation of training and enterprise councils will be a major step towards those objectives.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of claimants who have had their *(a)* benefit claim referred to an adjudication office and *(b)* benefit withdrawn as a result of refusing a place on an employment training scheme in terms of its actively seeking work conditions.

Mr. Eggar: Employment training is a voluntary programme. Social security legislation does not provide for disqualification or disallowance of unemployment benefit where a person refuses to apply for or accept a place on employment training.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of continuing training grants made available in respect of trainees recruited by employees before completion of the employment training action plan between September 1988 and December 1989 inclusive for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the companies that have withdrawn from employment training between January 1989 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number for employment training of *(a)* training agents and *(b)* training managers in Great Britain on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: As at 8 February 1990 there were 191 training agents and 1,362 training managers participating in employment training.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of employment training trainees who entered permanent employment in the period December 1988 to December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of training agents that went into receivership between September 1988 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: No training agents in employment training went into receivership between September 1988 and December 1989.

YTS

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of *(a)* YTS trainees with employment contracts in December 1989 and for each of the standard regions, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is in the table.

Numbers of trainees with employed status, in training at 31 December 1989

	Number
Great Britain	114,421
South East	16,725
London	8,450
South West	10,258
West Midlands	12,483
East Midlands and Eastern	15,772
Yorkshire and Humberside	12,817
North West	17,617
Northern	4,666
Wales	6,338
Scotland	9,295

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which are the 10 largest managing agents involved in YTS; what is the total number of trainees contracted to them; and what was the total Government expenditure on them in December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the 10 largest single contract managing agents in Great Britain, together with the number of agreed places.

Managing Agents	*Agreed Places*
Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Non-Electrical Programme	34,000
CITB Electrical Programme	9,500
Clothing and Allied Products Industry Training Board	7,228
Sight and Sound	4,515
Motor Agents Association	4,000
Association of British Travel Agents	2,650
British Rail	1,900
British Association of Professional Hairdressing Employers	1,830
Hairdressing Training Association	1,760
County of Avon Youth Training Scheme	1,750
Total number of places	69,133

The total amount paid to these managing agents during December 1989 was £11,516,489·93.

YTS and Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the steps being taken to minimise the cost of paying management fees for unfilled places on YTS and employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Management fees are not paid for employment training places. Under current YTS rules, there is provision for recovering management fees for unfilled YTS places. This is done wherever appropriate.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the amount of fees paid to Deloitte, Haskins and Sells up to 31 October 1989 for the initial feasibility study and for the work on the offer for sale of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Nicholls: At 31 October 1989, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells had been paid fees of £132, 425 for the feasibility study, and fees of £85,023 for work associated with the offer for sale. Both figures exclude expenses and VAT.

Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of employees in the Training Agency and previously the Manpower Services Commission in each of the years 1984-85 to 1989-90 outturn and planned for 1990-91 to 1992-93, planned for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of permanent employees in the Training Agency in 1988-89 and planned numbers up to 1992-93, are as follows:

1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
12,462	12,009	9,719	9,214	9,214

Information for earlier years is not available on a comparable basis.

HIV Testing

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance his Department has issued on the use of pre-employment HIV testing by employers.

Mr. Nicholls: The booklet "AIDS and Employment" published by my Department and the Health and Safety Executive in 1986 advises employers that, since in almost all occupations there is no risk of infected persons passing on HIV to others, having the virus or belonging to a particular group is not a reason for being treated differently from any other job applicants. It follows from this advice that there is generally no reason for employers to require a job applicant to take an HIV antibody test. Further updated guidance on "AIDS and the Workplace" is to be published shortly.

Training Costs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated gross cost per trainee week for employers, on a comparable basis to the figures in Cm 1006 of £50 and £33 for the gross public cost per trainee week, for *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1992-93; and what is the likely overall cost to employers of the transfer of costs.

Mr. Nicholls: An increasing element of empoloyer contributions is expected. It is impossible to forecast the gross cost per trainee week for employers, as this depends on the efficiency with which TECs, providers and employers can deliver training.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of applications to industrial tribunals under section 58 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 in the period 1984 to 1988 and indicate how many were complaints under section 58(1) *(a)* and *(b)* compared with the number under section 58 (1) *(c)*; and if he will give the outcome of these cases under the two separate categories and indicate *(a)* the number of Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service conciliated settlements, *(b)* withdrawal, not via Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *(c)* successful at tribunal hearing, *(d)* dismissed at tribunal out of scope, *(e)* dismissed at tribunal hearing, other reasons and *(f)* disposed of otherwise.

Mr. Nicholls *[pursuant to his reply, 6 December 1989, c. 245-46]:* I regret that some of the figures for 1987-88 in table 2 of the original reply were incorrect. The correct figures are set out in the table.

	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*	
	581	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*
Table 1. Applications Registered								
Applications registered	822	15	4,760	12	421	6	334	3
Table 2. Outcome of applications to industrial tribunals:								
ACAS Settlement	[1]291	6	[2]907	3	[3]3,776	2	88	2
Other withdrawal	150	4	151	4	186	2	143	2
Successful	56	7	51	2	35	—	15	2
Dismissed out of scope	115	1	31	1	48	—	12	—
Dismissed other reasons	110	6	145	3	72	2	73	1
Disposed of otherwise	8	—	138	—	5	—	5	—
Total	730	24	1,423	13	4,122	6	336	7

Notes on tables:
581 = complaints under Section 58 (1) *(a)* and *(b)*
582 = complaints under Section 58 (1) *(c)*
[1] including multiple application of c. 125.
[2] including multiple application of c. 780.
[3] including multiple application of c. 3400.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Workfare

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will institute a further study of workfare in the United States of America to investigate how workfare has helped in recent years to alleviate the problems associated with single-parent families and paternal maintenance.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: While we are, of course, interested in the arrangements made by other countries for lone-parent families, we have no plans to institute a study of workfare. Lone parents in the United Kingdom are not required to be available for work as a condition of receiving benefit. They are able to decide for themselves what is best for them and their children and we believe this is right. But maintenance is also very important. We are particularly concerned about the number of lone-parent families on benefit here who receive little or no maintenance. Regular payments of maintenance can be a great help to lone parents who work to move from dependence on benefit into work. We are therefore examining the whole maintenance system to establish how it can be improved. As part of this process we are examining maintenance arrangements abroad, including those in the United States, to see whether there are any lessons to be learned from them.

Computer Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department has, and is taking to improve the security of its computer systems.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For unclassified but sensitive systems the Department is expected to follow Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency guidance covering all aspects of IT security and the application of this has been tightened recently. CCTA advice is kept

under continuous review and is based on analysis of security risks and requirements using structured methods such as CCTA's risk analysis and management methodology (CRAMM), which has also been made commercially available.

More stringent conditions apply to classified systems.

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss-prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not possible to give an answer in the form requested as the Department does not employ a specific class of loss prevention officers. There is a general exhortation to all staff to take proper care of property and services for which they are responsible and for line managers to ensure that there is sound management of such resources. Internal audit procedures are undertaken by staff with appropriate training and security guard services are provided by a mixture of departmental staff and private companies.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to meet the needs of very severly disabled people with high care cost.

Mr. Scott: The arrangements proposed in "Caring for People" (Cm. 849) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health are designed to enable local authorities to provide help with the care needs of very severely disabled people. Financial help with the costs of domestic assistance and personal care is currently also available through the independent living fund.

Disability Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to ensure that claimants of the care element of the new disability allowance will receive invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: We propose that people who care for recipients of the highest or intermediate level of care component of the new disability allowance will receive invalid care allowance, provided they satisfy the conditions of entitlement.

Family Credit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in *(a)* west Leeds, *(b)* Leeds, *(c)* west Yorkshire and *(d)* England are in receipt of family credit; what estimated proportion these families represent of those entitled to this benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information about the familes receiving family credit is as follows:

Number who, at the time their award was made, were living in:

	number
a. West Leeds	[1]2,800
b. Leeds	[2]4,500
c. West Yorkshire	[3]15,600
d. England	257,000

[1] Total in the area covered by the Leeds West, Leeds North West and Leeds North local Social Security offices.
[2] Total in the area covered by all the local Social Security offices in Leeds.
[3] Total in the area covered by all the Social Security offices in West Yorkshire.

Information about the total number of families eligible for family credit can be obtained only for Great Britain, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of persons dependent on both social security and housing rebates in 1979-80 and 1989-90 and the forecast for 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the precise form requested, since claimants may receive more than one benefit at any one time, and may also receive benefit for one or more dependants. Broad-based survey data suggest, however, that in 1979, and also in 1987, the latest year for which such estimates are available, the social security system contributed to the incomes or family incomes of around 38 million people. For 1989-90 and 1990-91 figures for the estimated average number of people receiving individual benefits, including housing benefit, are shown in the table:

Estimated numbers receiving social security benefits at any one time[1][2]

thousands

	1979-80	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[4]
Retirement pension	8,680	9,825	9,940
Widows' benefits	490	370	360
Unemployment benefit	550	415	455
Sickness benefit	490	105	105
Invalidity benefit	620	1,185	1,265
Industrial disablement benefit	200	340	355
Industrial death benefit	30	30	25
Maternity allowance	115	15	15
Non-contributory retirement pension	55	35	35
War pension	370	255	250
Attendance allowance	285	796	880
Invalid care allowance	5	110	130
Severe disablement allowance	—	265	270
Non-contributory invalidity pension	165	—	—
Mobility allowance	140	615	655
Income support	—	4,075	4,100
Supplementary benefit[3]	2,920	—	—
Child benefit[4]	13,330	12,140	12,155
Family credit	—	315	325
Family income supplement	80	—	—
Housing benefit[5]			
rent rebate	1,205	3,115	3,120
rent allowance	220	1,040	1,050
rate rebate	3,065	4,480	—
Community charge benefit/rebate	—	930	7,895

[1] *Source:* Public Expenditure White Papers 1984 and 1990.
[2] Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any one time.
[3] Includes housing benefit supplement recipients who are also included in the figures for housing benefit recipients.

[4] Numbers of children in families receiving child benefit, including those also receiving one parent benefit.
[5] There is a significant overlap: most households getting help with rent also receive a rate rebate.
[6] Forecast.

Loan Sharks

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations the Minister for Social Security and the disabled has had about the increasing dependence on loan sharks of people who live on state benefits; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: None.

Community Charge

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he proposes to change the capital rule for community charge rebate to take account of the fact that the charge is being levied on individuals whereas the capital rule is applied to couples jointly.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to change the rule for Community charge benefit for couples. It is a fundamental principle of the income-related benefit schemes that the partners in a married or unmarried couple are treated as sharing their income and capital resources. The fact that the community charge is being levied on individuals does not affect this principle.

Departmental Leaflets

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many copies of leaflet SB 1 and IS 100 were printed for publication in October 1989; how many correction leaflets IS 100 indicating different rates for the enhanced pensioner premium were printed; what were the reasons for the incorrect rates being published; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In October 1989 3,322,000 copies of leaflet SB1 were printed, 4,525,668 copies of leaflet IS 100 were printed and 2,460,000 copies of the correction leaflet for IS 100 were printed because of a proof-reading error in the original leaflet.

Pensioner Premium

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the criteria for the payment of the enhanced pensioner premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The enhanced pensioner premium is part of the premium structure in income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit. From April 1990, this premium will be fixed at £14·40 a week for a single person and £21·60 for couples. It is awarded automatically when the claimant, or where appropriate, his partner, reaches the age of 75 years, and replaces the pensioner premium which is paid at a lower rate. Where a higher rate premium is in payment, that premium will continue. When it was introduced last October, this improvement provided extra benefit, for those who qualified for it, of up to £2·50 a week for single people and £3·50 a week for couples in time for the winter months. At the same time we increased the higher pensioner premium by the same amounts. This premium applied, automatically, to all income-related benefit recipients at the age of 80 years, and to disabled people aged 60 to 79 years. Overall, we estimate that 2·6 million people, including spouses, benefited from these substantial improvements.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments have been made so far during the 1989-90 winter; which Department of Social Security offices made such payments; and which weather stations covered these Departments of Social Security offices.

Mr. Scott: The latest information available relates to the two months ending 31 December 1989, by which time social fund cold weather payments totalling £73,500 had been made. The national climatological message (NCM) stations that have had an average temperature of 0 deg C for a seven-day period during this winter and the Department's local offices linked to them are shown in the table:

NCM Station and Local Office
Glasgow Airport
Airdrie
Bellshill
Clydebank
Coatbridge
Dumbarton
East Kilbride
Glasgow;
Anniesland
Bridgeton
City
Craigton
Cranstonhill
Cumbernauld
Laurieston
Maryhill
Parkhead
Partick
Provan
Rutherglen
South Side
Springburn
Greenock
Hamilton
Johnstone
Motherwell
Paisley
Port Glasgow
Gatwick Airport
Crawley
Epsom
Guildford
Redhill
Tunbridge Wells
Woking
Easthampstead
Aldershot
Basingstoke
Bracknell
Newbury
Reading
Dumfries (Drungans)
Dumfries
Fort William
Fort William
Oban

Kinloss
Elgin
Inverness

Lerwick
Lerwick

Reduced Earnings Allowance

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many new claims for reduced earnings allowance have been allowed each year since the benefit was established; how many people currently receive reduced earnings allowance; how many recipients are above pensionable age; how many are employed earners; and how many are on income support.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows. The net estimated number of reduced earnings allowance awards made from 1 October 1986 (when the benefit was introduced) to 1 April 1987 was about 5,000. The corresponding figures for the years 1987-88 and 1988-89 were 11,000 and 14,400. Of the 150,000 people estimated to receive the allowance (which includes those who previously received special hardship allowance), approaching 60,000 are over pensionable age. Of those under pensionable age, approximately one in four is estimated to be in work. No information is available on the numbers of REA recipients who also receive income support.

Community Care

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the community care grant budget had been spent by each Merseyside office on 1 December 1989.

Mr. Scott: Information about the levels of expenditure in each local office from the community care grants budgets is available in the Library.

Employment Training

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether claimants can benefit from employment on trial if during the 26 weeks prior to a trial period they were participating in an employment training scheme or a YTS scheme, with and without employee status.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Those in either employment training or YTS without employee status during the 26 weeks before commencing employment may benefit from the employment on trial provisions.

Correspondence

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will answer the letter from the hon. Member for Birkenhead dated 12 August 1989 and followed up on 1 December 1989 about his constituent Robert Holmes, of 4 Clarence road, Birkenhead.

Mr. Newton: I have writen to the hon. Member today on the point of policy he raised in his correspondence, and I regret that it has taken some time to consider.

Resettlement Agency

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the quality of service performance indicators that have been introduced into the Resettlement Agency since its establishment as an agency.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Resettlement Agency has been set a target to devise a scheme to assist resettlement unit managers to compare the effectiveness of units on a common basis. It also intends to undertake a study to examine clients' perceptions in an effort to help establish common standards for the units.

Local Offices (Interpreters)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate for each of the Department's local offices in the Greater Manchester area his estimate of the percentage of callers who have a very low understanding of the English language; and whether these offices maintain lists of staff who are willing and able to act as interpreters for ethnic minority customers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All the 23 DSS local offices in the Greater Manchester area estimate that up to 10 per cent. of their callers have a very low understanding of the English language. Of these, 12 offices—Bury, Cheetham, Chorlton, Failsworth, Farnworth, Hyde, Openshaw, Rochdale, Rusholme, Sale, Stockport North and Wigan—hold lists of staff willing and able to interpret for ethnic minority customers. Eleven offices—Ashton, Bolton, Leigh, Longsight, Manchester (Central), Middleton, Oldham, Salford North, Salford South, Stockport South and Wythenshawe—maintain effective arrangements for communicating with customers who have a very low understanding of the English language by other methods, such as the use of volunteer interpreters from the local community, including relatives and friends.

Transitional Benefit

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are still in receipt of transitional benefit payments *(a)* in west Yorkshire and *(b)* throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* It is estimated that immediately before the annual benefits uprating this April, the number of claimants in Great Britain receiving income support transitional protection will have reduced to under 500,000. A breakdown of this figure by individual regions or parts of regions is not available.

At the end of January, 99,897 applicants in Great Britain were receiving housing benefit transitional protection. This figure included 9,457 applicants in west Yorkshire.

Information for Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the amount in transitional payment benefit paid per person since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Just over £58 million has been paid out to 202,797 recipients of housing benefit transitional payments since July 1988, averaging £4·19 a week.

Income support statutory transitional protection paid to former supplementary benefit recipients is estimated to amount to some £340 million from April 1988 to the end of this financial year. Further information on these payments is not available in the form requested. However, during the period protection has been paid to just over 1·5 million claimants. The average weekly amount per claimant immediately after the April 1989 uprating is estimated at £3·30.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the transitional benefit payments to end; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The length of time for which individuals will need protection cannot be predicted.

Income support normal transitional protection reduces as the claimant's total benefit income under the new scheme catches up with that under the former supplementary benefit scheme either at annual upratings or through changes in circumstances. Special transitional protection does not normally erode at all; it is uprated annually.

Special arrangements for protecting ordinary boarders through their income support will have ceased by March 1990 in the majority of cases. However, longer-term arrangements exist for people living in supported lodgings while they remain in the support environment and for hostel dwellers who were eligible for special transitional payments from October 1989 until they leave the hostel. In both cases payments cease if income support entitlement ceases or if the claimant's normal benefit entitlement reaches the protected level.

We have made it clear from the beginning that housing benefit transitional payments will be reduced as increases in other benefits make them less necessary. We have decided on a flat rate reduction of £2·00 in these payments from April. This is the same level of reduction as the one applied in 1989 and, because of this occasion social security benefits are being increased by larger amounts, will ensure that the vast majority of recipients gain overall in cash terms from the uprating.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Safety

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigation his Department is making of Dutch, Danish and German research programmes into testing for food safety to ensure that the United Kingdom based food processing and production industry does not suffer adversely from foreign competition following the closure of the Bristol laboratory of the Institute of Food Research.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom has initiated a major European concerted activity relating to food safety, on, "Predictive Growth and Survival of Micro-organisms in Foods", which is to be supported under the European Commission's FLAIR programme and will be operational in 1990. This activity will provide an opportunity to draw on all relevant European data of benefit to the United Kingdom food processing and production industry and thus protect its competitive position.

Fishing (Greenland)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive a reply to his letter of 9 January, concerning British fishing in Greenland waters.

Mr. Curry: A reply to the hon. Member's letter of 9 January 1990 concerning British fishing in Greenland waters was dispatched on 7 February 1990.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of instructions given by him to local authorities and the state veterinary service concerning the inspection of bovines for bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the payment of compensation in respect of confirmed and unconfirmed cases.

Mr. Maclean: Instructions to the state veterinary service are for internal use and not appropriate for placing in the Library. Where local authorities have enforcement responsibilities for legislation relating to BSE, they are provided with the appropriate statutory instruments. In addition, the Ministry's divisional veterinary officers have ensured that meat inspection authorities at non-EC approved slaughterhouses are aware of BSE, its clinical signs and the action they should take if they identify suspected cases.

Animal Foodstuffs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to indicate to other countries the dangers inherent in using meat and some meal of United Kingdom origin in animal foodstuffs; and if he will indicate when such steps were taken.

Mr. Maclean: Comprehensive information about bovine spongiform encephalopathy, including the probable role of meat and bone-meal in its development, has been provided to the EC Commission and member states on a regular basis since the disease was first identified. Similar information has been passed to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) for dissemination to third countries. Inquiries received from individual countries are answered as they arise.

ENERGY

Onshore Oil Production

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many barrels of oil are produced each day from onshore drilling sites in the United Kingdom; how many such sites are currently in operation; and if he will make a statement of his proposals for licensing future onshore oil production.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Production from onshore oilfields averaged 14,700 barrels per day in 1989. This level is

expected to increase substantially when production from the Wytch Farm field expands later this year. Twelve fields and a number of small sites in the east midlands are currently in production. Companies are free to apply to my Department for licences to produce oil from onshore discoveries at any time. No such applications are under consideration at present. Existing licensees require consent for their detailed plans to develop oil discoveries. My right hon. Friend has two applications for such consent currently under consideration.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the names and dates of post-1980 NATO exercises in which the United Kingdom national oil board and the eastern branch of the NATO wartime oil organisation have participated.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 8 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *652;* it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Marketing Advisers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many companies submitted tenders for the contract to be special marketing and public relations adviser to him won by Lowe Bell.

Mr. Wakeham: Three firms were invited to submit tenders in respect of the appointment of a special marketing and PR adviser for the Secretary of State. One of the firms declined to participate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many companies submitted tenders for the marketing and public relations advisers contract with his Department and the electricity supply industry won by Dewe Rogerson.

Mr. Wakeham: Three firms were invited to submit tenders in respect of the joint appointment of a marketing and PR adviser for the Government and the electricity supply industry. One of the firms declined to participate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of his contract with Lowe Bell Communications as special marketing and promotional advisers.

Mr. Wakeham: Detailed information concerning contracts with individual advisers is commercially confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the target objectives laid down in his contract with Lowe Bell Communications as special marketing and promotional advisers.

Mr. Wakeham: Lowe Bell Communications will provide independent marketing and public relations advice to the Department of Energy as required in respect of electricity privatisation. Detailed information concerning contracts with individual advisers is commercially confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the target objectives set down in the contract with Dewe Rogerson as marketing and public relations advisers to his Department and the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: The Secretary of State for Energy and the electricity supply industry (ESI) have jointly appointed Dewe Rogerson to be marketing and public relations advisers for the privatisation of the ESI in England and Wales. Dewe Rogerson will be responsible for the development of the marketing strategy and will undertake specific marketing and public relations tasks, as required. Detailed information concerning contracts with individual advisers is commercially confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the distinct roles of Lowe Bell and Dewe Rogerson in providing him with special marketing and marketing advice, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Dewe Rogerson as a joint appointment will provide marketing and public relations advice to both the Department of Energy and the electricity supply industry. Lowe Bell Communications will provide marketing and public relations advice solely to the Department of Energy.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will place in the Library a copy of the contract for marketing and public relations advice between Dewe Rogerson and his Department and the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Detailed information concerning contracts with individual advisers is commercially confidential.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his current proposals for employee shareholdings in the electricity supply industry in terms of individual employees and as a percentage of total shares respectively.

Mr. Wakeham: No decision on the type of offers that will be made to employees has yet been taken.

Electricity Boards (Assets)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate of the value of the assets of the Central Electricity Generating Board, the 12 area boards and each of the Scottish electricity boards.

Mr. Wakeham: Asset values are contained in the relevant annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Information about the Scottish electricity boards is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Peak Demands (Cold Weather)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's current estimate of severe weather peak demand for electricity, this year and for each succeeding year up to 1995.

Mr. Wakeham: In the financial year 1988-89 average cold spell system maximum demand for electricity in England and Wales was 48·1 GW. The Department has no estimate of this number for future years.

(2) what was the total of electricity imported from France in 1989 in *(a)* kilowatt hours and *(b)* 1986 values.

Mr. Wakeham: Provisional data for the period December 1988 to November 1989, as published in the overseas trade statistics, show that electricity imports from France amounted to 14,045 GW hours. This equates to £346 million at 1986 prices. The figure at 1986 prices has been derived by applying the unit value of electricity imports in 1986 to the volume imported in 1989. There were no exports of electricity recorded for this period.

Energy Exports and Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what were the total exports of coal, natural gas and oil in December 1989 expressed in tonnes and at 1985 values;

(2) what were the total imports of coal, natural gas and oil in December 1989 expressed in tonnes and at 1985 values.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given on 1 February 1990, *Official Report*, col *264*.

Cormorant Alpha

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) of what material the leg of the Cormorant Alpha platform, damaged by explosion on 22 April 1989, was made; what was the extent of the damage to the leg; whether there was any water seepage into the leg at any point; whether the structural integrity of the platform, or of the leg where the explosion occurred, has been affected; what internal and external inspections have been carried out on the damaged leg; what frequency of inspection of the damaged leg his Department will require in the future; what repairs have been carried out to the leg; and whether repairs so far carried out have been approved by the appropriate certifying authority;

(2) what advice he has given to operators of offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf consequent on the explosion on the Cormorant Alpha platform on 22 April 1989; and if he will publish the results of his Department's investigation into the causes of the explosion;

(3) where the explosion on the Cormorant Alpha production platform on 22 April 1989 occurred; what work was being carried out at the time; and what was the cause of the explosion;

(4) whether he intends to pass a copy of his Department's report on the explosion on the Cormorant Alpha platform on 22 April 1989 to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen for consideration of prosecution.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The explosion occurred in one of the legs of the platform during the installation of an additional emergency shutdown valve on the gas riser. A small component failed allowing a safety plug in the gas riser to be ejected causing a gas leak. the valve and the riser were closed, isolating the riser, but residual gas in the leg found an unidentified ignition source. All personnel had been evacuated to a safe area and precautionary down-manning of the installation had commenced before the ignition occurred.

The legs of the Cormorant Alpha platform are constructed of concrete. There was no primary structural damage as a result of the explosion and the structural integrity of the platform had not been affected. Repairs to some minor internal damage to trunking and hatch covers have been carried out and have been approved by the certifying authority. Regular surveys of the platform will be undertaken by the certifying authority in accordance with statutory requirements. Although water from the deluge system entered the leg, there was no abnormal sea water seepage following the incident.

In October 1989 my safety directorate issued a discussion document on protection against fire and explosion on offshore installations.

A report on my Department's investigation into the incident has been passed to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen. As the report is an integral part of the procurator fiscal's consideration of whether any prosecution should be initiated, it would not be appropriate to release it.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the Cormorant field will begin production of oil and gas; and what has been the total loss of production from the Cormorant field caused by *(a)* the shutdown of the platform and *(b)* the shutdown of the pipeline system running through the Cormorant Alpha platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Production from the North Cormorant platform restarted late in May 1989. Production from the Cormorant Alpha platform is expected to restart later this month. It is not expected that there will be any long-term loss of production, but some 0·6 million tonnes of Cormorant production was deferred while the pipeline system was shut down and a further 1·1 million tonnes has been deferred while the Cormorant Alpha platform only has been shut down.

Ninian Central

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what advice he has given following the leak of gas, which occurred on the Ninian Central platform in the week ended 8 October 1988, to other operators on the United Kingdom continental shelf; if he will publish his Department's report into the incident; and if he intends to pass a copy of his Department's report to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen for consideration of prosecution;

(2) what was the cause of the gas leak which occurred on the Ninian Central platform in the week ended 8 October 1988; what remedial steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence; and what was the total cost of lost production of oil and gas as a result of the shutdown of the platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The incident was caused by undue manual force being applied when attempting to open a small valve. This resulted in the fracture of a drain line on a separator vessel, causing a high pressure discharge of condensate through a 0·75in hole. All similar drain connections on the operator's platforms were inspected and found to be in order.

My safety directorate issued a safety notice (5/89) on 21 February 1989. This made it clear that owners of installations should take steps, including safety assessments and hazard and operability studies where appropriate, to ensure that their systems and procedures are adequate to prevent gas releases from pressurised systems and to provide effective fire and gas detection and water deluge systems.

It is not proposed to publish the report by my inspectors into this incident. Careful consideration was given to whether there were grounds for prosecution, but it was concluded that such action was not appropriate.

The total value of lost and deferred production was some £7 million in prices of the day, of which some 40 per cent. represented deferred rather than lost production.

Fulmar FSU

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what advice he has given to offshore operators on the United Kingdom continental shelf consequent on the incident in the week of 25 December 1988, when the Fulmar FSU broke loose from its moorings; if he will publish a copy of his Department's report into the incident; and if he intends to pass a copy of his Department's report to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen for consideration of prosecution;

(2) what was the cause of the Fulmar FSU breaking loose from its moorings in the week of 25 December 1988; what was the loss of production caused by this incident; and what technical changes have been advised or required of operators of this and similar operations, to prevent a recurrence and earlier warning of serious incidents.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Fulmar FSU broke loose from its single anchor leg mooring buoy when critical latch components at the base of the buoy fractured during severe weather conditions. The buoy was of a design unique on the UKCS and any lessons learnt are largely specific to it. As a result of requirements by my safety directorate, the operator has made a number of design modifications and has installed a new position reference system and a propulsion facility to enable the direction of drift to be controlled. In addition, my safety directorate laid down specific technical requirements prior to the reinstatement of the Fulmar FSU. Similar advice has been given to one other operator planning to procure a floating storage unit.

My Department's investigation report will be sent to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen and will form an integral part of his consideration of whether any prosecution should be initiated. It would not therefore be appropriate for it to be published.

It is not expected that there will be any long-term loss of production as a result of this incident, but production of some 2·25 million tonnes of oil was deferred until later in the field life.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the loss of oil spillage as a result of the Fulmar FSU breaking loose from its moorings in the week of 25 December 1988; what steps were taken to control the resulting oil slick; what arrangements were in place at the locus to deal with oil spills; what was the maximum spillage that existing facilities could contain; and what instructions or guidance he has given to operators as a result of this incident to improve the oil spill response capacity on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Approximately 1,300 tons of oil were spilled following the incident. The oil slick was closely monitored by air and sea surveillance. No action was taken when it was found to have dispersed naturally.

The standby vessel for the Fulmar FSU held a maximum of 5 tons of dispersant capable of dealing with 100 tons of oil.

Primary responsibility for responding to oil spills from offshore installations rests with the operators who are required to have oil spill contingency plans. The industry has a counter-pollution capability on a collective basis, and the resources of the marine pollution control unit of the Department of Transport are available for dealing with oil spills requiring greater resources than those provided by the industry. No additional guidance as a result of Fulmar FSU incident is considered necessary.

Offshore Installations (Corrosion)

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what research his Department has undertaken into the problem of corrosion under insulation, in offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf; what specific instructions or guidance he has given to operators on this matter; and what assessment he has made of the loss of production as a result of corrosion under insulation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My safety directorate has appointed an independent consultant to carry out a survey to determine the procedures and systems in use for monitoring and controlling corrosion and erosion of pipework and plant, including corrosion under insulation, on offshore installations. The aim in sponsoring this work is to issue, if necessary, improved guidance to the industry.

My Department is also sponsoring the development of a system to detect corrosion of process pipework without removing the insulation cladding. A company has demonstrated the feasibility of the concept and is now proceeding with prototype manufacture prior to experimental evaluation.

My Department is not aware of any loss of production due to corrosion under insulation on offshore installations.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the proportion by which electricity prices will have risen for heavy industrial users between the years 1986-87 and 1990-91.

Mr. Baldry: Prices for all industrial users have risen by 12 per cent. in current terms, equivalent to a reduction of 5 per cent. in real terms, between 1986-87 and the first two quarters of 1989-90. Figures beyond the second quarter of 1989-90 are not yet available.

Nuclear Levy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the electricity consumers in England and Wales who will be exempt from the nuclear levy.

Mr. Baldry: Electricity customers benefit from the security of supply which diversity helps ensure, and therefore should contribute to the costs of achieving that security. The cost of nuclear power is already included in electricity prices. This will not change after privatisation. The fossil fuel levy will simply indentify this cost.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has carried out on the level and scope of the nuclear levy.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy earlier today.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum number of supply interruptions allowed in one year of a supply contract for electricity generated from nuclear sources for it to count towards the non-fossil fuel quota.

Mr. Baldry: Arrangements which allow a generator at his discretion to interrupt the supply, do not provide security of supply. Such arrangements will therefore not be capable of contributing towards the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the supply contract for nuclear electricity from France will count towards the non-fossil fuel quota.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 29 January at column *86*.

Leukaemia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the timetable for publication of the study commissioned by the board in 1988 into electro-magnetic fields emanating from power lines and the incidence of adult leukaemia;

(2) if during his next meeting with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, he will discuss the publication date of the report it commissioned into the link between electro-magnetic fields emanating from power lines and adult leukaemia.

Mr. Baldry: The national grid division of the CEGB is managing this work on behalf of the electricity supply industry. It is supporting investigations by independent researchers of good standing and it is expected that the results will be published in due course in scientific journals following the normal peer review process.

TRANSPORT

Tachographs

12. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure the enforcement of tachograph regulations for heavy lorries; how many tachograph inspectors have been appointed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Checks on HGV drivers' tachograph records are conducted by the Department's traffic examiners at the roadside and in follow-up investigations at operating bases. Charts are also checked in the 11 traffic area offices using computerised analysis equipment.

Over 1·4 million tachograph charts will be checked in 1990-91. Twenty-five traffic examiners were recruited in 1989, and a further recruitment drive is planned for 1990 to bring the grade up to its full strength of 235 posts.

London Underground

14. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold discussions with London Underground Limited on options for a special extra line service from Embankment to Charing Cross stations following any eastward extensions of the Jubilee line route.

Mr. Portillo: The existing Northern line and Bakerloo line services from Embankment to Charing Cross stations will be unaffected by the proposed extension of the Jubilee line, and it is proposed that Jubilee line passengers will benefit from new interchanges at Westminster, Waterloo, London Bridge and points east of there.

18. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to implement the major upgrading programme of London's Underground, proposed in the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: Action to implement the £1·5 billion modernisation programme is in hand on both the Underground and Network SouthEast. Examples on the Underground include the modernisation of the Central line at a cost of about £720 million; the development of similar plans for the Northern line; improvements to increase the capacity of other lines; and works to increase the capacity of some of the most heavily congested stations.

28. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many London Underground stations have been closed for all or part of the day to staff shortages so far this year.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground will close a station when insufficient numbers of staff are present to permit safe operation.

There were 153 station closures during the first four weeks of this year. Sixty-eight of these occurred during the first week, when additional staff had to be recruited to carry out the hourly fire inspections required by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Airline Users Committee

15. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met the chairman of the Airline Users Committee to discuss its annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend met the chairman and director general of the committee on 26 September 1989 before publication of the report. I shall be meeting the committee again on 14 February to discuss matters of mutual interest.

London Regional Transport

16. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: The date of my next formal meeting with Mr. Newton has not yet been fixed.

41. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport; and whether matters of safety were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet the chairman of London Regional Transport. The most recent meeting was on 5 February when the chairman and I discussed a wide-range of matters including safety.

42. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the total net saving to London Regional Transport due to competitive tendering.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport estimates that it has secured cost savings of some 15 per cent. as a result of letting bus routes by competitive tender. It is not possible to quantify the impact of competitive tendering on other areas of its business.

74. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much grant aid he is providing for London Regional Transport to implement the findings of the Fennell report during 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground estimates that by the year 2000 it will have spent more than £1 billion on improving safety. The improvements go much wider than the recommendations of the Fennell report. Government grant to London Regional Transport is not attributed to specific projects or activities, but the successive increases in grant announced in the last two Autumn Statements will be more than sufficient to enable London Underground to secure its planned improvements in safety standards. Grant is planed to rise by 115 per cent. over the public expenditure survey period.

Road Accidents

17. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to introduce to reduce the number of road accidents involving children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Cutting child casualties is one of our top road safety priorities. Since September we have introduced compulsory rear seat restraints, launched "conspicuity" and "safe route to school" campaigns, and are developing other safety measures which will benefit particularly child pedestrians and cyclists. I am looking to local authorities in their road safety plans to foster local initiatives with schools, hospitals, parents and all concerned with the safety and well-being of children.

Network SouthEast

19. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the extent to which fares on Network SouthEast are presently subsidised and on the effect on Network SouthEast of the phasing out of the public service obligation grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Network SouthEast is planning to invest some £1·2 billion over the next three years. The level of investment in British Rail was recently described by its chairman as

"about the maximum rate we can physically manage".

According to BR's plans Network SouthEast's investment can be achieved through modest real fares increases while subsidy falls from 13 per cent. to zero.

M25

20. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work will commence on the M25 spur to the A12 at Chelmsford.

Mr. Atkins: Our programme provides for award of the design commission later this year and announcement of a preferred route in 1993. Progress after that will depend on the outcome of the statutory procedures, including a public inquiry if one proves necessary.

British Rail

21. **Mr. Barns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

24. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment for Network SouthEast.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Rail on 17 January to discuss a range of subjects.

29. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by which date he intends British Rail to be ready for privatisation.

Mr. Portillo: We have taken no decisions yet on British Rail privatisation.

36. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will next meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) earlier today.

64. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on investment in the line between Waterloo and Southampton.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1988 the main line from Southampton to Waterloo has been served by a fleet of modern class 422 Wessex electrics which cost £46 million. Network SouthEast has carried out numerous station improvements in the Southampton area often with funding contributions from local authorities. Eastleigh station was recently rebuilt at a cost of £1·8 million. The £16 million Portsmouth-Southampton electrification scheme is due for completion in May.

67. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the Government grant of money to the Sheffield-St. Pancras midland line for each successive year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The public service obligation grant is not based on an allocation between routes, and it is not possible to specify the sums paid in respect of services on the Sheffield-St. Pancras midland line. No grant has been paid for Inter-City services on any line since April 1988.

Air Traffic Control

22. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to ensure better co-ordination of European air traffic control systems.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have launched various initiatives through Eurocontrol and the European civil aviation conference to promote integration of European air traffic control systems. I am glad that good progress is being made.

37. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on proposals by the Civil Aviation Authority to increase the number of air traffic controller cadets in 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority is embarking on an enhanced programme for training air traffic controller cadets and is aiming to increase its recruitment from 80 in 1988 to 240 by 1991.

50. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much the Civil Aviation Authority's new en route air traffic control centre will increase air space capacity.

Mr. McLoughlin: The new en route centre is expected to increase airspace capacity, in the en route sectors over England and Wales by at least 40 per cent. when operational in 1996.

65. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much will be invested by the Civil Aviation Authority to improve air traffic control over the next three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority plans to spend £260 million over the next three years on civil air traffic control-related projects.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what length of training is now required before full qualification as an air traffic controller and what was the period of training undertaken before qualification in 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: A simple comparison between the length of training now and the length of training in 1980 is not possible. I am therefore asking the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to reply to the hon. Member with detailed information.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of persons out of the last intake commencing training as air traffic controllers, whose training has now been completed successfully completed their training course and qualified as air traffic controllers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The last intake which completed its training to qualify as air traffic controllers had 13 successful members out of 18 who commenced; of the five who were unsuccessful, three had their training terminated due to failure and two resigned.

Freight Transport

23. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase freight transport by the waterways to ease the demand by heavy goods transport on the roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is for customers to choose the mode of transport best suited to their needs. The role of Government is to ensure that fair conditions of competition exist between the modes.

M1, Leicestershire

25. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent measures he has taken to improve the flow of traffic on the M1 in Leicestershire.

Mr. Atkins: A number of measures are being prepared, some for imminent implementation. Junction improvements and widening of the M1 in Leicestershire were announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" in May 1989. In the meantime, improvements to assist traffic flow at junctions 21 and 24 are planned for this year.

Railway Investment

26. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange to meet his West German counterpart to discuss railway investment.

Mr. Parkinson: I am looking forward to seeing all my European colleagues at the next EC Transport Council meeting on 29 March.

Channel Tunnel

27. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on plans for the high-speed railway link to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is continuing negotiations with its joint venture partner on a detailed agreement. The aim remains to introduce a Bill for the project later in the year.

31. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has discussed with British Rail its proposed levels of freight and passenger service between the north-west and the prospective Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: Ministers had the chance to see a presentation from British Rail very shortly before it published its proposals for passenger and freight services in its section 40 plan on 14 December.

38. **Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further consideration he has given to the proposals of the Ove Arup partnership with regard to the route of the Channel tunnel rail links; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 4 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), *Official Report*, at columns *87-88*.

49. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest plans by British Rail for the Channel tunnel line through London.

51. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current situation regarding British Rail's plans for a high-speed rail link to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: I refer to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

56. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current arrangements for the Euro tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: The Channel tunnel is a private sector project, to be constructed and operated in accordance with the Channel fixed link treaty, the Channel Tunnel Act and the concession agreement between the United Kingdom and French Governments and Eurotunnel.

Eurotunnel and TML, the construction group, have recently reaffirmed 15 June 1993 as the target date for completion. British Rail announced in December its plans for international rail services for the United Kingdom.

Bus Services (Privatisation)

30. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of privatisation of the bus services.

Mr. Portillo: Privatisation of all 72 subsidiaries of the National Bus Company was completed in April 1988. Eight local authority bus companies have also been privatised and other sales are in the pipeline. Privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group is to begin shortly. I intend that privatisation should also occur in London.

Traffic, London

32. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received in response to stage two of the east London assessment study.

Mr. Atkins: About 900.

45. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has received to the "Traffic in London" discussion paper.

Mr. Atkins: As of today, 59. The consultation period expires on 28 February.

55. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has commissioned into the effects of traffic restrictions and measures in London.

Mr. Atkins: My Department studies a wide range of measures aimed at easing congestion in London, and these have included a preliminary study of the possible implications of introducing electronic road pricing in London.

71. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has so far received to the London assessment studies consultation.

Mr. Atkins: About 3,000.

Roads

33. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road schemes have been completed since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: Since April 1979, 282 trunk road schemes, totalling 970 miles and including 107 bypasses and relief roads, have been completed.

Marchioness

34. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a decision as to whether a public inquiry will be held to investigate the Marchioness collision.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will decide whether to order a formal investigation into the Marchioness accident when he has received the report from the chief inspector of marine accidents.

Road Pricing

35. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to publish proposals on road pricing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has no proposals to introduce road pricing at present.

Driving Instructors

39. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to change the regulations governing the qualifications of people supervising learner drivers.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on 20 December 1989, *Official Report*, Vol. 164. c. *278*.

Association of Chief Police Officers

40. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss matters within his responsibilities; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has regular contacts with ACPO and with individual chief constables. These discussions cover all aspects of road, vehicle and driver safety. I met the chairman of the ACPO traffic committee on 8 November for a general discussion on all these matters.

Road Repairs

43. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the value of penalties for late completion of repair works to trunk roads received in the last year.

Mr. Atkins: Penalty charges are payable under lane rental contracts for late completion of major maintenance works. In 1988-89 there were 12 lane rental contracts and, while no penalty charges were incurred by contractors, an estimated £6 million in delay costs to road users were saved when compared with doing the work under conventional contracts, which would have taken longer.

Road Casualties

44. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to achieve the projected reduction in road casualties by a third by the year 2000.

Mr. Atkins: The steps that we are taking to reduce road casualties are outlined in the reply to the hon. Member on 9 January columns *584-85*. These are set out more fully in the second annual progress report "Road Casualty Reduction", a copy of which is in the Library.

MV Marine

46. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take regarding the loss of the MV Marine.

Mr. McLoughlin: As the Marine is a Bahamian registered vessel, the investigation into its loss is being conducted by the Bahamian authorities. However, as all the six crewmen were British, the marine accident investigation branch has asked for, and been promised, a copy of the Bahamian administration's report.

Severn Crossing

47. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the proposal to build a second Severn crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *241*.

Railfreight

48. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many container ship routes in Britain operated by Railfreight use non-British ships and crews; and if he will make a statement on the usage of local labour on such routes.

Mr. McLoughlin: Railfreight does not operate any ships. I understand that it buys container space from operators on three routes from United Kingdom ports, all using non-British vessels and crew. The routes are: Ellesmere Port to Belfast, Holyhead to Dublin, and Harwich to Zeebrugge. The choice of operators is a matter for British Rail's commercial judgment. Crewing decisions are matters for the operators, subject to any requirements of the flag state or restrictions in charter agreements.

Regional Airports

52. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to encourage the growth of regional airports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government encourage the maximum use of regional airports, both to meet local demand and to relieve pressure on the London airports.

Over the past decade more than £300 million of capital expenditure has been facilitated, through special borrowing approvals for the development of local authority airports. I announced on 9 January that special borrowing approvals totalling £59 million will be available for 1990-91, facilitating investment which the airports concerned estimate could total some £117 million in that year.

We also very much welcome the contribution to the development of local authority airports which the private sector already makes through direct investment and joint venture schemes; and we look to the airports concerned and their local authority owners to take full account of the opportunities for private sector involvement as they formulate their plans for further expansion.

We are continuing to pursue liberalisation policies, both in the European Community and in bilateral negotiations, which increase further the scope for services from our regional airports.

Trust Ports

54. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the trust ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: We believe that there are advantages in the main commercial trust ports being transformed into companies. So far we have not been able to make room ourselves for the legislation needed to bring about such a change. Meanwhile the Clyde and the Tees and Hartlepool port authorities have promoted their own private measures.

British Midland

57. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Midland Airways Ltd; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of British Midland Airways Ltd. on 29 January to discuss developments in the airline industry.

A1/M1, South Yorkshire

58. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the proposed A1/M1 link started in south Yorkshire to be completed.

Mr. Atkins: The proposals for an A1/M1 link road in south Yorkshire concern county roads which are the responsibility of the local highway authorities, Barnsley and Doncaster metropolitan district councils. Decisions on timing are for the councils, but I understand that construction work has not yet commenced.

Bypasses

59. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses, for which his Department was responsible, were opened last year.

Mr. Atkins: Twelve bypasses were opened to traffic on trunk roads in 1989. Many other schemes, although not designated as bypasses, also took through traffic out of towns and villages.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

60. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received seeking a public inquiry into the Lockerbie air disaster.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since 15 December, when the Lord Advocate announced his decision to set preparations in hand for a fatal accident inquiry, representations have been made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and representatives of relatives of those who died in the disaster.

Environmental Protection

61. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what environmental protection measures his Department takes when constructing new roads.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 2 February. My right hon. Friend will make a further statement on the environmental treatment of trunk road schemes when the roads report is published shortly.

Roads, Essex

62. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial allocation has been made for road building in Essex over the next five years; and what schemes have priority.

Mr. Atkins: Detailed Government funding is for only one year at a time and depends on completion of statutory and other procedures, although there are forward programmes. The Department's expanded trunk road and motorway programme includes a number of important schemes in Essex, notably widening of M25 and the new motorway from the M25 to Chelmsford. The major A127 Rayleigh Weir junction improvement is already under way.

For local roads Essex county council will in 1990-91 receive transport supplementary grant of £6·686 million towards capital expenditure, including work on the A120 Dovercourt bypass stage 2 and the A414 Caves lane improvement. This represents an increase of over 30 per cent. compared with 1989-90.

Motorway Lane Closures

63. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate how many lane closure days have been saved by motorway lane rental contracts.

Mr. Atkins: Since their introduction in 1984 lane rental contracts on motorways in England have saved over 2,000 days of lane closures compared with estimates of the length of time the works would have taken under conventional contracts.

Luton-Dunstable Line

66. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any further information from British Rail as to what its decision will be concerning the proposed reopening of the Luton to Dunstable line for passenger traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The British Railways Board is still appraising several options. It tells me that a decision will be taken soon.

Road Construction

68. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he expects his Department to spend on road construction in 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: Spending on road construction in 1990-91 will total £1,282 million. This is a 40 per cent. increase in real terms on the original provision for 1989-90.

Road Accidents

69. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce the number of alcohol-related traffic accidents.

Mr. Atkins: The most effective way of reducing such accidents is the increasing recognition by drivers that society will not tolerate drinking and driving. I welcome this change in attitude, reflected in the reduced number of accidents linked with alcohol misuse. But it is still a major cause of death and injury on the road. We shall continue through publicity, through working with the drinks industry to encourage responsible behaviour, through enforcement action by the police and through effective application of the law to seek to cut this waste of human lives.

70. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest available annual figure for road deaths to *(a)* children and *(b)* adults killed near pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, a total of 281 adults and 28 children were killed in road accidents that took place within 50m of a zebra or pelican crossing and, in particular, 222 of the adults and 24 of the children were pedestrians at the time of the accidents.

Of the pedestrian fatalities, 41 per cent. of the adults and 50 per cent. of the children were in the carriageway using the pedestrian crossing. Most of the remainder were in the carriageway, either within the zig-zag lines on the approach and exit to the crossing, or at some other point within a distance of 50m of the crossing. One child and six adults were on the footpath at the time of the accident.

Docklands Light Railway

72. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans London Regional Transport has to extend the docklands light railway.

Mr. Portillo: Work is under way on extending the docklands light railway to Bank in the City of London and through the royal docks area to Beckton. London Regional Transport is developing a case for a southern extension under the River Thames to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Inner Cities (Access)

73. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to improve access to inner-city areas.

Mr. Atkins: Assisting local road schemes through transport supplementary grant; constructing trunk roads where appropriate; providing grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 for public transport; and consolidating the regeneration of London's docklands with the approval of the Jubilee line extension.

A6 Bypass

75. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to start on the A6 bypass of Rushden and Higham Ferrers.

Mr. Atkins: Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, work could start in the summer of 1992 with completion towards the end of 1993.

RAF Aldergrove

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his reply of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *31*, what type of radar there is at RAF Aldergrove; and whether it detects meteorite activity or tracks attributable to associated ionisation effects on Saturday 11 November 1989, at or around 2028 GMT, particularly on or near a position three nautical miles east of Kirkistown and at around 11,000 ft.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no radar at RAF Aldergrove. There is a National Air Traffic Service Plessey Watchman EN 4000 radar at Belfast (Aldergrove) airport. It did not detect any unusual activity on 11 November 1989.

Irish Lights

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how Irish Lights is funded; what contribution is made to it by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; and whether fishing boats from the Republic of Ireland are required to pay similar levies to Irish Lights to those paid by Northern Irish vessels.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Commissioners of Irish Lights are funded from the general lighthouse fund established by section 1 of the Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act 1898. The fund's principal income is from light dues levied on shipping using ports in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Following an agreement entered into in 1985, the Irish Government make an annual contribution into the fund which, when added to light dues collected in the Republic, now meets half the costs of the Commissioners deemed to be incurred in the Republic. The most recent such contribution was in January 1990 in the sum of £2 million Irish pounds. The United Kingdom Government make no contribution to the fund. Light dues in the Republic are determined by the Irish Minister of the Marine and the Irish Government have made no decision to extend light dues to fishing vessels in the Republic. Such vessels are liable to the United Kingdom dues if they call at a United Kingdom port.

Company Cars

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of company cars sold in the United Kingdom in 1989 were made in the United Kingdom

Mr. Atkins: Of the cars registered for the first time in a company name in 1989, 51 per cent. were produced in Great Britain.

The figures for Northern Ireland are not available. Therefore, figures given are for Great Britain only.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much is raised in vehicle excise duty from owners of cars which have *(a)* a 1 litre engine, *(b)* a 1·5 litre engine, *(c)* a 2 litre engine, *(d)* a 2·5 litre engine and *(e)* a 3 litre engine; and what is the income and regional distribution of the car owners in each of these cases.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's estimates of vehicle excise duty revenue from cars of different engine sizes are as follows:

Estimated vehicle excise duty revenue from cars 1988-89

Engine size in litres	*Estimated vehicle excise duty revenue £ million*
<1	245
1 to 1·5	795
1·5 to 2	765
2 to 2·5	80
2·5 to 3	50
>3	35
TOTAL	1,970

Source: DVLC licensing statistics 1988-89.

The following tables give estimated annual income of main drivers and regional distributions for cars with these engine sizes.

Annual income distribution of main drivers of cars by engine size: 1985-86

percentage

Income (£ per annum)	*Engine size in litres* < 1	1-1·5	1·5-2	2-2·5	2·5-3	> 3	*Total*
0-4,999	50	41	28	23	26	20	36
5,000-9,999	35	39	36	31	28	28	37
10,000-14,999	13	17	23	22	23	27	19
15,000-19,999	2	3	8	11	5	8	5
20,000-24,999	1	1	3	5	7	4	2
25,000+	1	0	2	8	11	13	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Travel Survey 1985-86.

Regional distribution of cars by engine size: December 1988

percentage

Region	*Engine size in litres* < 1	1-1·5	1·5-2	2-2·5	2·5-3	> 3
South West	9	10	9	9	9	9
Northern	5	5	4	4	3	3
Yorks and Humberside	9	8	8	7	6	6
South East	32	33	36	38	45	45
East Midlands	7	7	7	7	7	7
West Midlands	11	10	10	9	9	10
East Anglia	4	4	4	5	4	4
North West	12	11	10	9	9	8
England	88	87	88	88	92	92
Scotland	7	8	7	7	5	5
Wales	5	5	5	5	4	4
Great Britain	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: DVLC licensing statistics December 1988.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much petrol prices would have to be raised for a revenue neutral budget if vehicle excise duty was *(a)* abolished, *(b)* frozen at its current rate, *(c)* abolsihed for cares of less than 1·5 litre engines and *(d)* abolished for cares of less than 2 litre engines; and what would be the impact on the retail prices index in each of these cases.

Mr. Atkins: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Air Traffic

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the growth of air traffic throughout the United Kingdom over the next five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's most recent air traffic forecasts, published in December 1988, predict that in 1995 passenger movements at United Kingdom airports will be in the range of 120 million to just under 140 million. In 1988, the first year for which complete statistics are available the corresponding total was 93·2 million.

Whaley Bridge Bypass

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the reports by Allol and Lomax, consulting engineers, into the performance of the consulting engineers employed on the Chapel-en-le-Firth-Whaley Bridge bypass; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: The report is not yet completed. Phase (iii) of the geotechnical investigation is in hand and phase (iv) may be necessary, depending on the outcome of phase (iii). When the full report is available, consideration will be given to placing a copy in the Library.

Chiltern Lines (Signals)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about new signalling systems on the Chiltern lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A scheme to resignal the Chiltern lines forms part of a package of measures to modernise the infrastructure on the route and is one of the prototype schemes for automatic train protection. The railway inspectorate will be discussing the details with British Rail at the appropriate time.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* the percentage of signals (i) nationally and (ii) on the Chiltern lines which are paraffin-lit and *(b)* that are currently out of action.

Mr. Portillo: I have no such information. If the hon. Lady has a particular concern about the use of paraffin-lit signals she might wish to write to me.

Mersey Tunnel

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received Merseytravel's submission for Government assistance in relation to the Mersey tunnel's debt issue; when Merseytravel is required to settle its budget and declare its levy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We received Merseytravel's submission for Government assistance on 28 November 1989, some two months later than expected. We have been considering it carefully. Merseytravel is due to set its budget on 14 February, and we hope to respond by then.

Escalator (St. John's Wood)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his reply on escalators at St. John's Wood to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, *Official Report*, 29 January, column *55*, what explanation he received from London Underground as to why that escalator was still out of service on 7 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter within London Underground's management responsibility, for which it should answer. However, the information given in my previous reply was given in good faith. I understand the repair is taking longer than expected, and that the work should now be complete by 26 February.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the quality of service performance indicators that have been introduced into the Vehicle Inspectorate since its establishment as an agency.

Mr. Atkins: The main quality of service indicators that have been introduced by the Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency are:

i. The number of exemption certificates issued annually (an exemption certificate is issued if the Vehicle Inspectorate is unable to test a vehicle by the due test date).
ii. The time taken for dealing with requests for MOT-test documentation.
iii. The extent to which ministerial targets for defined enforcement activities have been met (eg inspections of heavy goods and public service vehicle operators' maintenance facilities; and inspections of MOT testing stations).
iv. The time taken between the receipt of an operator's application for a test appointment and the grant of an appointment.
v. The proportion of tests undertaken at the times and locations requested by operators.

Indicators (i) to (iii) along with other, secondary, measures are published in the inspectorate's 1989-90 business plan and 1988-89 annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Indicators (iv) and (v) form part of the inspectorate's internal service quality monitoring system.

Historic Wrecks

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing how many historic wrecks are protected by designation orders under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Designation orders have been made under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 in respect of 34 wreck sites of historical importance. The numbers of orders made in each of the past 10 years is as follows:

	Orders
1980	3
1981	2
1982	2

	Orders
1983	1
1984	2
1985	1
1986	1
1987	—
1988	1
1989	2

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sums he has made available to marine archaeological work in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1986 the Department contracted the university of St. Andrews to provide a team to inspect both sites proposed for designation under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 because of their archaeological or historical importance and sites already so designated. Under this contract the Department has incurred expenditure as follows:

	£
1986-87	75,684
1987-88	42,884
1988-89	52,242
1989-90	73,700

Lancashire-London Transport Links

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve travel between Lancashire and London over the next 10 years.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* There is already a good rail service between Lancashire and London, which will benefit further from British Rail's substantial programme of investment.

The trunk road network is undergoing a major programme of expansion, as announced in "Roads for Prosperity"; within this programme are a number of schemes which will benefit links between Lancashire and London, in particular the completion of the M40 and the Birmingham orbital, and widening schemes for the M1 between junctions 6A and 19, the M6 between junctions 1 and 4A, junctions 11 and 21A and junctions 30 and 32. The widening of all present dual three lanes sections of the M25 to dual four lanes will also facilitate travel. The cost of the widening schemes alone will amount to some £1·8 billion.

There is also a number of major schemes proposed linking Greater Manchester and other urban areas to the national motorway network. These include the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road, the Manchester outer ring road, the Blackburn southern bypass and the Preston southern and western bypass.

The Government are also considering the timing and scope of the possibility of competitive tendering in the private sector to provide a new route in the Birmingham to Manchester corridor.

The region's airports are controlled by the local airport authorities and are not therefore under the direct responsibility of the Department. It is the policy of the Department to encourage LAAs to develop services to meet fully the demand which exists.

Computer Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has, and is taking to improve the security of its computer systems.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* For unclassified but sensitive systems Departments are expected to follow CCTA guidance covering all aspects of IT security and the application of this has been tightened recently. CCTA advice is kept under continuous review and is based on analysis of security risks and requirements using structured methods such as CCTA's risk analysis and management methodology (CRAMM) which has also been made commercially available.

Car Ownership

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the levels of car ownership by size of settlement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* In 1985-86 the average number of cars per household and the percentage of households with at least two cars was as follows:

Type of area	*Population (thousands)*	*Average number of cars per household*	*Percentage of household with at least two cars*
Urban	>250	0·67	12
Urban	100-250	0·78	15
Urban	50-100	0·75	13
Urban	25-50	0·76	13
Urban	3-25	0·86	16
Rural		1·06	27
Great Britain		0·78	15

Source: National Travel Survey

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the rates of change in car ownership by size of settlement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The increase in the number of cars per household between 1975-76 and 1985-86 was as follows:

Type of area	*Population (thousands)*	*Average number of cars per household*		*Per cent. increase 1975-76 to 1985-86*
		1975-76	*1985-86*	
Urban	>250	0·53	0·67	27
Urban	100-250	0·58	0·78	34
Urban	50-100	0·58	0·75	30
Urban	25-50	0·68	0·76	11
Urban	3-25	0·70	0·86	23
Rural	—	0·83	1·06	28
Great Britain		0·63	0·78	23

Source: National Travel Survey.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has done into levels of car ownership by income; and what are the latest figures.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* This information is provided by the family expenditure survey 1987, which shows for example that 7 per cent. of households with an income of under £45 per week have a

car or van available, 54 per cent. of those with incomes between £125 and £150 per week and 98 per cent. of those with incomes over £550 per week. Multiple car ownership occurs at almost all household income levels. At about average household income, 63 per cent. of households have one car or van available, 10 per cent. have two, and 1 per cent. have three or more.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has done into levels of car ownership in relation to communities comprising small scattered settlements.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The Department of Transport has done no research on this topic. The most appropriate source of data for this work would be the 1981 census, which can provide data at enumeration district level.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether in the course of research done in connection with the national road traffic forecast 1989 his Department looked at levels and rates of change in car ownership by size of settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The Department makes local forecasts of origins and destinations of car trips at the local authorities district level consistent with the national forecasts, but these forecasts are not differentiated by size of settlement.

Vehicles (Environmental Impact)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the environmental impact of road vehicles running on diesel as opposed to petrol; and what is his policy on the promotion of the use of diesel and petrol.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 18 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *12-14*.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made as to the implications for the Trident programme of the successful completion of the next stage of the CFE talks (CFE II).

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current CFE negotiations have yet to be completed; not until that has been accomplished can the Government assess possible further steps on conventional arms control. On the separate issue of nuclear arms control, the United Kingdom's position on including our strategic deterrent in negotiations is well known and I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 215 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989, volume 1 (Cm. 675-1).

Greenham Common

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the proposed use of the Greenham common airbase;

(2) what information he has on whether the United States European intelligence unit will be moving from Germany to Greenham common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 February 1990, *Official Report*, columns *591-92*.

Military Bases (Closures)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what closures of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or United States bases have been notified to him this year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the United Kingdom the United States authorities have announced, after consultation with the United Kingdom Government, that RAF Wethersfield is to be returned to the Ministry of Defence by June 1991, RAF Greenham Common will revert to standby status on the departure of the remaining cruise missiles in May 1991 and RAF Fairford will become a standby base in October this year.

Classified Documents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions have security classified documents been lost or mislaid in each of the last 10 years by classification.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not held of the number of classified documents lost or mislaid.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review has been undertaken of his Department's filing system arising from the loss and rediscovery of documents.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Filing systems and other procedures are reviewed as part of the investigations which follow the reported loss of classified documents.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has in regard of the relative costs of the SCRAM-T missile and the Anglo-French air-to-surface missile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I assume that the question relates to the assessment of options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb. These studies are continuing, and it is not yet possible to identify potential costs with any accuracy. However, company costs will be commercially confidential and, in accordance with normal procedures, will not be made public.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make the final decision on the replacement for the WE177 bomb with a tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 24 October 1989 at column *429*.

RAF Chicksands

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the amount of money that has been authorised in the United States budget FY91 for the construction of a satellite communication terminal at RAF Chicksands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand from the United States authorities that a project for the construction of a satellite communication terminal at RAF Chicksands has been submitted for inclusion in the United States fiscal year 1991 budget. The budget has not yet been approved.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on what the primary function of the satellite communication terminal to be constructed at RAF Chicksands will be.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand from the United States authorities that the satellite communications terminal planned for RAF Chicksands, if approved, would be a facility of the United States defence communications system (DCS). The terminal would provide communications services for United States forces at that site and radio relay facilities for other forces in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average length of time taken for a precautionary inspection of a nuclear submarine's reactor facility; and what is the average cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Planned inspections take place during scheduled refits and maintenance periods. With regard to the programme of inspections currently under way, the time taken will vary from one submarine to another. The additional costs of carrying out these inspections are likely to be small, but have not been separately identified.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the meaning of the term "come alongside" when the decision is taken as a precautionary measure to inspect the reactor of a nuclear submarine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In this context the term "come alongside" means to berth in a naval harbour.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether his Department has found it necessary to revise its risk estimates of a nuclear submarine reactor accident either at sea or in dock as a result of faults reported in one of Britain's nuclear-powered submarines;

(2) if he has any plans to revise the current risk estimates for the likelihood of a maximum design accident as a primary containment failure of a nuclear submarine in dock; and if he will make a statement with special reference to the spread of radiation emitted in the course of an accident in dock into the atmosphere.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to be guided by the advice of our independent safety advisers on the operation, in accordance with rigorous safety standards, of our nuclear-powered submarines. Submarines alongside have reactors closed down and present no hazard to the public.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if it is necessary for a nuclear submarine to enter a refit berth in order for an inspection to be carried out;

(2) how many refit berths there are for nuclear submarines; and whether there is sufficient refit berth capacity to make inspections of the nuclear submarine fleet without unnecessary delay.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to release details of our nuclear refit capacity. However, a refit berth is not required for the current inspections being carried out on our nuclear submarines.

Leopard II Tank

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities his Department is providing for Krauss Maffei Company to promote the Leopard II tank in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Krauss Maffei is aware that we are seeking industrial participation proposals from potential overseas suppliers competing for the Chieftain replacement requirement. The company will accordingly be undertaking a round of seminars as part of its marketing strategy to improve its knowledge of the United Kingdom defence market and to identify possible United Kingdom subcontractors. As with General Dynamics earlier, the Defence Export Services Organisation, in consultation with local chambers of commerce and regional development authorities, will be assisting Krauss Maffei in organising these seminars.

HMS Vulcan

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what defects were discovered in the HMS Vulcan P1 prototype reactor; and why it was closed down.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No defects were discovered in HMS Vulcan's PWR1 prototype reactor, which was shut down at the end of its programmed life.

Belgian Troops (Germany)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the British Army of the Rhine of a withdrawal of Belgian troops from the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Belgian authorities have made it clear that they have no current plans for large-scale unilateral troop withdrawals from the Federal Republic of Germany.

United States Air Force 401st Wing

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected cost of the transfer of the United States air force 401st wing from Spain to Italy; and what part of the cost is projected as falling to *(a)* Britain, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* other NATO allies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The provisional assessment of the total cost is £424 million. Of this £37 million would fall to be met by the United Kingdom, £198 million by the United States of America, and £189 million by other NATO nations.

Submarine Bases

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was paid in rates each year for the past 10 years by his Department in respect of the Clyde submarine base, Faslane and Coulport, to the local authority.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The contributions in lieu of rates paid in respect of the Clyde submarine base, Faslane and Coulport, are set out in the table.

Clyde submarine base

	Faslane		*Coulport*	
	Non-domestic £	*Domestic* £	*Non-domestic* £	*Domestic* £
1980-81	1,018,622	618	464,722	504
1981-82	1,346,454	834	711,080	680
1982-83	1,522,079	980	803,829	800
1983-84	1,498,622	965	812,796	788
1984-85	1,615,453	1,034	869,946	844
1985-86	1,638,065	1,704	936,650	899
1986-87	1,832,772	1,160	1,000,920	976
1987-88	2,129,780	1,278	1,093,110	1,075
1988-89	2,184,765	1,278	1,138,760	1,075
1989-90	2,234,090	—	1,125,000	—

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 February 1990

THE ARTS

Libraries (Beetles)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister for the Arts what recommendations he has made to historic libraries on protecting their collections of books against the Australian spider beetle and the biscuit beetle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The national preservation office, funded by the British Library, maintains a free inquiry and advice service to libraries in the United Kingdom on all aspects of preservation and security, including the protection of books against beetle.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatised Industries

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the possible renationalisation of privatised industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: None.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many profit-related pay schemes are linked to the profitability of the firm as a whole rather than to a smaller unit; and how many people are affected.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not readily available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer in each year of the profit-related pay scheme.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows.

Year	*Estimated cost of income tax relief £ million*
1987-88	negligible
1988-89	10
1989-90	15

Costs are expected to increase in future.

Payroll Taxes

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of different levels of payroll tax on the costs of industry.

Mr. Lilley: A payroll tax levied as a percentage of total payroll would raise an estimated £1¼ billion for each 0·5 per cent. of the tax rate.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each year that PEPs have been in operation what is *(a)* the number of people with PEPs, *(b)* the average holding per person in a PEP and the distribution of holdings and *(c)* the distribution of PEP holdings by region.

Mr. Lilley: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of plans taken out since the introduction of personal equity plans is estimated as follows:—

Year	*Total*
1987	270,000
1988	120,000
1989	300,000
Total	690,000

The average value of the investment in each plan is as follows.

Year	*£*
1987	1,650
1988	1,800

An estimate for 1989 is not available yet and there is no information available on the distribution of the level of investments or the regional distribution of investors.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has on whether the existence of PEPs has increased *(a)* personal shareholdings and *(b)* savings.

Mr. Lilley: Personal equity plans offer a simple and cheap way of owning shares and have been very successful in shares and encouraging the spread of share ownership.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the distribution of personal equity plan holdings by income in each year of the scheme's existence.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of *(a)* non-United Kingdom shares and *(b)* shares in privatised companies held on average in each PEP and their distribution.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not available. Non-United Kingdom shares may not be held directly in a PEP.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of PEP savings he estimates are diverted from other forms of savings, and what information he has as to what these other savings are.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount and share of pre-tax income accruing to *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the top 25 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 5 per cent. and *(g)* all taxpayers in each year from 1978-79 to 1989-90 and the amount and share of tax liability for each of these groups.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates are given in the tables for 1978-79 and 1983-84 to 1989-90. Information for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All estimates of income are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source. Estimates are based on the surveys of personal incomes for years up to 1987-88 and projections of the 1987-88 survey for subsequent years; the latter are therefore provisional. I regret that information on the bottom 5 per cent. of taxpayers is not available.

Group of taxpayers[1]

	Top 1 per cent.		*Top 5 per cent.*		*Top 10 per cent.*		*Top 25 per cent.*		*Bottom 70 per cent.*		*All taxpayers*
Year	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*
Gross Incomes before tax											
1978-79	5·1	5	15·0	15	24·3	24	45·9	45	51·0	50	102·8
1983-84	9·7	6	28·3	16	45·0	26	81·7	47	82·0	47	173·7
1984-85	10·9	6	31·4	17	49·6	26	89·3	47	88·8	47	188·8
1985-86	12·9	6	35·7	17	55·9	26	100·5	47	100·0	47	212·6
1986-87	15·1	7	40·8	17	63·2	27	112·5	48	107·3	46	232·9
1987-88	16·4	6	45·3	18	70·1	28	124·2	49	116·2	46	255·1
1988-89[2]	19·3	7	52·3	18	80·5	28	141·3	49	129·2	45	287·0
1989-90[2]	22·0	7	59·3	18	91·2	28	159·5	50	144·5	45	322·1
Income tax liabilities											
1978-79	2·3	11	4·9	24	7·0	34	11·5	57	7·7	38	20·2
1983-84	2·8	11	8·5	26	12·2	36	19·5	58	12·5	38	33·4
1984-85	4·2	12	9·3	26	13·3	38	21·1	60	12·4	35	35·4
1985-86	5·0	13	10·6	27	14·8	38	23·2	60	13·6	35	38·8
1986-87	6·2	14	12·7	29	17·3	40	26·5	61	14·5	34	43·3
1987-88	6·6	15	13·7	30	18·5	41	28·0	62	14·9	33	45·4
1988-89[2]	6·1	13	13·9	29	19·0	41	29·1	62	15·1	32	46·7
1989-90[2]	7·1	13	16·0	30	22·0	42	33·3	63	16·9	32	53·1

[1] Married couples and single people.
[2] Provisional.

Revenues

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenues have been received by Government for each year from 1979-80 to the present and in aggregate in real terms from *(a)* North sea oil, *(b)* privatisation proceeds and *(c)* other sales of land or property of central or local government.

Mr. Lilley: Such information as is readily available is included on the CSO database (identified by the database codes) and published in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021) as follows:

(a) total north sea taxes—database, code ABLG
(b) privatisation proceeds—Table 21.5.13 of Cm. 1021
(c) sales of land and buildings—Table 21.2.17 of Cm. 1021 implied GDP (at market price) deflator—database code DJDT

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will adopt the Keith committee proposal to require taxpayers to disclose tax avoidance transactions.

Mr. Lilley: The recommendation of the Keith committee that the taxpayer should be obliged to tell the inspector where he has taken the benefit of any doubt whether any item ought to be declared, or any relief or deduction allowed, was rejected, following extensive public consultations, because it was found that it would be both burdensome and impracticable.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to take measures to prevent fringe banks from funding tax avoidance schemes.

Mr. Lilley: No. Banks must be free to decide whether to fund any legitimate activity.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take to protect the interests of the Inland Revenue in personal bankruptcy cases involving moneys held by Isle of Man or Channel Islands based trusts.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue will continue to use all measures available to it under the insolvency legislation.

Workplace Nurseries

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking assistance through the tax system to employers setting up nurseries.

Mr. Lilley: Employers can already obtain tax relief for most of the costs of setting up and running workplace nurseries. As to the provision of any further assistance, I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement.

Child Care

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he received about the taxation of the use of child care facilities.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of bank provision against less-developed country debt will be accepted for the financial year 1989-90 as appropriate to offset against corporation tax liability.

Mr. Lilley: Banks are entitled to a tax deduction for the proportion of doubtful debt which is estimated to be irrecoverable. The amount will be negotiated between the Inland Revenue and the banks when the banks submit their accounts for the year.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has recieved, and from whom, seeking encouragement through the use of the tax system for the development or use of electrically powered road vehicles.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received few representations concerning tax concessions for the development or use of electrically powered road vehicles.

Day Vee

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Inland Revenue has sought the return of any former directors of Day Vee to the United Kingdom to help with its investigations into the company's tax liabilities.

Mr. Lilley: Such information is confidential.

Interest Rates

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses regarding the effects of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have received a number of such representations.

Investment

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will arrange to meet his West German counterpart to discuss investment policy.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the West German Finance Minister at the European Community's Economic and Finance Council. In our countries business investment has been buoyant in the last two years: in the United Kingdom it grew by over 30 per cent. in the two years to 1988, owing to the success of the Government's policies in fostering confidence in the future of the United Kingdom economy.

Taxation Revenue

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in rank order the total revenue raised from the 21 different forms of taxation.

Mr. Lilley: The information can be found in tables 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 in "Financial Statistics", published by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in order of amount collected by the Treasury each of the different and separate forms of taxation in the United Kingdom for 1988-89.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The information can be found in tables 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 in "Financial Statistics", published by the Central Statistical Office.

Inland Revenue Office, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons employed at the Inland Revenue office in Cumbernauld are registered as disabled; and what percentage this represents of the total work force.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue employs 26 registered disabled staff in its office at Cumbernauld; this represents 2·47 per cent. of the total staff at 9 February 1990.

Paymaster General's Office

Mr. Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to move the Paymaster General's office from Crawley.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* No.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the additional annual cost or yield to the Exchequer in tax relief on mortgage interest payments of every 1 per cent. rise or reduction in mortgage interest rates.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* An increase or reduction of one percentage point in the level of mortgage interest rates would increase or reduce the annual cost of mortgage interest relief on the current stock of mortgages by about £550 million.

Tax Receipts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures showing total receipts from capital transfer tax and inheritance tax for each year from 1980 expressed *(a)* in cash terms at 1990 prices and *(b)* as a percentage of total Inland Revenue receipts.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The receipts of capital transfer tax and inheritance tax for each financial year since 1980-81 are:

Year	*Receipts at forecast 1990-91 Prices £ million*	*Percentage of total Inland Revenue Receipts*
1980-81	760	1·3
1981-82	781	1·2
1982-83	758	1·1

Year	Receipts at forecast 1990-91 Prices £ million	Percentage of total Inland Revenue Receipts
1983-84	869	1·3
1984-85	909	1·3
1985-86	1,156	1·6
1986-87	1,263	1·7
1987-88	1,299	1·7
1988-89	1,203	1·6
[1]1989-90	1,200	1·5

[1] Converted using the GDP market price deflator and Autumn Statement forecast.

Beverage Containers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised if value added tax was levied at *(a)* 20 per cent. *(b)* 25 per cent. and *(c)* 30 per cent. on non-returnable beverage containers.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* No measurable extra revenue would accrue because beverage containers are normally taxed at the same rate as their contents when the goods are supplied.

Company Cars

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of not taxing company cars at their full value.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The benefit of the private use of a company car is taxed by reference to fixed scale charges, but the value of private use to any particular employee depends on a wide range of factors. Information about these is not available, so it is not possible to provide an estimate of the aggregate extent to which the private use of company cars is undertaxed.

Inflation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the impact on inflation of raising £1 billion from *(a)* tobacco products, *(b)* beer, *(c)* wine and spirits, *(d)* petrol *(e)* value added tax and *(f)* vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The estimated impact on the retail prices index of raising £1 billion from each of the specific taxes and duties is shown in the table.

Source	Effect on retail price index (per cent.)
Tobacco	0·64
Beer	0·48
Wines and spirits	0·91
Petrol	0·29
VAT	0·32
VED	0·24

These estimates are subject to a considerable margin of error given the large duty changes implied.

Petrol Duties

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the impact on the retail price index of increasing excise duties on petrol by twice what is needed for indexation, and raising excise on the other areas by as much as is necessary to achieve the same overall revenue for the Exchequer as would be achieved by full indexation only of all items.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* 0·47 per cent.

Income Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual reduction in income tax for a married man earning *(a)* £160,000 per year and *(b)* £260,000 per year as a result of the changes brought in by the 1988 Budget.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* A married man earning £160,000 in 1989-90 and claiming no reliefs of allowances other than the married man's allowance has income tax liability of £25,045 less than if the allowances and thresholds in 1987-88 had been indexed to 1989-90 and the tax rates had remained unchanged at 1987-88 levels. A married man earning £260,000 would have a corresponding reduction of £45,045.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the general conditions of approval of occupational and personal pension schemes by the Inland Revenue are such as to permit the provision of payments out of such a scheme of an amount related to a person's accrued or prospective retirement pension under the scheme, such payments to be made throughout any period in which that person is entitled to the payment of an invalidity pension from the national insurance fund and to cease at the end of that period.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The main purpose of occupational and personal pension schemes is to provide an income in retirement. The tax approval conditions for such schemes allow benefits to be paid before retirement age if a person is incapable of continuing in employment. There is no requirement on schemes to provide a pension before retirement age. Decisions on whether an incapacity pension is payable are matters for the scheme trustees and their criteria might differ from entitlements to invalidity pensions. Incapacity pensions are normally payable for life.

HMSO

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the quality of service performance indicators that have been introduced into HMSO since its establishment as an agency.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 15 January 1990 at column 98.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Taxis

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the circumstances under which police records are made available to the authorities concerned with the licensing of hackney-carriage and private hire drivers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information from police records is not generally made available for these purposes. In London records are available for the purpose of licensing hackney-carriage drivers, since the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is the licensing authority.

Boundary Commission (Wales)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure of the parliamentary boundary commission for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The parliamentary boundary commissions for England and Wales share a common secretariat and premises. Although work now in hand will enable costs to be identified for each commission separately, at present it is possible to give only the total combined expenditure of the two commissions, which for 1988-89 was £252,160. Members of the parliamentary boundary commissions receive no remuneration or attendance alowance, but are recompensed for any reasonably actual expenses incurred.

Summer Time

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from Scotland concerning any proposed change to British summer time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 5,475 representations, including signatures on petitions, were received from Scotland.

Shotgun Certificates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to whether any disciplinary action has been taken against any officer in regard to the renewal of the shotgun certificate of Mr. G. W. Phillips.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable that no such disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to whether a receipt was issued for the shotgun, the property of Mr. G. W. Phillips, when it was taken into the possession of the Gwent constabulary.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The local administration of the firearms licensing system is a matter for the chief officer of police concerned.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to what training has been given to police officers on the procedures for dealing with applications, renewals and variation of firearms and for shotgun certificates under *(a)* the Firearms Act 1968 and *(b)* the Firearms Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Training in the local administration of firearm licensing procedures is a matter for the chief officer of police concerned.

Security Service

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the security service tribunal is declining to accept complaints against the security service which relate to matters that took place prior to any given date.

Mr. John Patten: The tribunal is subject to paragraph 9 of schedule 1 to the Security Service Act 1989.

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will set out the procedure within his Department for authorising transfers of personal data to other Government Departments; and at what level such decisions are authorised;

(2) on what grounds decisions are taken to transfer personal data held by his Department to other Government Departments;

(3) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to other Government Departments; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(4) what internal guidelines covering the transfer of personal data to other Government Departments are available to staff in his Department; and whether he will place a copy of any such guidelines in the Library;

(5) what kind of personal data held by his Department, whether on computer or manually, are transferred to other Government Departments;

(6) what plans exist in his Department for the transfer of personal data via the Government data network; and what new procedures have been adopted within the Department to prevent unauthorised transfers of such data;

(7) what records are kept of transfers of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments; and whether the Data Protection Registrar has access to the relevant records;

(8) whether records will be kept of all personal data transferred to other Government Departments via the Government data network;

(9) whether the rules governing the transfer of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments are the same for data held manually as for data held on computer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Where information comprising personal data is computerised, disclosures are made only as permitted by the appropriate registration under the Data Protection Act 1984 or by one of the statutory exemptions embodied within the Act. The general guidance issued to staff is that dealing with the application of the Data Protection Act 1984, a copy of which has been

placed in the Library. This is the position whether or not there is any connection to the Government data network; and there are no plans at present to maintain records of, or issue central guidance dealing with, the transfer of personal data over the Government data network.

As regards non-computerised personal data, depending on the nature of the information held appropriate local procedures determine to whom the information may be disclosed, and who may authorise the disclosure. The Home Office holds many millions of records containing personal data, both manual and computerised, on a wide range of subjects: in consequence, the remaining detailed information sought in these questions is not readily available and could not be obtained save at disproportionate cost.

Drugs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his proposed international drugs conference in London.

Mr. Mellor: The world ministerial summit to reduce the demand for drugs and to combat the cocaine threat is being organised by Her Majesty's Government in association with the United Nations and will take place in London from 9 to 11 April 1990.

It is to be opened by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who will be joined for the opening session by the President of Colombia and the Secretary General of the United Nations. Expert speakers from around the world will address the working sessions. It is hoped that the summit will strengthen our knowledge of ways to tackle the drug problem and will lead to an even greater commitment internationally to reduce the demand for all drugs and to combat the production and traffic in cocaine.

Management Consultants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the contracts his Department has given to outside management consultants in policy areas concerning his Department since January 1985 and the date of completion and cost of each contract.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to the reply, 31 January 1990, c. 203]:* A contract awarded to Deloitte, Haskins and Sells to investigate the "Practicality of Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System", completed in February 1989 at a cost of £207,865 (exclusive of VAT), should have been included in my right hon. and learned Friend's answer of 31 January 1990.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Women Staff

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Overseas Development Administration staff are women in *(a)* all positions within the ODA, *(b)* ODA staff based in the United Kingdom, *(c)* ODA staff based overseas, *(d)* ODA staff at or above the level of grade seven, and *(e)* ODA staff at or above the level of grade five.

Mrs. Chalker: On 2 January 1990 the numbers of women employed in the ODA were:

	Total	Women	per cent.
All grades	1,525	662	43·3
Staff in United Kingdom	1,475	653	44·3
Staff overseas	50	9	18·0
Staff at or above grade 7	259	26	10·0
Staff at or above grade 5	50	5	10·0

These figures exclude casual staff and staff on special leave without pay.

Education Conference

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will be representing Her Majesty's Government at the world conference on education for all in Thailand on 5 to 9 March.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government will be represented by the Overseas Development Administration's chief education adviser and by the Under-Secretary for international relations at the Department of Education and Science.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Antrim Technology Park

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost to the Exchequer of developing the Antrim technology park in the period up to 31 March 1989; and how many jobs have been created by the expenditure to date.

Mr. Needham: The cost of developing the park and constructing the buildings has been £4,405,672. Present employment in companies located at the park is 234.

Police Services

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many police services, other than the Royal Ulster Constabulary, operate within Northern Ireland; what is the location of work for each of these services; how many personnel are employed as policemen and policewomen in each of these services; and what is the employing authority for each of these police services.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are three police services operating within the transport sector in Northern Ireland. They are:

a. Northern Ireland Airports Constabulary; 76 policemen and 7 policewomen; Northern Ireland Airports Ltd.

b. Belfast Harbour Police; 35 policemen, Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

c. Larne Harbour Constabulary; 16 policemen; Larne Harbour Limited.

Fire Service

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for the last three years for which information is available all those occasions when the fire service has had to attend Royal Ulster Constabulary police stations or other facilities, stating whether the incident was due to terrorist action, fire, arson or other cause; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: During the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 the brigade attended the following incidents to RUC stations and other police facilities in the Province.

Date and Location	*Reason*
6 April 1987—RUC Station, Lisburn Road, Belfast	Explosion
8 September 1988—RUC Station, Main Street, Coagh	Explosion
11 April 1989—RUC Station, Enniskillen	Accidental fire
12 April 1989—RUC Station, Charlotte Street, Warrenpoint	Explosion
8 June 1989—RUC Station, Newtownabbey	Explosion
1 October 1989—RUC Station, Randalstown	Explosion
10 January 1990—RUC Station, Seapark	Accidental fire

It is believed that the explosions as listed above were as a result of terrorist attack.

Homelessness

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people the Housing Executive has accepted as homeless since 1 April 1989 to 31 December 1989; and how many people who claimed homelessness in that specified period were refused under the regulations as laid down in the Housing (NI) Order 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive says that the information is not available in the form requested. Between 1 April 1989 and 31 December 1989, a total of 3,822 applicants were accepted as being either homeless or threatened with homelessness and 763 applicants were considered not to be homeless or threatened with homelessness under the provisions of the Housing (NI) Order 1988. A further 183 applications are still under consideration.

Youth Training

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the Northern Ireland Association of Community Workshops about the proposed funding arrangements for the youth training programme which will come into effect on 1 April 1990.

Mr. Needham: I met representatives of the Northern Ireland Association of Community Workshops on 29 January 1990. In response to their representations I have made a number of modifications to the funding arrangements for the youth training programme to meet their concerns. I understand that the association has reacted positively to these changes.

Fire Authority

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether *(a)* the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland and *(b)* Mr. Kerr were legally represented at the hearing held by the Fair Employment Agency in the case of Kerr *v.* Northern Ireland Fire Authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These are issues for the fire authority and Mr. Kerr. The fire authority was not legally represented at the hearing held by the Fair Employment Agency. Mr. Kerr was accompanied by his solicitor at the hearing.

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Fire Authority sought the advice of counsel *(a)* prior to the decision of the Fair Employment Agency on 6 December and *(b)* thereafter in the case of Kerr *v.* Northern Ireland Fire Authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for the fire authority whose chairman has informed me that the authority did not seek the advice of counsel either prior to the decision of the Fair Employment Agency on 6 December or thereafter. The fire authority took advice from its solicitor in relation to the FEA report and findings.

School Expenditure

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will update to the latest available date the answer given to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), 12 May 1989, *Official Report*, columns *553-54*, on expenditure on books and equipment.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Books and equipment (separate figures for books and equipment not available)

Year	*Primary schools*			*Secondary schools*			*Special schools*		
	Cash	*Real terms*	*Index*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Index*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Index*
	£	£		£	£		£	£	
1978-79	10·40	22·81	100	22·88	50·17	100	24·32	53·33	100
1979-80	12·05	22·67	99	25·24	47·49	94	26·65	50·14	94
1980-81	12·34	19·58	86	25·73	40·82	81	30·96	49·12	92
1981-82	14·37	20·77	91	29·22	42·23	84	38·34	55·42	104
1982-83	14·63	19·74	86	30·62	41·33	82	38·11	51·44	96
1983-84	15·08	19·46	85	31·74	40·95	81	41·83	53·97	101
1984-85	16·37	20·13	88	34·26	42·13	84	46·38	57·04	107
1985-86	17·14	19·96	87	36·40	42·41	84	46·13	53·74	101
1986-87	18·30	20·67	90	42·14	47·59	95	67·77	76·54	129
1987-88	19·94	21·40	94	47·92	51·42	103	84·78	90·97	171
1988-89	20·00	20·00	88	46·55	46·55	93	87·34	87·34	164

Donaghadee Carpets

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed at the firm of Donaghadee Carpets; how many redundancies there have been at this firm in the last four weeks; whether the firm is receiving the support of the IDB.; and if he will make a statement on future employment prospects with this company.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 February 1990]:* CV Carpets Ltd. employs 460 at Donaghadee. The management and trade union representatives are in discussion about manning levels and working practices, but no redundancies have been made or announced in the last four weeks. The company is in receipt of selective financial assistance from the IDB for a capital investment programme which should provide an increase in employment over the next 18 months; the extent of that support is, as usual, dependent on achievement of the forecast employment levels.

Fair Employment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in relation to the fair employment draft guide to effective practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Following consultation with a wide range of interested parties, the guide was published in its final form by the Department of Economic Development on 31 December 1989. It provides advice and guidance to employers and others on their responsibilities and obligations under the fair employment legislation and has become the first code of practice under section 8 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

European Parliament

Q5. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit the European Parliament.

The Prime Minister: In the normal course of events, I would expect to visit the European Parliament during the British presidency of the Community in the second half of 1992.

Rugby League

Q39. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to a rugby league ground.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Summer Time

Q110 **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on summer time.

The Prime Minister: The Home Office published a Green Paper entitled "Summer Time—A Consultation Document" (Cm 722) on 27 June 1989 inviting representations on three options for future summer time arrangement. I have received several representations. Over 30,000 have been received at the Home Office.

Homelessness

Q118. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what further plans she has to meet homeless people in London.

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans at present. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is taking forward, with urgency, action following our review of the homelessness legislation. This includes the allocation of additional resources to relieve homelessness pressures in London. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Housing and Planning have had a number of meetings with homeless people in London and with voluntary agencies who work with the homeless.

Aberdeen

Q143. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Aberdeen.

The Prime Minister: I hope to visit Aberdeen during the course of this year.

TUC

Q195. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet representatives of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters she intends to discuss.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Poland

Q216. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Poland.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit Poland at present. I had a friendly and useful meeting with the Polish Prime Minister here yesterday.

European Monetary System

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of sterling and its relationship to the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to do so.

1992

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the extent and purpose of the inquiries being initiated by the European Economic Community into the prospects for 1992.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so, but will not hesitate to discuss the studies, if that is likely to be useful. The 1992 prospects are for both opportunities and challenges to British business, and the outcome will depend on the way in which individual firms and industries respond to those opportunities and challenges.

Social Charter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will invite the next meeting of the European Council to agree that the Commission should not present measures to

implement the provisions of the social charter until the charter has been agreed by all member states; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Commission has the right to make proposals on any matters that fall within the competence of the Community as set out in the treaty of Rome. As I made clear in my statement following the last meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg in December—*Official Report*, 12 December 1989, column 858—we do not endorse the text of the social charter and, judging from their comments, I believe that many of my colleagues in Europe will have considerable difficulties with the Commission's specific proposals when they come forward.

Private Office

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of her private office in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: The cost of the Prime Minister's office over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Total cost* £
1985-86	4,405,852
1986-87	4,962,950
1987-88	5,418,455
1988-89	6,553,712
1989-90	[1]7,924,979

[1] Estimate.

Salaries and wages, notional pension liability and administrative costs and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust are included. My salary as a Cabinet Minister is not included, nor are my pay and allowances as a Member of this House.

Since 1985 there have been two developments which have affected the way in which costs are assessed. These are inclusion of costs for office services from 1986-87; and inclusion of the cost of redecoration of certain state rooms and of major security works in 1988-89 and 1989-90. When the effects of these developments are excluded (as far as it is possible to do so) and the results expressed in constant price terms at 1988-89 prices, the cost has increased by 6 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1989-90.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total number of people employed in her private office in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: The total number of people in my office in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1985-86	66
1986-87	66
1987-88	67
1988-89	67
1989-90	68

Security Services (Disinformation)

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will institute a wide-ranging inquiry into the dissemination of disinformation relating to public figures by the security services in the last 30 years.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement I made on 6 May 1987.

South Africa

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she has issued a formal invitation to Mr. Nelson Mandela to visit her in Britain.

The Prime Minister: As we explained in our statement of 2 February I plan to do so now that he is free.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to make an official visit to South Africa this year.

The Prime Minister: I plan to visit South Africa in due course.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her meeting with the Rev. Jesse Jackson on Monday 6 February.

The Prime Minister: We had a full discussion on the situation in South Africa. We share the objective of an end to apartheid through peaceful negotiations.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when was the last time she spoke to President de Klerk of South Africa.

The Prime Minister: We are in regular contact with the South African Government.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all representations additional to that made by the Minister for Sport to the chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board on 2 August 1989 made by *(a)* herself, *(b)* any of her Ministers and *(c)* Government officials to dissuade the members of the rebel cricket tour of South Africa from undertaking the tour.

The Prime Minister: The Government's position on the cricket tour to South Africa is set out in my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport's letter of 2 August to the chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board. At my hon. Friend's request, his letter was copied to the players concerned.

Engagements

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall preside at a dinner in honour of the Prime Minister of Poland.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil and Political Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will take steps to incorporate the international covenant on civil and political rights into domestic law.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply. No.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply of 6 February, he will list the cases or proceedings which cause him to treat matters relating to Mr. Lorrain Osman as being sub judice.

Mr. Maude: Mr. Osman's fourth application for a writ of habeas corpus, launched on 2 February.

Western European Union

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the WEU Assembly recommendation that the WEU Council work out the prior conditions necessary in the conceptual field for SNF negotiations to be resumed without delay after the implementation of the first CFE agreement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The comprehensive concept adopted by NATO Heads of State and Government at their summit in May set out the "prior conditions" for SNF negotiations, namely that once the implementation of an agreement on conventional arms is under way

"the United States in consultation with the Allies concerned, is prepared to enter into negotiations to achieve a *partial* reduction of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missiles of shorter range to equal and verifiable levels."

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on the Western European Union Assembly's recommendation that the Western European Union Council call for *(a)* a complete review of the COCOM lists in the light of a fundamental reassessment of the current state of Soviet technology, with a view to encouraging maximum opportunities for trade, *(b)* negotiations with proscribed countries for the introduction of verification procedures to accompany all future sales of western strategic technology in return for the further liberalisation of the COCOM list and *(c)* the establishment, within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe framework, of a committee of experts to make recommendations for the sharing of high technology between East and West.

Mr. Waldegrave: On his first point I refer my hon. Friend to the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 15 December at column *839* to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

On his second point I refer my hon. Friend to the comments made by my hon. Friend during the Adjournment debate on 21 December at column 632. There have already been contacts at official level between COCOM partners and Poland and Hungary. The results of these will inform the review of COCOM and its procedures now under way.

Finally, COCOM provides a forum for national experts to discuss the level of technology to be shared with or transferred to the proscribed destinations. Against the background of an existing military threat, this issue will receive increasing scrutiny in the meetings now under way to discuss technology transfer and developments in eastern Europe. The participating states in the CSCE process do not include all the members of COCOM and we would not see the establishment of a separate committee, with the same mandate, as providing any practical benefit.

EC (Security and Defence)

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken in the framework of the European Community to enable the European Commission to study security and defence questions.

Mr. Maude: The political and economic aspects of security are the subject of co-ordination among the member states in European Political Co-operation (EPC). The Commission is fully associated with EPC. The military aspects of security are not the subject of co-ordination in any Community framework.

Baron Max Khatchaturian

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the post in India will come to a decision on the application by Baron Max Khatchaturian and his family for recognition of their British citizenship and concerning which he has received correspondence from the hon. Member for Caernarfon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Education Conference

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will protest at the participation of a member of the Khmer Rouge as the representative of Cambodia at the world conference on education for all in Thailand on 5 to 9 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The world conference on education for all is being organised and sponsored by four specialised agencies of the United Nations (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank). We understand that, as Cambodia's representatives at the UN, the National Government of Cambodia (formerly the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea) will have been invited to attend. This is normal practice for such UN-sponsored conferences.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Multi-racial Comprehensives

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the issues raised in "School Effect: A Study of Multi-racial Comprehensives" produced by the Policy Studies Institute and the University of Lancaster, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This study is based on research which followed the progress of 3,000 pupils in 20 urban comprehensives, starting in 1981. The research found striking differences between the schools surveyed in what they did and how they did it. The level of achievement of pupils of similar abilities, regardless of their ethnic or social background, varied markedly according to the school they attended.

This study reinforces the Government's determination to press ahead with the implementation of the national curriculum and with the arrangements for assessment and testing so that every child can have the best possible start in life. The study also suggested some profitable further lines of inquiry and my right hon. Friend is considering how best to pursue these.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research projects are receiving funding from his Department that are designed to contribute to the development of electrically powered road vehicles.

Mr. Jackson: The Science and Engineering Research Council, which is funded by the Department, has supported a number of research programmes in universities which are of relevance to the development of electrically powered vehicles. A collaborative programme between Durham university and Lucas plc, completed in 1987, developed a prototype hybrid electric/diesel vehicle. Two research programmes at Loughborough university, completed in 1989, and ongoing programmes at the university of Newcastle and London university's Imperial college are concerned with aspects of new battery systems.

PE Teachers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of physical education teachers for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is available only in respect of 1984 and 1988. In 1984 the number of full-time teachers in maintained secondary schools in England who were teaching physical education was 37,900, including 15,600 for whom physical education was their main teaching subject. The equivalent figures for 1988 were 30,300 and 13,300. Over the same period the number of pupils in maintained secondary schools in England fell by about 16 per cent. (from 3·65 million to 3·07 million).

School Hours

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average numbers of hours per year spent in school by schoolchildren in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* other European Community countries.

Mrs. Rumbold: Recent school staffing surveys in England indicate that pupils in primary schools spend on average some 860 hours in lessons (excluding registration, assemblies and break time) a year. The comparable figure for secondary pupils is some 900 hours. Figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. European comparisons are not readily available.

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers of hours of classroom teaching per year spent by teachers in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* other European Community countries.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the basis of information from recent school staffing surveys, we estimate that primary teachers spend on average some 790 hours a year in classroom teaching. The comparable figure for secondary teachers is some 680 hours. These figures exclude time spent in registration, assemblies and supervision. Figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. European comparisons are not readily available.

Schools (Expenditure)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update to the latest date available the answer given to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), 4 May 1989, *Official Report*, column *173-74*, on expenditure on books and equipment.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information previously supplied has been updated to take account of latest data on actual local authority spending in 1987-88 as recorded in returns to the Department of the Environment; pupil numbers as recorded in returns to the Department of Education and Science; and price movements as recorded by the GDP deflator. Comparable data on spending in 1988-89 are not yet available. The table has been expanded to show two indices. The first shows the change in real-terms spending for each year compared with the base year 1978-79; the second, also shown in the previous table, shows the change in real-terms spending for each year compared with the previous year.

Expenditure per pupil—England

	Primary				Secondary			
	Cash	*[1]Real terms*	*Index 1978-79 = 100*	*Index year on year increase*	*Cash*	*[1]Real terms*	*Index 1978-79 = 100*	*Index year on year increase*
	£	£			£	£		
Books and equipment								
1978-79	12·85	26·34	100	100	24·40	50·04	100	100
1979-80	14·33	25·16	96	96	26·61	46·71	93	93
1980-81	16·05	23·81	90	95	29·26	43·40	87	93
1981-82	18·16	24·54	93	103	32·18	43·48	87	100
1982-83	20·90	26·34	100	107	36·53	46·04	92	106
1983-84	22·79	27·44	104	104	39·21	47·21	94	103
1984-85	23·54	27·01	103	98	42·53	48·78	97	103
1985-86	24·91	27·11	103	100	44·83	48·80	98	100
1986-87	28·04	29·53	112	109	57·15	60·18	120	123

	Primary				Secondary			
	Cash	[1] Real terms	Index 1978-79 = 100	Index year on year increase	Cash	[1] Real terms	Index 1978-79 = 100	Index year on year increase
	£	£			£	£		
1987-88[2]	30·64	30·64	116	104	62·19	62·19	124	103
Books								
1978-79	4·25	8·71	100	100	7·16	14·69	100	100
1979-80	4·69	8·23	94	94	7·82	13·73	93	93
1980-81	5·32	7·90	91	96	8·08	11·99	82	87
1981-82	5·91	7·99	92	101	8·60	11·62	79	97
1982-83	7·00	8·82	101	110	9·89	12·46	85	107
1983-84	7·14	8·60	99	98	10·09	12·15	83	98
1984-85	7·29	8·36	96	97	10·15	11·64	79	96
1985-86	7·49	8·15	94	97	10·66	11·61	79	100
1986-87	8·25	8·69	100	107	13·13	13·83	94	119
1987-88[2]	9·01	9·01	103	104	14·82	14·82	101	107
Equipment								
1978-79	8·60	17·64	100	100	17·24	35·35	100	100
1979-80	9·65	16·94	96	96	18·79	32·98	93	93
1980-81	10·73	15·91	90	94	21·17	31·41	89	95
1981-82	12·25	16·55	94	104	23·58	31·86	90	101
1982-83	13·91	17·52	99	106	26·65	33·58	95	105
1983-84	15·65	18·85	107	108	29·12	35·06	99	104
1984-85	16·26	18·65	106	99	32·38	37·14	105	106
1985-86	17·42	18·96	107	102	34·17	37·19	105	100
1986-87	19·79	20·84	118	110	44·02	46·36	131	125
1987-88[2]	21·63	21·63	123	104	47·37	47·37	134	102

[1] The cash figures for earlier years have been repriced to 1987-88 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.
[2] The figures for 1987-88 include spending in aursry schools. This reflects a change in the classification of the local authority spending returns to the DOE whereby spending on nursery provision was incorporated into the primary sector, rather than being shown separately.

Expenditure per pupil—England

	Special			
	Cash	[1] Real Terms	Index 1978-79 = 100	Index Year on Year Increase
	£	£		
Books and Equipment				
1978-79	37·16	76·19	100	100
1979-80	41·78	73·35	96	96
1980-81	46·73	69·32	91	95
1981-82	51·09	69·03	91	100
1982-83	61·00	76·87	101	111
1983-84	68·24	82·16	108	107
1984-85	70·45	80·81	106	98
1985-86	88·84	96·71	127	120
1986-87	87·58	92·22	121	95
1987-88[2]	98·95	98·95	130	107
Books				
1978-79	5·93	12·16	100	100
1979-80	6·73	11·82	97	97
1980-81	6·90	10·24	84	87
1981-82	7·09	9·58	79	94
1982-83	8·65	10·90	90	114
1983-84	8·68	10·45	86	96
1984-85	9·12	10·46	86	100
1985-86	11·46	12·47	103	119
1986-87	10·65	11·21	92	90
1987-88[2]	12·35	12·35	102	110
Equipment				
1978-79	31·23	64·03	100	100
1979-80	35·05	61·53	96	96
1980-81	39·83	59·09	92	96
1981-82	44·00	59·45	93	101
1982-83	52·35	65·97	103	111
1983-84	59·56	71·71	112	109
1984-85	61·33	70·35	110	98
1985-86	77·38	84·23	132	120
1986-87	76·94	81·02	127	96
1987-88[2]	86·60	86·60	135	107

[1] The cash figures for earlier years have been repriced to 1987-88 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.
[2] The figures for 1987-88 include spending in nursery schools. This reflects a change in the classification of the local authority spending returns to the DOE whereby spending on nursery provision was incorporated into the primary sector, rather than being shown separately.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a breakdown of the overall increase in school unit costs shown in table 11.10 of Cm 1011 between 1979-80 and 1988-89 showing how much of that overall increase is due to increases in the level of school teachers' pay above the rate of inflation.

Mrs. Rumbold: Changes in overall spending on schoolteachers' pay reflect both changes in teacher numbers and successive pay settlements. As a broad estimate, the 42 per cent. increase in unit costs shown in table 11.10 of Cm 1011 may be analysed as follows:

	Percentage
Total increase in real terms spending per pupil:	42
Of which	
Increase due to improvements in pupil:teacher ratio:	13
Increase due to improvements in teachers' pay above the GDP deflator:	16
Other increases, including improved provision for non-teaching costs such as equipment:	13

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the overall increase in real terms between 1979-80 and 1988-89 of *(a)* national average earnings, *(b)* average non-manual earnings outside the public sector and *(c)* school teachers' pay.

Mrs. Rumbold: Between April 1979 and April 1989 national average earnings rose by 28 per cent. in real terms, and teachers' average salaries by 30 per cent. in real terms. Over the same period the real terms increase in average non-manual earnings outside the public sector was 43 per cent. for men and 48 per cent. for women. A combined figure is not available.

Pupils (Exclusion)

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will establish a national system for the collection of information about the exclusion of pupils from schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is introducing a national system for reporting to him all permanent exclusions from maintained primary, secondary and special schools and from grant-maintained schools during the two-year period from the beginning of the summer term 1990. Heads, governors and local education authorities, as appropriate, will be asked to provide the Secretary of State with information on the background to such cases and on the decisions reached about the pupils concerned, who will not be named in these reports. In the light of this information, my right hon. Friend will decide on the future of the existing statutory provisions on exclusion.

Governing Bodies

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will identify by name and by size of governing body in each case only those colleges and polytechnics in the PCFC sector for which he has agreed revised instruments of government under the Education Reform Act 1988 where the size of the governing body is in excess of 21 persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his reply, 29 January 1990, c. 29-30]:* Information given in the previous answer was not completely up to date. Additional nominee members were appointed to the governing bodies of a further seven institutions subsequent to the appointment of the other members of their boards. The following institutions, therefore, should also have been listed as having governing bodies in excess of 21 persons:—

Institutions	*Number*
Bath College of Higher Education	22
Bolton Institute of Higher Education	22
Bristol Polytechnic	22
Kent Institute of Art and Design	22
Kingston Polytechnic	22
Portsmouth Polytechnic	25
Worcester College of Higher Education	25

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state, on the same basis as his reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), 7 June 1988, *Official Report* columns *521-22*, the total amount of child benefit, together with the number of families and children in respect of which it is paid, and the percentage which each figure represents for the income bands *(a)* under £5,000, *(b)* £5,000-10,000, *(c)* £10,000-15,000, *(d)* £15,000-20,000, *(e)* £20,000-25,000, *(f)* £25,000-50,000, *(g)* £50,000-100,000 and *(h)* £100,000 and over.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the incomes of families receiving child benefit is not routinely collected. The following estimates of the distribution of gross incomes of recipient families in 1989-90 are therefore made on the basis of sample survey data which are subject to normal sampling and response variation.

Band of Gross Income	*Families receiving Child Benefit*		*Number of Children*		*Child Benefit Expenditure*	
	(000s)	*Per cent.*	*(000s)*	*Per cent.*	*(£ million)*	*Per cent.*
Under £5,000	430	6·3	490	4·1	180	4·1
£ 5–10,000	1,740	25·7	3,340	27·8	1,260	27·8
£10–15,000	1,520	22·4	2,620	21·9	990	21·9
£15–20,000	1,380	20·4	2,520	21·0	950	21·0
£20–25,000	740	10·9	1,340	11·2	510	11·2
£25–50,000	870	12·8	1,500	12·5	560	12·5
Above £50,000	100	1·5	190	1·6	70	1·6
Total	6,760	100	12,000	100	4,530	100

Notes:

1. Estimates are based on the 1985 and 1986 Family Expenditure Surveys, supplemented by the Survey of Personal Incomes, and updated to 1989-90 levels of earnings and benefit rates.
2. Income is measured on a gross basis, and is the family's total income from all sources including benefits.
3. No detailed breakdown is possible for an income band above £50,000 because of small sample sizes.
4. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10,000.
5. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation in his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information about losses of items from the Department's offices relate to the 1988-89 financial year when the value of these losses came to £106,744.

Benefits Leaflet

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make leaflet FB2 generally available in post offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Social Security leaflet FB2 "Which benefit?" is displayed in all main post offices (about 1,900 offices). Copies are also sent to around 19,000 sub-post offices, but there is no obligation for sub-postmasters/mistresses to either display them or to make copies available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each parliamentary constituency in Lancashire details of the number of people presently receiving housing benefit and income support together with housing benefit; and what are the costs involved.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information is not collected on a constituency basis. The table shows the available information by local authority area. Blackpool includes the constituencies of Blackpool, North and Blackpool, South, and Lancaster City covers the constituencies of Lancaster, and Morecambe and Lunesdale.

Local authorities	*Housing benefit only* *Numbers*	*Housing benefit income support* *Numbers*	*Local authority estimated cost* *£ million*
Blackburn	5,200	8,905	11·8
Blackpool	7,359	10,954	16·3
Burnley	3,084	5,048	7·3
Chorley	2,694	3,841	5·3
Fylde	2,369	2,643	3·7
Hyndburn	3,068	3,962	6·1
Lancaster City	4,577	7,121	14·6
Pendle	2,615	4,266	5·5
Preston	4,946	7,661	13·0
Ribble Valley	1,194	1,007	1·4
Rossendale	2,506	3,116	5·3
South Ribble	2,765	3,073	4·3
West Lancashire	5,126	6,904	10·9
Wyre	5,717	4,774	4·9

Note: Expenditure information is not available by recipient group.
Source: Local authority caseload returns and expenditure estimates.

DSS Offices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will open new Department of Social Security offices close to current Department of Trade and Industry regional offices in Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to open new DSS offices near the regional offices of the Department of Trade and Industry in Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers will benefit from the increase of the invalid care allowance earnings limit from £12 to £20.

Mr. Scott: I regret this information is not available. It is likely that a small number of carers earning between £12 and £20 per week will be able to qualify for invalid care allowance for the first time. Data are not collected on the numbers of existing recipients currently earning less than £12 who stand to gain by increasing their earnings to the new limit.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the cost of the increase in the invalid care allowance earnings limit from £12 to £20.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 13 December 1989 at columns *663-64*.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to publicise the increase in the earnings limit for the invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: We shall be publishing a revised version of the invalid care allowance leaflet in April, and we are considering what additional publicity we might provide to bring the increased earnings limit to the attention of those who might benefit.

Carer's Premium

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what data the Government have used to estimate that 30,000 carers will benefit from the introduction of a carer's premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimate was derived from information on recipients of invalid care allowance in the income support annual statistical inquiry.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans there are to publicise the introduction of a carer's premium;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that people who have not previously claimed invalid care allowance because of the overlapping benefit rules will now do so in order to benefit from the introduction of a carer's premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: People in receipt of invalid care allowance who get income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit will be awarded the new carer's premium automatically. For other people, we will be publishing revised versions of leaflets. We will also revise the guide to non-contributory benefits for disabled people, which is intended for advisers and members of the public who have a particular interest in disabled people. We are giving careful consideration to the question of additional publicity.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the carer's premium will be awarded in addition to any other premium; and whether *(a)* people who start caring after reaching pension age and *(b)* pensioners who were carers before reaching pension age but did not claim invalid care allowance, will be able to receive the carer's premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The carer's premium will be awarded in addition to any other premium for which the claimant qualifies. The premium cannot be paid to people who start caring after reaching pension age, or who did not claim invalid care allowance before reaching that age.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people who would receive the carer's premium with *(a)* income support and *(b)* housing benefit/community charge benefit if the premium was awarded to all claimants caring for someone receiving attendance allowance for at least 35 hours a week and not earning more than £20 a week, regardless of whether they were in receipt of invalid care allowance.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information needed to make such an estimate is not available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates will be the cost of the additional pensions payable with invalidity benefit at 1989-90 prices in each of the tax years 1990-91, 2000-01, 2010-11, and 2020-21 *(a)* if clause 4 of the Social Security Bill is enacted *(b)* if the present position with regards to the computation of additional pension for the purposes of invalidity pension remains unchanged and *(c)* if the Bill is amended to provide for guaranteed minimum pensions in respect of tax years after 1990-91 to be deducted from the additional pension payable with invalidity pension but no other change is made with regard to the computation of additional pension for purposes of invalidity pension; and, in each case, what proportion of the cost he estimates will relate to persons then aged 60 years and over.

Mr. Scott: Projections of expenditure on additional pension with invalidity benefit at 1989-90 prices under current legislation and under the clause 4 proposals are as follows. These estimates are subject to considerable margins of uncertainty, particularly in the longer term.

Year	*Current Legislation* £ million	*Clause 4 Proposals* £ million
1990-91	565	565
2000-01	1,850	1,375
2010-11	2,225	1,200
2020-21	2,500	975

The figures illustrating the effect of the proposals in "The Way Ahead" show the gross effect on expenditure. The net effect of the proposals on social security spending will be less because of offsetting changes in invalidity allowance and income-related benefits.

I regret that information to answer *(c)* or to apportion the costs between persons under and over age 60 is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to the reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), *Official Report*, 5 February, column *524*, by what percentage those portions of the income support, introduced in April 1989 to cover the 20 per cent. of the average community charge, will be increased in the April 1990 uprating; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Income-related benefit levels will generally be uprated by 5·2 per cent. from April.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* all departmental circulars issued by his Department in connection with the community charge giving in each case the date of issue and an outline of the contents; and if he will indicate whether or not copies of such have been placed in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is as follows:

HB(88)15 November 1988
COMMUNITY CHARGE REBATE: SCOTLAND
Describes arrangements for introduction of the Community Charge Rebate scheme in Scotland.

HB(89)2 20 January 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE REBATES
Guidance and information on the Community Charge Rebate scheme in Scotland.

HB(89)8 17 March 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE REBATES AND DEDUCTIONS FROM INCOME SUPPORT
Explains the provision of various Regulations and outlines the timetable for consultation on the Community Charge Benefit Regulations for Great Britain.

HB/CCB(89)11 24 May 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS (TRANSITIONAL) ORDER 1989
Gives details of the draft Regulations and draft Order.
HB/CCB(89)16 6 September 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS (TRANSITIONAL) ORDER 1989
Gives details of the Regulations and Order, arrangements for the introduction of Community Charge Benefit.

HB/CCB(89)17 13 September 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE ARREARS—DEDUCTIONS FROM INCOME SUPPORT
Explains the arrangements for the recovery of community charge arrears from Income Support payments for Scotland.

HB/CCB(89)18 22 September 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS—LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS
Sets out the liaison arrangements for the introduction of the Community Charge Benefit Scheme in England and Wales.

HB/CCB(89)20 1 November 1989
HOUSING BENEFITS AND COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS: 1990 UPRATING
Advises local authorities of the proposed new rates of social security benefits from April 1990.

HB/CCB(89)22 13 December 1989
HOUSING BENEFIT AND COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFIT GUIDANCE MANUAL
Informs authorities of the Department of Social Security's intention to publish a combined Guidance Manual covering both Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit.
HB/CCB(89)23 19 December 1989
HOUSING BENEFIT AND COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFIT
Gives advice on various aspects of Housing Benefit and amends some details given in HB/CCB(89)20.
HB/CCB(89)24 15 December 1989
COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFITS—MONITORING LOCAL AUTHORITY PREPARATIONS
Asks authorities in England and Wales to complete a questionnaire showing how far advanced authorities are with their preparations for the introduction of the Community Charge Benefit scheme.
HB/CCB(89)25 14 December 1989
AMENDMENTS TO THE HOUSING BENEFIT (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1987 AND THE HOUSING BENEFIT (COMMUNITY CHARGE REBATES) SCOTLAND REGULATIONS 1988: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR HAEMOPHILIACS INFECTED WITH HIV
Advises of the Department's intention to introduce amending Regulations to the above provisions to allow a full disregard of any payments from the Macfarlane Special

Payments Trust to HIV infected haemophiliacs and their families.

Copies of all circulars have been placed in the Library.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people lost entitlement to unemployment benefit when the age limit at which occupational pensions affect entitlement was lowered in January 1989; how many had benefit reduced; how many subsequently sought a review and had money refunded; and whether he will make it his policy that all those who lost benefits will receive the correct entitlement via an extra-statutory payment if Mrs. D. Morris's case is upheld by the social security commissioner.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that, in a full year, 45,000 people will lose entitlement to unemployment benefit as a result of the age limit change. Of these, 14,000 would lose some, and 31,000 all, benefit. Following the local appeal tribunal decision in the case of Mrs. Doreen Morris, 1,552 people had, as at 31 December 1989, requested a review of their benefit disallowance. Further action will be considered once the decision of the social security commissioners is known.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Package Travel

94. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the proposed European Community draft directive on package travel.

Mr. Forth: EC Ministers reached a common position on a proposal for an EC directive on package travel at the 21-22 December Internal Market Council, subject to finalisation of the recitals and amendments to the text. The common position is expected to be formally agreed by the Council in the near future. Thereafter, it will be subject to the EC co-operation procedure, whereby the European Parliament may give its opinion on the proposal before the Commission can put the draft directive to the Council for consideration of its final adoption.

Post Office Vehicles

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many bicycles the Post Office operates; and how many bicycles are maintained in house and how many by private contractors;

(2) how many vehicles the Post Office operates; how many are operated on long lease hire and maintenance contracts; and if he will list those postal districts where Post Office vehicles are maintained by a private contractor.

Mr. Forth: These are operational matters for the Post Office. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Estate Agents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any proposals for extending the Sale of Goods Act to estate agents; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no proposals to extend the provisions of the Sale of Goods Act 1979 to sales of land and has not received any representations on this matter.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on requiring estate agents to disclose personal interests in properties or sales and stopping them favouring bids which use mortgages or other services in which the estate agent has a personal interest; what proposals he has for legislation or regulations on these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers, and the National Consumer Council, have copied to me their responses to the Director General of Fair Trading's consultation document on estate agency which includes proposals on disclosure of personal interests and on tie-in sales. The director general will be reporting the conclusions of this consultation shortly. I will study the director general's report most carefully, and consider what action may be necessary to give effect to any recommendations he may make.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received in support of and against the recommendations of the Dylis Gane report of 1984 on the self-policing of amateur radio bands; and if he will list the relevant organisations that are opposed to these recommendations.

Mr. Forth: The Gane report of 1984 was an internal Department of Trade and Industry efficiency scrutiny document dealing with the work of the radio investigation service. The report contained proposals for reordering the priorities of the radio investigation service. The thrust of the section dealing with radio amateurs was that amateurs should take on greater responsibility for resolving interference problems. That policy has been implemented and the Department has received representations both for and against this policy from organisations and individuals: it would not be practicable to list them.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the amateur radio observation network operated by the Radio Society of Great Britain is currently operational; and if he will list any occasions on which it has not been operational.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for the Radio Society of Great Britain.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the amateur broadcasting licence fee is allocated to the radio investigation service; and what is the annual cost of that service.

Mr. Forth: The radio investigation service budget for 1988-89 was £6,284,000. Over 60 per cent. of the radio amateur licence fee represents the direct costs of licensing and enforcement. In addition all licensees benefit from the work of the radio investigation service in seeking to prevent interference and abuse of radio across the spectrum.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps the radio investigation service is taking to prevent abuse on amateur radio repeaters.

Mr. Forth: The radio investigation service is currently holding discussions with the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB), which is the licensee for amateur repeater stations, about the minority of radio amateurs who act irresponsibly when using this service.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is giving any consideration to the shutting down of the amateur radio repeater network until the problem of abuse has been resolved.

Mr. Forth: No. The majority of amateur radio repeaters are used by responsible licensees.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which parts of the United Kingdom had, for the purposes of the EC's structural funds' provisions, per capita gross domestic product of less than 50 per cent. of the Community average in the latest available year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Gas Supplies (Contract Customers)

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether British Gas has offered undertakings about contracting for new gas fields following the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the supply of gas to contract customers.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I have now accepted undertakings given by British Gas following discussions with the Director General of Fair Trading in the light of the Government's decision announced on 27 April 1989 about contracting for new gas fields. The undertakings are as follows:

1. British Gas plc ("British Gas") hereby undertakes to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that it will in good faith give constructive support to the efforts of gas producers towards the achievement of the target that 10 per cent. of the gas coming forward from new gas fields and contracted to be sold after 31 May 1989 should be supplied to the industrial and commercial market in the United Kingdom by suppliers other than British Gas by:

(i) not purchasing more than 90 per cent. of the gas on offer to it in the period 1 June 1989 to 31 May 1991;

(ii) not requiring, in contracts for the purchase of gas entered into after 1 June 1989 under which British Gas does not buy the whole of the recoverable reserves of a field, the inclusion of terms which would unreasonably constrain the ability of the gas producers to dispose of the gas not sold to British Gas into the industrial and commercial market in the United Kingdom;

(iii) expeditiously co-operating in setting up and conducting negotiations for the securing of rights to have gas conveyed in its pipelines under Section 19 of the Gas Act 1986 (common carriage). In particular British Gas will, within four weeks of any application to it for such rights containing sufficient information for the purpose, provide to the applicant a full response thereto setting out the terms and conditions (including price) offered by it for the exercise of such rights or, as the case may be, an explanation of the reasons why such application cannot in full or in part be complied with. In the case of exceptionally complicated applications to which it is not possible to provide a full response within four weeks, British Gas will provide whatever information it can within that time and undertakes to provide a full response without unnecessary delay;

(iv) not otherwise doing anything calculated to obstruct the achievement of the target.

2. For the purpose of this Undertaking, in assessing the achievement of the 10% target level there shall be taken into account both gas coming from the United Kingdom Continental Shelf and gas imported from foreign sources.

3. British Gas will provide to the Director General of Fair Trading any information to which it has access which the Director General may require to assist the Government in ascertaining whether the target level has been achieved or the undertaking in paragraph 1 fulfilled.

The Government are very pleased that British Gas has given these undertakings which are a declaration of good faith by British Gas that it will co-operate in establishing competitive suppliers of gas. I would like to emphasise again the importance which the Government attach to the development of competition in the supply of gas to business users and their determination to encourage the emergence of such competition. This should give greater confidence to gas producers and independent gas suppliers selling gas directly to the market in competition with British Gas. I hope that they will take advantage of this new opportunity. If they have any concerns about the development of competition in the market they should make representations to the Director General of Fair Trading who will be able to look into the matter.

Flame-retardant Covers

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to compensate retailers and small business men who have to destroy stock which does not have flame-retardant covers from 1 March.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* I have no plans to do so. It would be very difficult to justify the payment of public money to retailers and small businesses for complying with a safety requirement of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations, which was announced almost two years ago, after a full consultation.

ENERGY

Petrol Prices

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the average equivalent pump price per litre and per gallon of *(a)* diesel, *(b)* leaded petrol and *(c)* unleaded petrol for each month since January 1989 (i) excluding Government taxes and duties, (ii) excluding Government taxes and duties and retailers' margin and (iii) including all Government taxes and duties, in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), of 27 July 1989, *Official Report*, columns *807-08*.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department of Energy does not have data on retailers' margins. Figures from the Commission of the European Communities on the pump price of diesel and on premium grade leaded petrol are given for each month of 1989 available at present. Comparable figures for unleaded are not available.

The figures are as follows:

Price in Pence/Litre

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
PUMP PRICE OF DIESEL										
Excluding government taxes and duties										
Belgium	12·10	11·54	11·86	12·84	12·37	13·07	12·81	12·98	14·33	15·13
Denmark	14·78	14·46	13·69	15·16	14·49	15·06	14·66	15·09	14·50	16·86
West Germany	10·77	11·16	11·26	13·04	11·81	10·99	11·28	12·18	13·40	13·57
Greece	10·04	8·97	9·23	10·47	10·47	10·78	10·00	10·10	11·28	12·93
Spain	12·52	12·66	12·52	13·73	13·48	13·72	13·04	13·26	13·91	14·73
France	11·23	11·21	11·65	12·63	12·42	12·34	11·37	11·40	11·76	n/a
Ireland	14·57	15·72	15·71	15·85	16·08	16·69	16·62	17·54	18·15	19·60
Italy	11·71	11·74	11·89	13·23	13·34	12·84	12·20	12·40	12·78	14·11
Luxembourg	11·46	11·46	11·65	12·17	12·17	12·60	12·56	12·66	12·61	13·92
Netherlands	12·53	12·08	12·27	13·08	12·00	12·75	12·31	13·76	13·97	15·50
Portugal	11·74	12·75	13·31	13·62	13·66	16·23	16·54	16·30	14·63	16·04
United Kingdom	12·42	13·17	13·22	14·08	14·06	13·95	13·90	13·75	14·02	15·17
Including government taxes and duties										
Belgium	26·18	25·49	26·07	27·40	26·81	28·10	27·73	29·99	31·61	33·25
Denmark	35·68	35·20	34·47	36·51	35·66	37·07	36·48	37·15	36·34	40·13
West Germany	27·77	28·25	28·60	30·81	29·36	29·05	29·27	30·43	31·73	32·77
Greece	13·84	13·76	13·86	13·85	13·85	14·26	14·07	14·22	14·11	14·38
Spain	26·94	27·14	27·47	27·80	27·71	27·91	30·49	30·82	30·73	31·61
France	30·08	30·09	30·95	32·29	32·05	32·57	31·31	31·55	31·93	n/a
Ireland	41·04	42·45	42·81	43·19	43·50	45·15	44·96	46·24	46·88	49·85
Italy	31·45	31·53	32·43	33·32	33·58	35·08	34·79	35·36	35·74	40·17
Luxembourg	19·88	19·89	20·21	20·86	20·85	21·60	21·53	21·70	21·61	23·42
Netherlands	24·03	23·51	23·88	24·92	23·65	24·92	24·30	26·10	26·32	28·62
Portugal	27·68	27·68	27·95	28·13	28·11	28·99	28·69	32·83	32·66	33·53
United Kingdom	34·17	35·03	35·09	36·08	36·05	35·93	35·86	35·70	36·00	37·33
PUMP PRICE OF PREMIUM GASOLINE										
Excluding government taxes and duties										
Belgium	12·41	13·11	13·22	16·72	17·68	16·09	14·56	13·92	15·62	16·10
Denmark	12·61	13·37	13·93	16·58	17·79	17·54	15·92	15·01	14·82	16·57
West Germany	11·11	12·08	12·32	16·49	16·30	15·26	14·01	13·65	14·96	14·94
Greece	9·85	10·38	11·05	13·99	13·99	14·40	13·07	13·21	12·78	13·38
Spain	12·26	12·87	13·31	14·66	14·64	14·75	15·39	14·20	14·76	15·41
France	10·24	10·34	10·90	13·75	14·96	14·77	13·00	12·08	12·05	n/a
Ireland	14·36	14·11	14·49	14·61	16·45	17·07	17·00	16·81	17·14	18·40
Italy	12·34	12·37	13·03	15·73	16·46	17·37	15·79	14·82	14·77	15·73
Luxembourg	12·85	12·85	14·02	15·74	16·94	17·54	17·07	16·37	16·31	16·48
Netherlands	12·86	13·55	14·53	17·96	17·49	17·56	15·50	15·85	16·02	16·81
Portugal	13·68	14·32	14·28	15·62	15·37	18·24	18·79	18·94	17·44	19·38
United Kingdom	11·86	12·86	13·34	15·33	16·80	16·69	15·64	14·27	15·03	15·11
Including government taxes and duties										
Belgium	37·44	38·32	38·82	43·41	44·60	43·42	41·44	42·38	44·41	46·15
Denmark	52·06	52·83	54·01	57·76	59·22	59·54	57·36	56·48	56·09	60·03
West Germany	35·36	36·47	37·11	42·09	41·85	41·59	39·99	39·76	40·98	42·38
Greece	28·42	28·25	28·47	28·44	28·44	29·28	28·90	29·20	28·98	29·52
Spain	36·25	36·52	36·96	37·40	37·29	37·55	40·83	41·26	41·14	42·32
France	44·63	44·89	46·19	49·95	51·38	52·36	50·06	49·35	49·22	n/a
Ireland	48·10	48·65	49·63	50·06	52·40	54·38	54·16	54·09	54·34	57·49
Italy	56·80	56·95	57·66	58·25	58·71	61·32	60·82	61·81	61·61	66·17
Luxembourg	30·70	30·71	32·28	34·36	35·71	36·98	36·41	35·75	35·61	36·60
Netherlands	42·58	43·44	44·95	49·28	48·74	50·71	48·03	48·67	48·77	51·18
Portugal	44·51	44·51	44·94	45·23	45·21	46·61	46·13	50·81	50·55	51·90
United Kingdom	37·14	38·30	38·85	41·14	42·83	42·70	41·49	39·92	40·79	40·89

Pump Prices in Pence/Gallon

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
PUMP PRICE OF DIESEL										
Excluding government taxes and duties										
Belgium	55·01	52·47	53·93	58·37	56·24	59·44	58·24	59·02	65·13	68·79
Denmark	67·20	65·72	62·22	68·90	65·87	68·47	66·64	68·61	65·90	76·67
West Germany	48·98	50·71	51·20	59·28	53·67	49·97	51·30	55·38	60·91	61·70
Greece	45·64	40·79	41·98	47·61	47·62	49·02	45·45	45·93	51·27	58·78
Spain	56·90	57·57	56·93	62·43	61·30	62·39	59·26	60·27	63·25	66·96
France	51·03	50·96	52·97	57·40	56·47	56·09	51·71	51·85	53·46	n/a
Ireland	66·25	71·46	71·44	72·06	73·09	75·86	75·54	79·73	82·50	89·09
Italy	53·26	53·39	54·07	60·15	60·63	58·37	55·46	56·36	58·08	64·15
Luxembourg	52·10	52·11	52·97	55·32	55·31	57·29	57·12	57·55	57·33	63·30
Netherlands	56·97	54·92	55·79	59·48	54·58	57·96	55·96	62·56	63·49	70·48
Portugal	53·36	57·96	60·49	61·93	62·12	73·77	75·19	74·09	66·49	72·94
United Kingdom	56·46	59·82	59·87	63·87	63·91	63·41	63·18	62·50	63·73	68·96
Including government taxes and duties										
Belgium	119·02	115·86	118·52	124·55	121·88	127·72	126·06	136·32	143·71	151·16
Denmark	162·21	160·00	156·69	165·99	162·11	168·52	165·86	168·87	165·18	182·45
West Germany	126·23	128·40	130·02	140·04	133·46	132·07	133·05	138·36	144·23	148·97
Greece	62·92	62·55	63·03	62·96	62·97	64·83	63·98	64·66	64·15	65·35
Spain	122·49	123·39	124·89	126·38	125·99	126·89	138·61	140·10	139·69	143·69
France	136·77	136·80	140·70	146·80	145·69	148·06	142·36	143·41	145·14	n/a
Ireland	186·57	192·97	194·63	196·32	197·76	205·25	204·41	210·21	213·12	226·63
Italy	142·97	143·34	147·44	151·48	152·68	159·47	158·16	160·75	162·49	182·61
Luxembourg	90·38	90·40	91·89	94·81	94·80	98·19	97·90	98·64	98·25	106·49
Netherlands	109·25	106·88	108·57	113·27	107·50	113·28	110·48	118·67	119·64	130·09
Portugal	125·83	125·82	127·06	127·88	127·80	131·77	130·41	149·24	148·48	152·44
United Kingdom	155·34	159·18	159·23	164·00	163·91	163·33	163·04	162·28	163·64	169·70
PUMP PRICES OF PREMIUM GASOLINE										
Excluding government taxes and duties										
Belgium	56·41	59·61	60·11	76·01	80·37	73·13	66·20	63·27	71·03	73·18
Denmark	57·32	60·79	63·35	75·36	80·87	79·76	72·38	68·25	67·37	75·32
West Germany	50·51	54·89	56·01	74·97	74·08	69·39	63·68	62·06	68·01	67·91
Greece	44·77	47·21	50·24	63·60	63·61	65·49	59·41	60·04	58·09	60·83
Spain	55·75	58·52	60·49	66·62	66·57	67·06	69·98	64·56	67·10	70·07
France	46·54	46·99	49·54	62·51	67·99	67·15	59·10	54·92	54·77	n/a
Ireland	65·27	64·15	65·85	66·42	74·77	77·60	77·28	76·41	77·93	83·64
Italy	56·09	56·23	59·23	71·53	74·84	78·97	71·76	67·37	67·15	71·49
Luxembourg	58·41	58·43	63·72	71·55	77·00	79·76	77·61	74·44	74·15	74·91
Netherlands	58·45	61·58	66·07	81·63	79·52	79·82	70·47	72·04	72·81	76·40
Portugal	62·20	65·08	64·91	71·00	69·89	82·92	85·41	86·09	79·29	88·09
United Kingdom	53·92	58·45	60·64	69·68	76·36	75·87	71·09	64·86	68·32	68·69
Including government taxes and duties										
Belgium	170·19	174·22	176·49	197·33	202·78	197·38	188·40	192·66	201·88	209·80
Denmark	236·66	240·18	245·56	262·57	269·20	270·70	260·76	256·74	255·01	272·88
West Germany	160·75	165·77	168·71	191·34	190·25	189·05	181·80	180·75	186·30	192·64
Greece	129·21	128·44	129·42	129·29	129·31	133·13	131·37	132·77	131·73	134·20
Spain	164·81	166·02	168·04	170·04	169·52	170·72	185·60	187·59	187·04	192·40
France	202·90	204·06	209·99	227·08	233·57	238·03	227·57	224·35	223·75	n/a
Ireland	218·65	221·17	225·60	227·56	238·21	247·23	246·21	245·89	247·06	261·36
Italy	258·23	258·88	262·11	264·81	266·90	278·77	276·47	281·00	280·09	300·83
Luxembourg	139·56	139·59	146·76	156·20	162·33	168·13	165·51	162·51	161·88	166·39
Netherlands	193·59	197·47	204·35	224·02	221·59	230·51	218·34	221·27	221·70	232·65
Portugal	202·35	202·33	204·32	205·64	205·53	211·91	209·71	230·97	229·79	235·92
United Kingdom	168·84	174·12	176·60	187·03	194·71	194·10	188·63	181·48	185·42	185·88

HEALTH

Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for England for each year since 1974-75 (i) total National Health Service expenditure, (ii) current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iii) capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iv) expenditure on the family practitioner services, (v) expenditure on centrally funded National Health Service services, and (vi) expenditure on personal social services, giving each in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and *(c)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will place in the Library details of the methods used to make these adjustments.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1959 *(a)* the total amount spent on health and *(b)* the capital expenditure, giving the figures at constant prices.

Mr. Freeman: Information, which is readily available only from 1974-75, has been placed in the Library.

Hospital Patients (Mortality)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital patients have died as a result of catching infection whilst in hospital for treatment for other conditions during each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The exact information requested is not available. The number of deaths with the underlying cause of post-operative infection, England and Wales, 1984-88, is shown in the table.

Deaths from post operative infection,[1] England and Wales, 1984-88

Year	Deaths
1984	13
1985	12
1986	15
1987	11
[2]1988	15

[1]International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, code 998.5.
[2]Provisional data.

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the effect on services for mentally ill patients of the Government's proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Freeman: We have received several representations and are considering them all carefully.

Statutory Child Care

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many current cases there are of statutory child care; how many are not supervised by local authority social workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Particulars of the number of children in the care of local authorities under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, the Child Care Act 1980, and other legislation are published in the document "Children in Care in England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library. Particulars of the numbers of children on child protection registers—some of whom are also in the care of local authorities—are contained in the "Survey of Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers", copies of which are also available in the Library. Information is not collected centrally about the numbers of child care cases not supervised by local authority social workers.

Sight Tests

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish figures indicating the change in the number of sight tests since 1 April 1989, nationally and regionally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Data on the number of National Health Service eye tests carried out between April and September 1989 will be available in the spring. We do not collect statistics on the numbers of private sight tests carried out since April 1989. An independent sample survey has been commissioned relating to the first quarter of 1990. The results of that survey should be available in the early summer.

British Medical Association

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the British Medical Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met representatives of the British Medical Association formally on 18 October 1989, when he had a friendly and constructive discussion about the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients". The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Lords) and I met representatives of the British Medical Association on 7 February to discuss the question of junior doctors' hours of work.

GPs' Contracts

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of the new general practitioners' contracts.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of the new general practitioners' contracts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will monitor the GPs' new contract through family practitioner committees by collecting information about the services provided, by analysing claims for payment made by GPs and through research studies.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were inpatient and outpatient waiting lists *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* currently; and what is his estimate for 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The inpatient waiting list for England fell from 752,422 at 31 March 1979 to 704,724 at 31 March 1989, the latest date for which firm figures are available. Provisional figures for September 1989 suggest there has been a further reduction, particularly in the number of patients waiting over a year. We do not make forward estimates of the size of the waiting list, since this is subject to unpredictable factors such as variations in demand. No information is held centrally on numbers awaiting outpatient appointments.

Patient Involvement

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to increase the involvement of patients in the running of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to increase the involvement of patients in the running of the National Health Service.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to increase the involvement of patients in the running of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie), for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), and for Wigan (Mr. Stott) on 23 January at column 662.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to meet the chairmen of the regional health authorities; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend's next meeting with chairmen of regional health authorities is on 21 March 1990 when the items for discussion will include the implementation of the NHS reforms and other matters of topical interest.

Acute Hospitals

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *235*, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and locations of the acute hospitals in England with fewer than 600 beds in total, indicating which regional health authority is responsible for each.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Consultants

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants now work in the Rugby health authority area; and how many did so in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to ask the West Midlands regional health authority which holds the contracts for consultants working in Rugby

General Practitioners

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the proposed pay increases for general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received one letter on the GPs' pay increase.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make an up-to-date statement about the ambulance dispute.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 18 January 1990 at column *402*.

Osteoporosis

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of resources his Department is committing to making women aware of the preventive effects of hormone replacement therapy with respect to osteoporosis.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department provided in 1989-90 funding totalling £63,000 to three voluntary organisations which inform women about hormone replacement therapy (HRT)—Women's Health Concern, the National Osteoporosis Society, and the Amarant Trust. The Health Education Authority has also produced a booklet on the menopause, which includes information on HRT and osteoporosis. The Department is also providing funding for research and recently gave funds to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists towards holding a study group of experts on HRT and osteoporosis. The Department and health authorities allocate funds for the provision of courses and other educational activities for general practitioners, including courses on HRT and osteoporosis.

Pharmaceutical Investment

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the report, "Pharmaceutical Investment in the United Kingdom: the impact of the proposals in the White Paper, Working for Patients", submitted to his Department by the Economist Advisory Group.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report, which was commissioned on behalf of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of the USA, acknowledges the attractions over the years of the United Kingdom as a place for investment, highlighting research activities in view of this country's strengths in pure science and pharmaceutical innovation. While some concern was reported about future manufacturing investment, there is no reason why these attractions should disappear.

Information Technology

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on working paper No. 11 on information and information technology in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: One response to the document has been received to date, about the needs of regional and supra-regional services, which will be taken into account as part of the consultation, the closing date for which is 30 March 1990.

Community Pharmacies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish Alan Glanz's report on the role of community pharmacies in AIDS prevention and drug misuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The report was published on 8 February 1990 and copies have been placed in the Library.

The report indicates that the involvement of community pharmacies in preventive health education activities for drug misusers could be an effective way of making contact with those who are at high risk of HIV infection.

We welcome this news and acknowledge the good will displayed by many pharmacists who are prepared to supply injecting equipment to drug misusers, give out information materials and offer advice. Where the report has identified problems hindering the involvement of pharmacists, we are considering ways of making progress.

Almost £15 million has been allocated to health authorities in 1989-90 for the expansion and development of drug services in the light of HIV. We would expect that money from this allocation could be used for both the provision of individual sharps containers for drug users to place their used equipment in, and also the provision and servicing of larger sharps containers sited in pharmacies.

Pharmacists' training needs are currently being considered by the Department in conjunction with the relevant professional bodies, and we have encouraged liaison between pharmacists and local drugs services through the drug advisory committees established in every health district.

HIV

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe of 8 February, what steps have been taken to obtain evidence on the disadvantage after the infection has been discovered in respect of employment prospects and ability to obtain life insurance and mortgages, suffered by people who became infected with HIV via blood transfusions; and what comparisons have been undertaken between the situations of such people in the post-infection phase and that of haemophiliacs in the post-infection stage.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not believe that any useful purpose would be served by such a survey of the financial circumstances after infection of any particular group with HIV. Our ex-gratia payments to haemophiliacs recognise their wholly exceptional circumstances whereby they were doubly disadvantaged by their pre-existing haemophilia as well as the HIV infection. We have no plans to extend these special arrangements to other groups.

The full facilities of the National Health Service and a range of social security benefits are available to all those infected with HIV who suffer illness, unemployment or loss of earnings.

NHS Pay Increases

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what will be the total cost to health authorities of the increases in pay for hospital doctors from April; and how much of that sum will be provided by additional central Government funding;

(2) what will be the total cost to health authorities of the increases in pay for nurses from April; and how much of that sum will be provided by additional central Government funding.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The total cost in 1990-91 of pay increases for National Health Service review body staff groups is £884 million in the United Kingdom. The cost of the increases for nurses and midwives is £523 million, and for hospital doctors and dentists it is £146 million. Of the total United Kingdom cost, £635 million is already within existing National Health Service provision, and an additional £205 million will be provided from the reserve. This additional funding is not specifically apportioned between the different National Health Service review body groups.

Families

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average family size in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and the European Economic Community as a whole in 1970 and each five years thereafter, including data for 1989 or the latest available date.

Mr. Freeman: The table gives total period fertility rates —which are the only available reasonably comparable measures of average family sizes for the areas concerned. The total period fertility rate is the average number of children which would be born per woman if women experienced the age-specific fertility rates, as recorded at a particular point in time, throughout their entire childbearing lifespan.

Country	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*Latest estimate*
United Kingdom	2·45	1·81	1·89	1·80	1·84 (1988)
France	2·48	1·93	1·95	1·82	1·82 (1987)
West Germany	2·02	1·45	1·44	1·28	1·35 (1986)
Italy	2·43	2·21	1·69	1·41	1·41 (1985)
European Economic Community	—	—	—	—	[1]1·61 (1987)

[1] Estimate.
Source: Eurostat, Population and Social Conditions, 1989.

"Caring for People"

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the percentage set out in chart 6 of "Caring for People" (Cm. 849) as the estimated cumulative rate of transfer will be affected if the costs of the continuing commitment to residents with preserved rights are higher than has been estimated.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 1 February 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

The transfer of resources from the Department of Social Security to local authorities will be determined in the 1990 public expenditure survey. Any subsequent changes in the amounts required by DSS in respect of residents with preserved rights will be a matter for future surveys and will not therefore affect the transfer.

TRANSPORT

Ports

89. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on labour efficiency in the ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The abolition of the dock labour scheme has created the conditions for more efficient working in the ports. The effects of this reform have still to finish working through the ports industry.

90. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the effects of the abolition of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 5 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) at column *183*.

91. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received of the progress of the docks in Hull since the end of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: None; but I would not expect any. However, according to press reports new flexible working arrangements have led to the reopening of the container terminal under new management, with a weekly service to Scandinavia, and to the establishment of new bulk trades at the port.

Taxis

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many hackney carriage and private hire drivers were granted licences in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1989;

(2) what is the total number of licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers in England and Wales.

Mr. Portillo: The licensing of hackney carriage and private hire drivers belongs to district councils. Statistics are not collected by central Government.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hackney carriage and private hire driving licences were revoked in the last year for which records are available; and what were the most common reasons.

Mr. Portillo: District councils have powers to revoke licences for a variety of reasons. They have not been asked to supply central Government with statistics on revocations.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received regarding the protection of passengers in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles from drivers who have prison convictions for offences of a sexual or violent nature.

Mr. Portillo: Since October 1989 I have received five representations on the threat to passengers in hackney carriages and private hire vehicles from drivers who may have had criminal convictions.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider making statutory provision for a declaration of previous offences of a sexual or violent nature by all applicants for hackney carriage or private hire licences.

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to make such a provision. Local licensing authorities already have powers under legislation which enable them to require the submission of information by applicants as a means of assessing their suitability.

Bradford-Leeds Railway (Electrification)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive proposals from the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority concerning the electrification of the Bradford to Leeds railway and associated works; when he expects to reach a decision on such proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The West Yorkshire passenger transport executive has recently approached the Department of Transport about this project, which will be considered on its merits. More details will be needed before any decision can be taken.

Company Cars

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport *(a)* how many people presently have cars registered in a company's name; *(b)* what is their income distribution; *(c)* how many are women and how many are men; *(d)* what is the regional distribution and *(e)* if he will give comparable figures for the information in *(a)* for each year since 1973-74.

Mr. Atkins: The latest figures available show that in 1988, approximately 2,391,000 cars were registered in a company name. These include cars held in pools, rather than being assigned to particular users. According to the 1985-86 national travel survey, about 11 per cent. of household cars were provided by companies. For 84 per cent. of these, the main driver was a man.

The distribution of these vehicles according to region and to the income of the main driver are given in the following tables.

Regions (1985-86)

	Per cent.
Great Britain	100
North	4
Yorkshire and Humberside	8
East Midlands	7
East Anglia	4
South East	39
South West	7
West Midlands	9
North West	11
Wales	3
Scotland	9

Income (1985-86)

£ per annum	*Per cent.*
Less than 5,000	14·4
5,000— 9,999	26·3
10,000—14,999	30·5
15,000—19,999	15·2
20,000—24,999	6·3
25,000 and over	7·3

The number of cars registered in a company name for 1983 to 1987 are given in the following table. Figures are not available for years prior to 1983.

Year	*thousand*
1983	1,840
1984	1,917
1985	1,981
1986	2,038
1987	2,170

Motor Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total revenue raised from motor taxation in 1988-89; and what is his estimated revenue for 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's estimates of revenue from motoring taxation are as follows:

£ billion

Tax	Revenue 1988-89	1989-90
Vehicle excise duty	2·8	2·9
Fuel duty	8·5	8·6
Total	11·3	11·5

A40 (Lighting)

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the standard of lighting on the A40 Westway and of the A40 in the London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham and Ealing.

Mr. Atkins: A consultant's report on lighting standards on the A40 in the London borough of Ealing was received in February 1989. Remedial works are already in progress or planned on those parts of this section of the A40 where lighting was found not to conform with British standard BS5489. Although the A40 Westway was not included in this assessment, there is no reason to doubt that it conforms to the British standard.

Unleaded Fuels

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what proportion of *(a)* new cars use unleaded fuel, *(b)* car owners have converted their cars to unleaded fuel and what proportion this is of cars that can be converted and *(c)* new cars have a catalytic converter, *(d)* new cars made in the United Kingdom have catalytic converters, *(e)* car owners have had a catalytic converter fitted; and what were the figures in 1988.

Mr. Atkins Industry sources indicate that virtually all new cars can run on unleaded petrol without adjustment. Estimates are that about 20 per cent. of cars on the road were able to use unleaded petrol without adjustment at the end of 1989, against 10 per cent. at the end of 1988. An additional 50 per cent. could use unleaded with adjustment at the end of 1989, against 35 per cent. at the end of 1988. The current uptake of unleaded represent about 28 per cent. of the fuel market, and if the same proportion of the vehicle fleet uses unleaded fuel, and about 20 per cent. of that fleet can use unleaded without adjustment, up to 8 per cent. of the vehicle fleet may have been adjusted.

There were 186 new car models and two light van models on the market fitted with three-way catalysts, out of a total of about 1,000 models listed in the Department's "New Car Fuel Consumption" figures for October 1989. Of these, 24 models were known to be of British manufacture. We know of one model offered with a catalyst in 1988. There is no information available on the market share occupied by these models, but I understand that the industry proposes to collate these data for the future.

Tighter emission standards will take effect in 1992. The number of catalyst equipped cars on the market can be expected to increase rapidly during the next two years.

Information on the retrofitment of catalysts by individual motorists is not available.

St. Mary's Airport

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decision has been taken on the request by the council of the Isles of Scilly for Government financial help towards the cost of repairing and extending the runway at St. Mary's airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department wrote to the council on 5 February describing the financial basis on which it envisages the runway works at St. Mary's airport being carried out later this year. I am sending a copy of the letter to my hon. Friend.

M2-A2

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which year's budget contained the relevant expenditure, in relation to the relevant authorities, in respect of the following works on the M2/A2: *(a)* London boundary to M2 provision of lighting and provision of hard shoulders, *(b)* Brenley to Harbledown provision of lighting and provision of central reserve safety fencing, *(c)* Harbledown to Bridge provision of central reserve safety fencing, *(d)* Shepherdswell provision of lighting and *(e)* Jubilee Way to Dover alterations to road markings and removal of lay-bys.

Mr. Atkins: Expenditure was contained in the following years:—

A2

(a) London boundary to M2	
Hardshoulders:	1985-86 to 1989-90 inclusive.
Lighting:	Not yet allocated
(b) Brenley to Harbledown	
Lighting:	Not yet allocated.
Central reserve safety fence:	Not yet allocated.
(c) Harbledown to Bridge	
Central reserve safety fence:	Not yet allocated.
(d) Shepherdswell	
Lighting:	1989-90.
(e) Jubilee Way to Dover	
Alterations to road markings:	1989-90
Removal of lay-bys:	1989-90.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research or other assistance his Department is funding for the development of electrically powered road vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: Electric vehicles have for some years been exempt from vehicle excise duty. A considerable amount of research related to electric vehicles has been carried out by the transport and road research laboratory. The Department of Transport and the Department of Trade and Industry have also funded research into higher energy density batteries and the Department of Industry has funded the development of electric vehicles. Although no further research is foreseen, officials keep in touch with developments in electric vehicles both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Station Car Parks

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the capacity of station car parks in London in each of the last 10 years; and what is his current policy on the contribution station car parks can make to transport in London.

Mr. Portillo: The provision of station car parks has an important role to play in encouraging commuters to leave their cars outside central London and to travel in by rail. The rail operators are in the best position to judge where increases in capacity will lead to increased rail demand. Network SouthEast has a substantial programme of investment in improving and expanding its car parks. I regret that I cannot supply the data requested.

A66 Improvements

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to respond to the feasibility study on road improvements to the A66 near Longnewton in Cleveland carried out by Cleveland county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A decision on the feasibility study will be announced shortly.

Pedestrians and Cyclists (Accidents)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* pedestrians and *(b)* cyclists were killed and injured in each of the last five years due to drivers causing accidents while in excess of the blood alcohol limit; and what research his Department has done on the impact random breathalysing would have on these figures.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers of *(a)* pedestrians and *(b)* pedal cyclists who were reported by the police as killed or injured as a result of collision with a motor vehicle whose driver was established to have a blood alcohol level in excess of the legal limit or failed to provide a specimen are:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Pedestrians					
killed	116	110	83	70	61
all severities	1,117	1,186	1,092	949	919
Pedal cyclists					
killed	20	19	17	14	6
all severities	771	217	160	144	136

These figures confirm the significant success of our campaign against drinking and driving, to which increased enforcement activity by the police has made a major contribution. The impact of any extension of police powers would depend on the extent to which they were used and on the level of associated publicity. The extensive powers currently available to the police were set out in the recent statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General (*Official Report*, 5 December, column *131*). The Government fully support the full use by the police of these powers.

Personal Travelling Time

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what values for personal travelling time are given in departmental assessment methods for *(a)* bus passengers, *(b)* pedestrians, *(c)* motorists and *(d)* cyclists.

Mr. Atkins: The values of personal travelling time are given in the latest version of the "Highways Economic Note No. 2" issued in May 1989, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Goods (Road and Rail)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the tonnage of goods transported by road and rail in each year since 1985.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is published in table 1.13 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1978-1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

WALES

Carmarthen Southern Bypass

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales with regard to the changes now being carried out to the roundabout at the junction of the Carmarthen southern bypass with the trunk road A40, why is the work necessary and what it is designed to achieve, how much it will cost, and who is responsible financially.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The improvement scheme at this roundabout scored very highly using the Welsh Office's computerised ranking programme for schemes costing less than £1 million. This programme takes into account a number of factors, including the incidence of accidents. The improvement scheme is being carried out at a cost of £500,000 to the Welsh Office.

Bed and Breakfast

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for the number of people living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Ian Grist: On 30 September 1989 there were 164 homeless families in Wales placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Information on the number of individuals is not available centrally.

Public Bodies

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* each community health council in Wales, *(b)* each district health authority in Wales, *(c)* the All-Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for People with Mental Handicaps, *(d)* each family practitioner committee in Wales, *(e)* the Health Policy Board and *(f)* the Health Promotion Board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservative, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(2) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Administration of Radioactive Substances, Advisory Committee, *(b)* the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, *(c)* the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales, *(d)* the Agricultural Valuation Committee (Wales), *(e)* the Agricultural Wages Committee, *(f)* the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales, *(g)* the Audit Commission and *(h)* the British Wool Marketing Board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed

allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* Liberal Democrats, *(d)* Social Democratic party, *(e)* Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(3) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Farm Animal Welfare Council, *(b)* the Forestry Commission Reference Committee Panel for Wales, *(c)* the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, *(d)* Housing for Wales, *(e)* the Land Authorities for Wales, *(f)* the Library and Information Services Council (Wales), *(g)* the Local Government Boundary Commission and *(h)* the National Parks Committee, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* Liberal Democrats, *(d)* Social Democratic party, *(e)* Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(4) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the National Radiological Protection Board, *(b)* the North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, *(c)* the Place Names Advisory Committee, *(d)* the Rent Assessment Panel, *(e)* the Saundersfoot Harbour Commission, *(f)* the Sports Council for Wales and *(g)* the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* Liberal Democrats, *(d)* Social Democratic party, *(e)* Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(5) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(b)* the Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research, *(c)* the Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering, *(d)* the Council for National Academic Awards, *(e)* the courts and councils of (i) the National Library and (ii) the National Museum of Wales, *(f)* the Curriculum Council for Wales and *(g)* the Development Board for Rural Wales declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* Liberal Democrats, *(d)* Social Democratic party, *(e)* Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru.

Mr. Peter Walker: I do not require candidates for public appointment to indicate their political affiliation, as this is not a qualification for appointment.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the National Radiological Protection Board, *(b)* the North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, *(c)* the Place Names Advisory Committee, *(d)* the Rent Assessment Panel, *(e)* the Saundersfoot Harbour Commission, *(f)* the Sports Council for Wales and *(g)* the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

Women in public appointments

	Number of appointments held by women
(a) National Radiological Protection Board	2
(b) North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee	None
(c) Place Names Advisory Committee	None
(d) Rent Assessment Panel	7
(e) Saundersfoot Harbour Commission	None
(f) Sports Council for Wales	4
(g) South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee	1

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made by him either solely or jointly with another Minister to *(a)* each community health council in Wales, *(b)* each district health authority in Wales, *(c)* the All-Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for People with Mental Handicaps, *(d)* each family practitioner committee in Wales, *(e)* the Health Policy Board and *(f)* the Health Promotion Board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have taken the hon. Gentleman's question to refer at *(f)* to the Welsh Health Promotion Authority. The information is shown in the following table:

	Number of appointments held by women
(a) Community Health Councils in Wales:	
Clwyd South	1
Clwyd North	3
Carmarthen/Dinefwr	3
Llanelli/Dinefwr	1
Ceredigion	2
Pembrokeshire	3
South Gwent	2
North Gwent	3
Arfon/Dwyfor	1
Aberconwy	2
Ynys Mon	1
Meirionnydd	1
Rhymney Valley	2
East Glamorgan	3
Merthyr/Cynon Valley	2
Ogwr	2
Brecon/Radnor	2
Montgomery	1
Cardiff	3
Vale of Glamorgan	2
Neath/Port Talbot	3
Swansea/Lliw Valley	2
(b) District Health Authorities:	
Clwyd	4
East Dyfed	4
Gwent	3
Gwynedd	3
Mid Glamorgan	2
Pembrokeshire	2
Powys	4
South Glamorgan	4
West Glamorgan	4
(c) All Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for people with Mental Handicaps	1
(d) Family Practitioner Committee:	
Clwyd	7
Dyfed	8
Gwent	8
Gwynedd	5

	Number of appointments held by women
Mid Glamorgan	5
Powys	12
West Glamorgan	8
South Glamorgan	7
(e) Health Policy Board	1
(f) Welsh Health Promotion Authority	7

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee, *(b)* the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, *(c)* the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales, *(d)* the Agricultural Valuation Committee (Wales), *(e)* the Agricultural Wages Committee, *(f)* the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales, *(g)* the Audit Commission and *(h)* the British Wool Marketing Board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

Women in public appointments

	Number of appointments held by women
(a) Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee	2
(b) Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances	None
(c) Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales	3
(d) Agricultural Valuation Committee for Wales	None
(e) Agricultural Wages Committee:	
Dyfed	1
Glamorgans	1
Powys	1
(f) Ancient Monuments Board for Wales	1
(g) Audit Commission	1
(h) British Wool Marketing Board	1

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Farm Animal Welfare Council, *(b)* the Forestry Commission Reference Committee Panel for Wales, *(c)* the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, *(d)* Housing for Wales, *(e)* the Land Authority for Wales, *(f)* the Library and Information Services Council (Wales), *(g)* the Local Government Boundary Commission and *(h)* the National Parks Committee are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

Number of Appointments held by women

	Number
(a) Farm Animal Welfare Council	5
(b) Forestry Commission Reference Committee Panel for Wales	None
(c) Historic Buildings Council for Wales	None
(d) Housing For Wales	1
(e) Land Authority for Wales	None
(f) Library and Information Services Council (Wales)	2
(g) Local Government Boundary Commission	1
(h) National Parks Committee:	
Brecon Beacons	1
Pembrokeshire Coast	1
Snowdonia	1

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to *(a)* the Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(b)* the Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research, *(c)* the Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering, *(d)* the Council for National Academic Awards, *(e)* the courts and councils of (i) the National Library and (ii) the National Museum of Wales, *(f)* the Curriculum Council of Wales and *(g)* the Development Board for Rural Wales are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

	Number of appointments held by women	
(a) Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	2	
(b) Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research	None	
(c) Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering	2	
(d) Council for National Academic Awards	None	
(e) Courts and Councils of	*Court*	*Council*
(i) The National Library	3	1
(ii) The National Museum of Wales	1	—
(f) Curriculum Council for Wales	3	
(g) Development Board for Rural Wales	1	

YTS

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by county, the number of YTS trainees in Wales and the number of YTS vacancies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Figures for YTS trainees are not available on a county basis. The Training Agency in Wales provides statistics on an area office basis only which refer to the area in which training takes place rather than where the trainee lives.

At the end of January 1990, the numbers in training in Wales were 23,330 comprising South and Mid Glamorgan 7,337; Gwent 3,813; West Glamorgan and Dyfed 5,826; and Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys 6,354.

At the end of January 1990 the number of unfilled places in Wales was 5,795 broken down as follows: South and Mid Glamorgan 1,889; Gwent 1,127; West Glamorgan and Dyfed 789; and Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys 1,990.

Industrial Employment

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons in Wales were engaged in industrial employment, as described in article 9 of EC regulation No. 2052/88 of 24 June 1988, in each year from 1979 inclusive to the latest available year.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the following table:

At June each year	No. of employees in Industrial Employment[1] ('000s)
1979	439
1980	411
1981	355
1982	333
1983	315
1984	310
1985	305
1986	293
1987	296
1988	309
1989	313

[1] Employees in employment in Wales in Divisions 1 to 5 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980; ie. Energy and Water supply, manufacturing and construction.

The decline in employment in the coal and steel industries has resulted in a reduction of 60,000 in the numbers employed. I am pleased to say that increases in the service industries and the self-employed have more than compensated for this.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales into which NUTS level III territorial unit for the purposes of article 9 of EC regulation 2052/88 the area covered by the Llanelli borough council has been put.

Mr. Peter Walker: Llanelli borough council area comprises part of the Dyfed county council NUTS level III unit. For the purpose of article 9 of the EC regulation 2052/88, however, the Llanelli area is eligible for European Community assistance under objective 2 of that regulation because it is adjacent to West Glamorgan, a NUTS level III unit within the industrial south Wales objective 2 area, and because it satisfies all the Commission's criteria for objective 2 support.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the area covered by the Llanelli borough council is eligible for assistance under objective 2 of article 9 of the EC regulation 2052/88.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes.

Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Board

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made either jointly or solely by him to the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The board comprises 35 members; 24 are appointed by the Secretary of State following election by the profession and 11 are directly appointed by him. Twenty-four are women.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to committee nominees.

Mr. Grist: Total expenditure for 1987-88 (the latest figures available) was £5,812,206 with allocations of:

(a) £622,717 for administration;
(b) £2,500 for hosting of meetings and conferences; and
(c) £33,901 subsistence allowances for attending meetings.

There were no general allowances given to committee nominees.

Agricultural Advisory Panel

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: All appointments to the Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales are made solely by me. The full panel meets two or three times a year and the information requested is set out in the following table.

	Attendance record percentage since appointment	In 1989
Mr. R. E. M. Rees	95	100
Mr. J. A. Parry	95	100
Mr. D. F. R. George	92	100
Mr. C. J. Beynon	84	100
Professor M. Haines	100	100
Mr. T. H. Jones	90	100
Mr. D. L. Carey-Evans	100	100
Mr. D. R. Williams	100	100
Mr. R. C. Pratt	75	100
Mr. E. H. Perkins	100	100
Mrs. T. Adams	100	100
Mrs. P. Keen	100	100
Mrs. A. M. Rees	100	100

Industrial Decline

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to meet the EEC Regional Commissioner to discuss aid for areas affected by industrial decline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My officials regularly visit the regional policy directorate in Brussels and I am in close touch with developments. I will make contact with the Commissioner whenever I believe it to be necessary.

South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the South Wales sea fisheries committee are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: One.

Education Spending

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local authority expenditure per pupil on text books, library books, educational equipment, stationery and materials in primary, secondary and special

education since 1978-79 is shown in the following table. Reliable information on text books and equipment is not separately available.

Table 1
Expenditure (£/pupil) on books and equipment at outturn prices

	Primary	Secondary	Special[1]
1978-79	11·9	20·9	35·1
1979-80	12·7	22·8	42·2
1980-81	14·6	25·2	40·9
1981-82	16·2	28·4	59·5
1982-83	18·5	33·5	54·7
1983-84	19·8	37·4	57·9
1984-85	17·9	39·9	67·1
1985-86	20·0	41·3	93·7
1986-87	22·5	57·4	80·7
1987-88	23·9	58·2	102·6

[1] Figures relate to the education of pupils at maintained special schools and other special education provided otherwise than at school. Expenditure on special education in primary and secondary schools is included in the primary and secondary school unit costs.

Table 2
Index of expenditure (£/pupil) on books and equipment (1978-79 = 100)[1]

	Primary	Secondary	Special[2]
1978-79	100	100	100
1979-80	91·4	93·4	103·1
1980-81	88·9	87·1	84·2
1981-82	89·7	89·5	111·7
1982-83	95·9	98·6	96·0
1983-84	97·9	105·2	97·1
1984-85	84·4	107·0	107·1
1985-86	89·3	104·9	141·8
1986-87	97·1	141·2	118·2
1987-88	98·4	136·3	143·1

[1] Primary includes nursery schools.
[2] Figures relate to the education of pupils at maintained special schools and other special education provided otherwise than at school. Expenditure on special education in primary and secondary schools is included in the primary and secondary school unit costs.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the value of development funding awarded to training and enterprise councils *(a)* in total and *(b)* by TEC.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The total value of development contracts at present is £311,620, broken down as follows: West Wales TEC £110,000; Mid Glamorgan TEC £103,500 and the North East Wales TEC £98,120.

The levels of development funding for the other TECs whose bids have been approved, North West Wales, South Glamorgan and Gwent, are still being negotiated.

Waste Disposal Sites

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hydrogeological surveys have been brought to the notice of the Welsh Office via the National Rivers Authority and the Welsh Water Authority in conjunction with planning applications to use quarries and other locations as landfill waste disposal sites.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office has no record of a hydrogeological survey brought to its attention via the National Rivers Authority and the Welsh Water Authority in conjunction with a planning application for a landfill waste disposal site.

Singleton Casualty Unit

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received for an extension of X-ray facilities at the Singleton casualty unit; and how many in opposition.

Mr. Grist: Since 1 June 1988, 102 individual representations and petitions have been received by the Department seeking expanded use of the minor casualty unit services at Singleton hospital, Swansea, the majority of which have explicitly sought improved access to X-ray facilities.

The district health authority has indicated to the Department that it would neither support nor encourage the development of radiology services for the minor casualty unit.

Mortgages

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish a table showing the average income of first time house buyers and average prices of houses in Wales in 1989-90;

(2) what is the average new mortgage in 1989-90 in Wales:

(3) what is the average outstanding mortgage in 1989-90 in Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The available information for Wales relating to building society borrowers only for the first six months of the financial year 1989-80 is given in the following table:

First time purchases		*April—September 1989 all Purchases*	
Average recorded income of borrowers[1]	*Average house price*	*Average new mortgage*	*Average house price*
£	£	£	£
13,291	33,209	30,026	45,615

[1] Different building societies have different conventions for recording the income of borrowers.

ENVIRONMENT

Foreign Taps

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to prohibit the importing of foreign taps which do not conform to British Standard 5412 with respect to the diameter of the taps' internal construction.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to prohibit the importing of foreign taps. Taps have to comply with the byelaw requirements of the United Kingdom water undertakers. Such things as the performance of taps and their value for money are largely matters for consumers to judge.

Lead Pollution

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the Department of the Environment pollution report No. 28.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on Thursday 8 February to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) (*Official Report*, Vol 166, col. *757*).

Landfill Sites

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish a central register of landfill sites receiving low-level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Trippier: Any waste disposal site licensed by a waste disposal authority under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (COPA) may receive low-level radioactive waste where this is authorised by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Low-level radioactive waste authorised for disposal to local landfill sites with ordinary refuse is subject to certain conditions including activity limits. Disposals under these conditions present no hazard either to the refuse collector or at the disposal site and the destination of the waste is not recorded. It is therefore impracticable to establish a central register containing the information requested. Waste disposal authorities do, however, maintain registers of all disposal sites licensed under COPA in their areas.

Nirex

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not yet met representatives of UK Nirex Ltd.

Eco-labelling Scheme

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies to date have indicated their support and have offered assistance with the Government's product eco-labelling scheme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained in his reply of 9 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) (*Official Report*, Vol 164, cols *589-91*), we received over 80 responses to the discussion paper which we issued last August proposing the establishment of an EC-wide scheme of eco-labelling. Just over 30 of these responses were from individual companies, and they were overwhelmingly in support of our proposals. We shall, of course, want to work closely with interested groups in moving towards setting up a scheme.

Rivers

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the specific measurements of the substances that are to be present in or absent from river water in order to meet *(a)* the minimum clean water qualification standards of the National Rivers Authority and *(b)* the qualification standards set by the European Economic Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The requirements of the general river classification system currently in use throughout England and Wales are set out in the report of the 1985 river quality survey, a copy of which is in the Library. There is no EC legislation setting general quality standards for rivers, although there are directives relating to specific dangerous substances (76/464/EEC et seq, reproduced in Department of the Environment circular 7/89 (Welsh Office 16/89)), to the quality of designated fresh water needing protection or improvement in order to support fish life (78/659/EEC), and to the quality of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water (75/440/EEC).

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what system of classifying the quality of river water has been prescribed by his Department.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The general classification system for rivers currently in use throughout England and Wales is being reviewed and will not be formally prescribed until that review has been completed. In the meantime specific classifications have been established, by regulations made under section 104 of the Water Act 1989, for surface waters according to their suitability for abstraction by water undertakers for supply (after treatment) as drinking water (SI 1989 No. 1148) and for a range of specific dangerous substances (SI 1989 No. 2286).

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the results of the survey of rivers being conducted by the National Rivers Authority will be available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the NRA expects to be able to publish results from its 1990 survey of river quality in England and Wales during the autumn of 1991.

Radiochemical Inspectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many radiochemical inspectors' posts *(a)* filled and *(b)* unfilled were provided for each year in respect of each organisation; what is the maximum period considered necessary between site visits by these organisations; and what statutory duties exist on these organisations to monitor, record and make public radioactivity emitted off-site from any site subject to inspection;

(2) how many radiochemical inspectors were in post for each year from 1986-87 to 1989-90, respectively for *(a)* the radiochemical inspectorate prior to April 1987, *(b)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, *(c)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (Scotland), *(d)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (Northern Ireland), and *(e)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;

(3) how many sites were visited by radiochemical inspectors in each year from 1986-87 to 1989-90; and what is the average period between site visits;

(4) what statutory duties exist on users of radioactive materials as defined in the Radioactive Substances Act to *(a)* monitor, *(b)* record and *(c)* make public in each case amounts of radioactive emitted off-site from any site to which radiochemical inspectors have powers of entry or inspection.

Mr. Trippier: Organisations subject to control under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA60) must comply with strict conditions and activity limits imposed by HMIP in certificates of registration and authorisation

issued under the Act. The issue of certificates follows careful assessment of the possible environmental impact where appropriate.

Conditions imposed vary with the circumstances, but in the case of radioactive waste disposals, these commonly require monitoring to take place. In all cases proper and detailed records must be maintained. All premises controlled under the Act are subject to scrutiny by HMIP inspectors under powers contained in section 12 of RSA60, to ensure compliance with the terms of certificates issued.

Although there is no requirement in the Act to make information public, details of monitoring of radioactive discharges from the nuclear industry are published annually both by the industry itself and by this Department.

The information available on the number and frequency of site inspections and on staff in the radiochemical inspectorate and HMIP, for the period 1986-87 to 1988-89 is contained in the Department's management information system returns (MINIS 8-10), available in the Library of the House. The MINIS 11 report covering 1989-90 will be placed in the Library in due course.

Matters relating to Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are the responsibilities of their respective Secretaries of State.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites in the United Kingdom are subject to powers of entry or inspection by radiochemical inspectors.

Mr. Trippier: In England there are some 9,600 premises subject to regulation by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA60). The administration of RSA60 in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a matter for the respective Secretaries of State for those countries.

Leakage

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline his responsibilities in respect of protecting water sources and in respect of controlling leakage from the distribution system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The National Rivers Authority is primarily responsible for protecting water sources. The water undertakers are responsible for controlling leakage from the distribution system. But the Director General of Water Services will monitor their leakage control programmes to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between capital and operational costs in the interests of local consumers.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introductionary measures that would encourage an increase in the proportion of recycled paper used in newsprint.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am writing today to newspaper publishers to urge them to increase the proportion of recycled paper that they use. Copies of the letter have been placed in the Library.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he is doing to ensure that those waste disposal authorities identified in the answer to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) *Official Report*, 11 January, columns *684-85*, submit waste disposal plans as they are required to do under section 1 of the Control of Pollution Act.

Mr. Trippier: I have today written to leaders of the 15 authorities concerned asking them to submit their plans by 30 November. My officials will be discussing with the authorities concerned the steps needed for completing the plans by this date. Officials are also writing to other authorities asking them to provide confirmation of their latest plans.

At the same time, we are proposing an amendment to the Environmental Protection Bill to allow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to set deadlines for the preparation of waste disposal plans and to prescribe the factors to be taken into account in preparing such plans.

We attach considerable importance to having a comprehensive framework of such plans across the country. Under the Bill's provisions, we see these plans as providing a vital framework for informing investment decisions by public and private sector waste disposal interests as well as publicising required standards and enforcement policies by the new waste regulation authorities. We shall be reviewing the content and scope of these plans for the future and will be issuing, in due course, revised guidance to local authorities on how existing plans should be updated.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will propose revisions to the housing revenue account subsidy determination of 21 December in response to requests by local authorities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is today sending to local housing authorities proposed amendments to the housing revenue account subsidy rules for 1990-91. These are designed to deal with questions put to us since the main rules were published on 21 December. They should reassure councils that rents next year can be kept within Government guidelines.

The new policy is designed to begin moving authorities towards a sensible patten of rents in which the rents of council housing broadly reflect the geographical variations in the value of property. The old system was a nonsense because we had to assume that rents would move by the same amount in every part of the country. None the less, we are not suggesting that council rents should reach market levels (except where these are low) and we will make sure that rents can stay within the reach of ordinary working people.

I know that many authorities have been doubtful about whether they can keep rent increases within our guidelines. I believe we have now removed the main outstanding problems, and that some of their worries have been unnecessary. I would urge councils to look closely at several aspects of the system that convey very considerable flexibility or help. Let me give a few examples.

Some authorities have been worried that they could no longer fund repairs and improvements from capital

receipts from the sale of council property. But genuine capitalised repairs are not precluded by section 40 of the 1989 Act.

Today's draft rules confirm our intention that subsidy will be paid on works that have been financed through deferred purchase or leasing schemes.

Councils can carry forward balances up to £150 a dwelling or £5 million. Authorities can also look for economies and efficiency savings.

We have also, today, confirmed a rule change that was prompted by the action of Wakefield council, on 9 January. Wakefield reduced its rent for the last seven weeks of this year from £17·82 to £1·70 a week, solely to gain an extra £5 million in 1990-91 from a recalculation of subsidy. We believe this was wrong and, after formal consultations with the council, have revised the rules so that the January change in rents will not alter its subsidy entitlement next year.

As a result of today's revised rules, I believe authorities should be able to hold rent increases broadly in line with guidelines. Some may be above, some below. The final decision rests with councils themselves, which must decide on the levels of income and expenditure they want to budget for.

Council Houses

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses for rent have been built each year since 1970; and how many are planned to be built in each of the next five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Numbers of house-building completions for rent by local authorities and new towns are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1970	127,700
1971	110,900
1972	89,400
1973	75,700
1974	95,600
1975	113,800
1976	116,200
1977	114,000
1978	92,100
1979	73,300
1980	73,500
1981	54,200
1982	30,800
1983	28,700
1984	28,400
1985	22,700
1986	18,900
1987	15,700
1988	15,300
[1]1989	12,600

[1] Provisional.

The Government do not expect local authorities to add significantly to their stock of houses for rent. Our policy is that housing associations should become the major providers of new subsidised rented housing and public expenditure plans reflect this.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence his Department has of pollution risk to water supplies or other health hazards from toxic waste deposited at Stanton road, Sandiacre, Pewit tip, Manners avenue, Ilkeston, and Long Eaton refuse tip, all in Derbyshire; what monitoring by pollution control authorities has been undertaken; and what information or advice has been given to Erewash local authority.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* In 1972-73, a desk study commissioned by my Department suggested that the sites presented the following potential risk to groundwater:

(a) Stanton road, Sandiacre—no recorded information;
(b) Pewit tip, Manners avenue, Ilkeston—some (risk) to minor (aquifer);
(c) Long Eaton refuse tip, Meadows lane—serious (risk) to minor (aquifer).

This information was passed to the local authority and water authority to assist them in their regulatory function.

My Department has no evidence that the sites are presenting a risk to water supplies or public health.

Irish Sea (Pollution)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ask for the radioactive and chemical pollution of the Irish sea to be placed on the agenda of the forthcoming North sea Environment Ministers conference; what other issues will be discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Given the geographical scope of the North sea conference, it would not be appropriate for matters concerning pollution in the Irish sea to be included at the third North sea conference in March.

The main purpose of the third North sea conference is to look at progress on the implementation of important measures agreed at the second conference in London in 1987. The conference will also review all the major activities which have an impact on the marine environment, including discharges of dangerous substances via rivers and the atmosphere, nutrients, dumping, shipping and offshore installations.

The measures agreed at the North sea conferences are applied to all our seas, including the Irish sea.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table detailing the cost of the annual applications by archaeologists to *(a)* his Department and *(b)* English Heritage for rescue archaeological work to record and excavate sites of national importance in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 February 1990]* The total annual figure for applications approved for funding for rescue archaeological work is as follows:

Funding		*£ million*
(a) Department of the Environment	1981-82	6·700
Department of the Environment	1982-83	7·900
Department of the Environment	1983-84	[1]7·000
(b) English Heritage	1984-85	7·100
English Heritage	1985-86	8·745
English Heritage	1986-87	11·501
English Heritage	1987-88	12·230
English Heritage	1988-89	13·759
English Heritage	1989-90	7·107

[1] Estimate.

Comparable figures are available only from 1981-82.

From 1989-90 English Heritage has adopted a rolling programme for funding rescue archaeological work and no longer accepts speculative applications. The total of the applications approved is therefore expected to correspond to the funds available.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table showing the amount of funding given by *(a)* English Heritage and *(b)* his Department to rescue archaeologist projects in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The figures are as follows:

		Spending £ million
Department of the Environment Funding	1981-82	4·000
Department of the Environment Funding	1982-83	4·877
Department of the Environment Funding	1983-84	5·100
English Heritage Funding	1984-85	5·538
English Heritage Funding	1985-86	5·680
English Heritage Funding	1986-87	7·437
English Heritage Funding	1987-88	7·422
English Heritage Funding	1988-89	6·877
English Heritage Funding	1989-90	[1]7·107

[1] Budgeted

Comparable figures are available only from 1981-82.

Figures from 1986-87 onwards include provision for the Greater London archaeology service, taken on by English Heritage following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Domestic Water Services

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with what schemes, other than metering, the Government are offering help to the Director General of Water Services, so as to ensure that the changes in charging for domestic water services provide the best value for money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* It is for each water company to decide on what basis to charge for its services once rateable values can no longer be used, and to apply to the Director General of Water Services for an interim adjustment of its price limit (k) to cover the additional cost of introducing and operating its choice of system. The costs of metering on a wide scale are currently more uncertain than those associated with other methods of charging. The Government are therefore providing financial support to a series of metering trials to ensure that the results are available in sufficient time to influence each company's choice of charging method and to enable the director general to have regard to the results when considering applications for interim adjustments. The director general may, however, commission research into other methods of charging if he considers it appropriate.

Flooding (Windsor and Maidenhead)

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will extend the Bellwin scheme or some other relief to cover the cost of the recent flood damage to Windsor and Maidenhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The Government have not yet decided whether to extend the scope of the Bellwin scheme to cover flood damage at Windsor and Maidenhead. We are monitoring the situation to assess whether an extension would be justified under the criteria for the scheme.

Council House Sales, Norwich

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much lower or higher on average the determinations of the district valuer are on council house sales in Norwich than the prices quoted by Norwich city council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: In the year ending 31 December 1989, the district valuer made 101 determinations of value under section 128 of the Housing Act 1985 on the application of tenants of Norwich city council. The value determined was lower than the council's opinion of value in 76 cases by an average of £3,334 or 6·52 per cent., higher in one case and the same in 24 cases.

Mortgages

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing the average income of first-time housebuyers and average prices of houses in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region in 1989-90;

(2) what is the average new mortgage in 1989-90 in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The available information, which relates to building society borrowers only, is for the first six months of the financial year 1989-90:

		First time purchasers		*All borrowers*	
		Average recorded income[1] £	*Average house price* £	*Average mortgage advance* £	*Average house price* £
(a)	England	15,921	43,399	39,130	59,428
(b)	Northern	12,145	25,604	26,869	39,146
	Yorkshire and Humberside	13,025	30,589	28,952	43,095
	East Midlands	14,075	37,707	34,062	50,656
	East Anglia	17,210	50,340	44,367	65,980
	Greater London	23,528	67,558	60,383	84,826
	South East (ex GLC)	19,445	60,270	52,021	82,743
	South West	15,426	49,355	42,220	68,867
	West Midlands	13,763	34,661	32,696	50,898
	North West	12,852	28,666	29,675	43,256

[1] There is considerable variation in the income details recorded by different societies.

DEFENCE

Classified Documents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the Colin Wallace file was finally found; on what date; and what other documents were located with it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the information given in the letter dated 2 February 1990, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence sent to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). A copy was placed in the Library.

General Dynamics

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the details of the memorandum of understanding with the General Dynamics Company of the United States of America concerning offset agreements for the purchase of goods and services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The details of the MOU are commercially confidential.

Aircraft Disturbance

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any controlled experiments have been undertaken to assess the response of seabirds to aircraft disturbance which have involved either the active participation or co-operation of his Department including service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any Ministry of Defence involvement in experiments of this kind, which would be the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

SA 80 Rifles

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has taken steps to have armour-piercing ammunition for the SA 80 rifles used by the Army in Northern Ireland procured and issued in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our usual practice to discuss detailed operational capabilities.

SCOTLAND

Enterprise Councils

92. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the procedures to be used to monitor expenditure by local enterprise councils and training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on local enterprise companies. Training and enterprise councils are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Employment, Glasgow

93. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve employment in the north-east of Glasgow.

Mr. Lang: The full range of training and employment services is available to help people in north-east Glasgow to acquire appropriate skills and find work. The training and enterprise development provision available to the people of Glasgow will be further enhanced by the establishment of a local enterprise company for Glasgow which will have responsibility for delivering and combining the training programmes of the Training Agency and the economic development and environmental activities of the Scottish Development Agency at local level in a way which best meets the needs of Glasgow's economy and labour market.

Investment

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the instances of inward investment since the formation of Locate in Scotland which have subsequently been closed down.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inward investment projects from outside the United Kingdom were established *(a)* between 1964 and 1970, *(b)* between 1970 and 1974, *(c)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(d)* between 1979 and 1987 and how many of them survive today.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available for the period prior to the inception of Locate in Scotland in 1981. In the six years to 31 March 1987, LIS recorded 309 projects planned by companies. It is not possible to say how many survived to date, since not all the projects were in receipt of financial assistance and therefore subject to monitoring by the Department.

Water Charges

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* metered water charge and *(b)* non-domestic water rate in each water authority area for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The metered water charges and non-domestic water rates for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are set out in the table. The figures for 1990-91 are unconfirmed at this stage.

Regional/Islands Council	1989-90 Metered Water Charge Pence Per Cubic Metre	1989-90 Non-domestic Water Rate Pence	1990-91 (unconfirmed) Metered Water Charge Pence Per Cubic Metre	1990-91 (unconfirmed) Non-domestic[1] Water Rate Pence
Borders	28·00	6·0	43·50	4·5
Central	21·00	3·5	21·00	2·7
Dumfries and Galloway	28·20	7·0	33·90	6·0
Fife	26·00	8·0	28·00	6·5
Grampian	43·00	7·0	45·80	6·2
Highland	35·50	9·4	37·50	8·9
Lothian	28·70	4·9	30·60	2·7
Strathclyde	27·84	4·4	30·19	3·3
Tayside	32·00	5·3	34·00	4·1
Orkney	33·00	10·0	38·50	8·7
Shetland	22·04	2·9	58·70	10·1
Western Isles	36·00	16·8	47·00	17·7

[1] A revaluation of non-domestic property takes effect on 1 April 1990.

Water Authorities (Debt)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the level of indebtedness of each water authority in Scotland at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The most recent figures available are given in the table.

Capital debt outstanding at 31 March 1989: Water Account

Region/Islands areas	£000's
Borders	9,138
Central	21,602
Dumfries and Galloway	12,734
Fife	32,017
Grampian	63,004
Highland	16,942
Lothian	88,809
Strathclyde	129,494
Tayside	27,781
Orkney	3,233
Shetland	232
Western Isles	3,048

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the expenditure to be incurred by each water authority in Scotland in servicing capital debt in 1989-90 and 1990-91 and the proportion which that amount is of their total expenditure in relation to water supply.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table. Figures for 1990-91, and on total expenditure in relation to water supply, are not yet available centrally.

Estimated loans charges 1989-90: Water Account

Region/Islands areas	£000's
Borders	1,557
Central	3,435
Dumfries and Galloway	2,075
Fife	4,468
Grampian	9,812
Highland	2,867
Lothian	11,463
Strathclyde	20,831
Tayside	5,385
Orkney	278
Shetland	280
Western Isles	619

Water Supply

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total expenditure incurred by each region and islands area in respect of their functions in relation to water supply.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available figures for total expenditure, both current and capital, incurred by the regional and islands councils are for the year 1988-89 and are as follows:

	Total Current Expenditure Outturn £ 000s	Total Capital Expenditure Outturn £ 000s
Borders	3,606	965
Central	11,549	2,347
Dumfries and Galloway	5,365	1,614
Fife	9,862	3,066
Grampian	18,484	8,767
Highland	7,199	3,307
Lothian	22,374	7,722
Strathclyde	68,050	17,399
Tayside	13,353	3,949
Orkney	1,412	1,029
Shetland	2,040	545
Western Isles	1,263	352

Education Spending

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Mr. Lang: The information available is given in the following tables which have been compiled from local authority financial returns. Expenditure on equipment was not separately identified in these returns until 1982-83. There have been some variations from year to year in the recording of expenditure under these two headings. In particular some of the figures for expenditure on library books may include some expenditure on items of equipment.

Table 1: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials at outturn prices.

£

Year	Books			Education tools, equipment and materials		
	Primary	Secondary	Special	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	4·54	8·31	7·27	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979-80	5·49	9·61	11·25	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	5·84	9·29	12·20	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	6·54	9·77	12·17	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	7·03	10·03	13·65	8·18	27·33	48·46
1983-84	8·99	13·35	22·64	7·28	25·36	42·11
1984-85	9·55	13·83	21·41	8·91	30·09	57·77
1985-86	8·91	13·47	21·37	8·33	30·26	53·42
1986-87	10·93	16·67	22·22	8·92	33·85	61·98
1987-88	9·25	12·93	17·42	11·71	44·42	77·58
1988-89	11·23	17·85	27·60	13·23	48·07	80·86

Table 2: Expenditure per pupil on text library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials adjusted to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

£

Year	Books			Education tools, equipment and materials		
	Primary	Secondary	Special	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	9·98	18·27	15·99	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979-80	10·34	18·10	21·18	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	9·29	14·78	19·41	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	9·48	14·16	17·64	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	9·50	13·56	18·44	11·06	36·94	65·50
1983-84	11·61	17·24	29·24	9·40	32·75	54·38
1984-85	11·75	17·01	26·34	10·96	37·02	71·07
1985-86	10·40	15·73	24·95	9·73	35·33	62·37
1986-87	12·34	18·83	24·10	10·07	38·23	70·00
1987-88	9·92	13·87	18·68	12·56	47·64	83·21
1988-89	11·23	17·85	27·60	13·23	48·07	80·86

Table 3: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books at outturn prices expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	100·0	100·0	100·0
1979-80	120·9	115·6	154·7
1980-81	128·6	111·8	167·8
1981-82	144·1	117·6	167·4
1982-83	154·8	120·7	187·6
1983-84	198·0	160·6	311·4
1984-85	210·4	166·4	294·5
1985-86	196·3	162·1	293·9
1986-87	240·7	200·6	305·6
1987-88	203·7	155·6	239·6
1988-89	247·4	214·8	379·6

Table 4: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books adjusted to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator, expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	100·0	100·0	100·0
1979-80	103·6	99·1	132·5
1980-81	93·1	80·9	121·4
1981-82	95·0	77·5	110·3
1982-83	95·2	74·2	115·3
1983-84	116·3	94·4	182·9
1984-85	117·7	93·1	164·7
1985-86	104·2	86·1	156·0
1986-87	123·6	103·1	157·0
1987-88	99·4	75·9	116·8
1988-89	112·5	97·7	172·6

Note: Tables 3 and 4 do not include expenditure by authorities on educational tools, equipment and materials from 1982-83 as shown in tables 1 and 2.

Human Retrovirus

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has as to the ownership and disposal of all material produced under the agreement between Cogent Ltd. and the CSA of the Health Service to carry out research work into the production of monoclonal antibodies against human retrovirus at Edinburgh university; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the total value of funding contributed by *(a)* the CSA of the Health Service and *(b)* Cogent Ltd. in pursuance of the contract between them to carry out research into the production of monoclonal antibodies against human retrovirus at Edinburgh university; and if he will make a statement;

(3) why the contract between the Common Services Agency of the Health Service and Cogent Ltd. to produce monoclonal antibodies against human retrovirus at Edinburgh university was terminated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The contract was suspended in June 1989 by Cogent Ltd. following attempts by UnivEd Technologies (the commercial arm of the university of Edinburgh) to negotiate with Cogent financial and intellectual property rights in the project to which Cogent were unable to agree. Discussions continue between the Common Services Agency and Cogent Ltd. with a view to arranging formal termination of the contract in such a way as to safeguard the interests of both parties.

The agreement between the Common Services Agency and Cogent Ltd. relates to the development of antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus which might prove of potential value in the treatment of patients. A number of

antibodies were produced prior to suspension of the project although none was deemed suitable for development for patient therapy. The ownership and disposal of material produced under the agreement will require to be dealt with in terminating the agreement. The CSA has contributed £67,000 and Cogent Ltd. £175,000 to the project.

Horticulture Diversification

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications have been received by the Highlands and Islands Development Board under its horticulture diversification scheme; and how many have been approved.

Mr. Lang: Horticulture diversification is part of the Highlands and Islands Development Board's land diversification programme. Records of applications received and approved are not available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure has been incurred by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in publishing promotional material on its horticulture diversification scheme and mailing it to potential applicants.

Mr. Lang: In 1989-90, expenditure of £38,000 has been incurred on the information leaflets "Patterns for Change" which promote land diversification.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision exists within the current budget of the Highlands and Islands Development Board for a horticulture diversification scheme; and whether any provision is being made for next year's budget.

Mr. Lang: The total budget for the Highlands and Islands Development Board's land diversification programme, including publication of promotional material, for 1989-90 is £107,000. The budget for 1990-91 is £90,000.

Cumbernauld—Kilsyth Road

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans for the construction of a new road between Cumbernauld and Kilsyth; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans. The present road between Cumbernauld and Kilsyth is the responsibility of Strathclyde regional council but the minor local realignments to it which will be required because of the proposed M80 Stepps-Haggs trunk motorway cutting across it will be financed in due course from the trunk road programme.

New Hospital, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any proposals from Lanarkshire health board for the construction of a new hospital at Cumbernauld; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lanarkshire health board has recently submitted an option appraisal on the provision of geriatric and psycho-geriatric services. The options which include the development of a new 120-bed unit at Cumbernauld are being considered by my officials.

New Towns

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent advice he has given to new town development corporations on privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead" published on 11 July last year, stated the Government's view that a number of the new town development corporations' functions were suitable for privatisation. The Government consider that the privatisation of these functions is not only likely to ensure the continuity of service necessary to enable the development corporations to complete their remaining tasks, but offers the best prospect of safeguarding employment and opening up wider job opportunities for corporation employees.

Since the publication of the White Paper my officials have had extensive discussions with senior management of the five development corporations on the different options for the privatisation of the development corporations' services and functions, the appropriate methods of privatisation and other associated issues.

My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairmen and chief executives of the Scottish new towns on 1 December to discuss privatisation among other issues affecting the new towns. I am encouraged by the progress being made by the corporations in identifying privatisation options and in assisting their employees to explore these possibilities.

Cumbernauld Development Corporation

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he last met Mr. David Mitchell, chairman of Cumbernauld development corporation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chairman of Cumbernauld development corporation together with the chairmen of the other development corporations on Friday 1 December 1989, when he discussed a wide range of matters concerning the new towns.

Storm Damage

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the £600,000 in European Community storm aid to the United Kingdom announced in February will be made available to his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Decisions on the allocation of EC storm aid to the United Kingdom have not yet been made. Arrangements to identify those affected are under way and any awards will be distributed as soon as possible.

Quarrying

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the expansion of quarrying in the Highlands and Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Representations regarding the expansion of quarrying in the Highlands and Islands have not been received.

It is recognised that there are particular mineral resources which, owing to the nature of the geology of Scotland, are more likely to occur in the Highlands and Islands. The extraction of such minerals can, with the appropriate environmental safeguards, bring social and economic benefits especially to remoter areas.

Any proposal for the development of quarrying would require planning permission and would, in the first instance, be the responsibility of the relevant planning authority.

Teachers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are made to enable persons who have qualified as teachers outside Scotland to upgrade their teaching qualification to meet the requirements of the Scottish Education Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Any person who proposes to teach in an education authority school in Scotland must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Where an applicant's qualifications do not meet the requirements for registration, the council is normally able to recommend a course of study at a college or university to bring those qualifications up to its required standards.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Green Pound

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the level of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I receive frequent representations about the level of the green pound from farmers and their representatives.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence is available to him that the causative agent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy *(a)* is found in offal, other than brain tissue and *(b)* is not found in bovine tissue, other than offal.

Mr. Maclean: BSE was probably caused by the scrapie agent being transmitted to cattle through animal protein feed. Infectivity studies using various sheep tissues showed that the agent is most likely to be present in brain, spinal cord, spleen, tonsil, thymus and intestine, but not detectable in other tissues. These offals from bovines have therefore been banned from any use in human food as a precautionary measure, even though affected animals are slaughtered and destroyed. Infectivity experiments are being undertaken to confirm that the agent which causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy acts in the same way in terms of its presence or otherwise in relation to cattle offals and tissues.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions more than 50 per cent. compensation has been paid in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed cattle identified at abattoirs.

Mr. Gummer: The compulsory slaughter of animals suspected of suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy was introduced on 8 August 1988. Under the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Compensation Order 1988, compensation is paid to the owner of an animal in which infection is confirmed at the rate of one half of its market value, up to 62½ per cent. of the average market price.

I propose to introduce from tomorrow new arrangements for the assessment of compensation for the slaughter of animals in which infection is confirmed. Compensation will be at 100 per cent. of the market value of the animal or the average market price, whichever is the less. There will be no change in the basis of compensation for animals in which the disease is not confirmed.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he intends to take in the light of the discovery that bovine spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted to mice through feeding stuffs.

Mr. Maclean: The mice to which bovine spongiform encephalopathy was transmitted were fed large quantities (at least half their own body weight) of brain and cerebrospinal fluid from advanced clinical cases of BSE cattle. This was a laboratory experiment and the method of infection used was completely unnatural. The results

were not unexpected and provide further evidence that BSE is similar to scrapie, a disease for which there is no evidence whatsoever of its being a risk to human health. Further action in the light of these results is not therefore appropriate.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected tissues are prevented from entering the food chain of any other animals either in this country or abroad.

Mr. Maclean: All cattle suspected of having BSE are compulsorily slaughtered and their carcases destroyed. In addition the offals which might harbour the agent in cattle with sub-clinical infection are banned from human consumption. Protein material, including these offals, derived from ruminant animals, cannot be fed to ruminants in this country. However, there is no scientific reason why the offals should not be incorporated into feedstuffs for non-ruminant animals. It is up to countries importing protein material from the United Kingdom to determine the conditions under which such imports may take place in the full knowledge they have about the disease and its likely cause.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations has he received about the future of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Gummer: A number of individuals and organisations have made their views known including those representing the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation. The issue is an important one, and it is right that there should be an open exchange of views.

Food Additives

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many substances of no nutritional value were permitted as food additives *(a)* in 1984 and *(b)* in 1989.

Mr. Maclean: There are approximately 320 additives permitted by regulation for use in food and these include additives of some nutritional value. This number has not altered substantially between 1984 and 1989. In addition, there are about 3,000 flavourings available to the food industry that are not specifically controlled by regulations. They are however subject to the general provisions of the Food Act and are used in very small amounts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the enforcement of section 4(2) of the Food Act 1984 in respect of colouring additives with no nutritional value.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 29 January at column 75. The criteria that the Food Advisory Committee uses in assessing food additives was published in "Food Facts—Additives No. 7", a copy of which is being sent to the hon. Member.

Research and Development (Food)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amount was spent on *(a)* research and *(b)* development on (i) food safety, (ii) food quality and (iii) food processing for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The table sets out figures showing the expenditure by Government on food R and D over the past 10 years. Data on expenditure on food quality, safety and processing are not readily available before 1984-85. Figures for research and development separately are not available.

The Government are firmly committed to funding research on food safety and hygiene issues of concern to consumers, producers and industry.

Government spending on food R & D (at current prices)

	Total food R & D expenditure £ million	of which primary AIM: Safety £ million	Quality £ million	Processing £ million
1980-81	9·7	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	13·6	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	16·2	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983-84	17·8	n/a	n/a	n/a
1984-85	20·4	[1]4·6	[1]6·0	[1]9·0
1985-86	23·5	5·2	7·1	11·2
1986-87	24·6	5·1	7·3	12·2
1987-88	26·4	[2]9·7	—	[3]16·7
1988-89	28·8	[2]10·9	—	[3]17·9
1989-90[4]	31·5	[2]11·5	—	[3]20·0

Notes: n/a Figures not readily available.

[1] £0·8 million is not attributable to subject area.

[2] Change of definition in 1987-88; aimed primarily at food safety and applied nutrition.

[3] Change of definition in 1987-88: aimed primarily at food quality and technology.

[4] Provisional.

Pesticide Residues

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are carried out to check for pesticide residues, and in particular DDT residues, on imports of fruit and vegetables from Spain.

Mr. Maclean: The Government undertake a continuous monitoring programme of fruit and vegetables and other major food commodity groups from all sources, including Spain, to ensure that residue levels of DDT and other pesticides do not exceed statutory levels contained in the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988. The results are published; the latest report covering the period 1985 to 1989 was published by HMSO in 1989 (Food Surveillance Paper No. 25).

Waste Disposal

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name those materials categorised as inert or of natural origin currently dumped by the United Kingdom in the North sea under existing licences and those categorised under other headings.

Mr. Gummer: Materials licensed for dumping by the United Kingdom which are categorised by the Oslo commission as being inert and of natural origin are colliery stone and clean sand. Other material dumped includes

port and navigation dredgings, which other North sea countries also dump at sea. In addition the United Kingdom licenses the dumping at sea of sewage sludge, liquid industrial waste and flyash. The disposal at sea of liquid industrial waste and flyash is being terminated as soon as environmentally acceptable land-based means of disposal can be introduced.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the specific waste materials mentioned in the United Kingdom's current applications for further industrial waste disposal licences relating to the practice of waste disposal in the seas around the United Kingdom, including the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom has submitted information to the Oslo commission in accordance with the internationally agreed procedures in respect of the following wastes:

1. Wash waters from synthesis of Intal—a treatment for asthma and allergies.
2. Aqueous residues from preparation of paracetamol.
3. Salt solution from manufacture of O-tolyl-byguanide, exported for use in paint and soap manufacture.
4. Wash waters from synthesis of antibiotic and anti-ulcer medicines.

The crucial importance of some of these products will be obvious.

Since the date information was forwarded to the Oslo commission on the first waste an alternative means of disposal has been implemented. I have therefore rejected an application for renewal of the licence for the sea dumping of this material.

Alternative means of disposal are also being put in place for the third and fourth of these wastes and dumping at sea will cease later this year.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's timetable for ending the current practice of the bulk dumping of various waste materials, including sewage sludge, in the North sea and in other maritime locations around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: The dumping of flyash and liquid industrial wastes is being terminated as soon as environmentally acceptable land-based means of disposal are available. Considerable progress has already been made in reducing the number of sea dumping licences and alternative disposal methods are currently being developed and implemented for the few remaining licensed materials.

Nearly 70 per cent. of our sewage sludge production is already disposed of on land. Licences for the sea dumping of the remainder are issued in accordance with international agreements and are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure that sea dumping will cause no harm in the marine environment and to confirm that no practicable land-based means of disposal are currently available.

There is no international requirement to phase out the sea dumping of dredged materials, which are dumped by all North sea states, and inert materials of natural origin.

Eggs

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will undertake a review of the overall effectiveness of recent legislation affecting the egg producing industry.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply, 11 January 1990, c. 747]:* As indicated to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee during its recent further inquiry on salmonella in eggs, I have been reviewing the compensation paid when flocks infected with salmonella are compulsorily slaughtered. I am now introducing new scales of values for calculating compensation which reflect increases in commercial prices since the scales were first drawn up. The scales will also be kept under regular review in future. If a producer disagrees with the Ministry's valuation he will continue to have the right to take the matter to arbitration.

I am also amending the orders on the registration and testing of poultry flocks for salmonella, to remove the provisions that require the registers to be open to public inspection. I am taking this step as I accept that the ready availability of the registers could jeopardise the security of poultry premises.

In our programme of measures to control salmonella, protection of public health continues to be our first priority, but, as these changes indicate, we are also alive to concerns expressed by the industry about certain aspects of our controls. I am also continuing to press hard for measures on salmonella to be introduced throughout the Community.

EMPLOYMENT

Unofficial Disputes

4. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of strikes result from unofficial action.

Mr. Howard: Approximately half all stoppages and one third of all days lost in 1988 were in unofficial disputes.

8. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost last year as a result of unofficial industrial action.

Mr. Nicholls: Separate statistics on unofficial strikes ceased to be published as a regular series in 1981. However, information from a special exercise for 1988 was included in the Government's Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. This showed that approximately 1·3 million days were lost to unofficial disputes in 1988.

Work Permits

14. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received in response to his consultation paper on the work permit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Over 70 responses to the consultation exercise have been received. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce the outome of the review in the near future.

Small Businesses

15. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any information about the growth of the small business sector in 1989.

Mr. Eggar: Early indications are that there was a net increase of some 80,000 businesses registered for VAT in 1989. This compares with an increase of 64,000 in 1988.

57. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the number of jobs created annually by small firms.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest research commissioned by my Department estimates that between 1985 and 1987, firms employing between five and 19 people created 290,000 additional jobs, compared with just 20,000 in larger firms.

Enterprise Councils

18. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the representations made to him by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Servants Association regarding the staffing of local enterprise councils and TECs.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Youth Training

20. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of young people aged 16 to 20 years receive training in Germany, Japan, the United States of America, Sweden and the United Kingdom for the most recent date for which information is available.

Mr. Howard: The figures available are for the proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds in education or training in 1986. They are as follows:

Country	*Percentage*
West Germany	90
Japan	79
United States of America	80
Sweden	78
United Kingdom	64

The figure for the United Kingdom rose to 69 per cent. in 1988. I agree that more needs to be done in the field of youth training. That is why we are setting up training and enterprise councils to ensure that more young people get training of the kind they need.

ACAS

21. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chair of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet had the opportunity to meet the chairman of ACAS.

Local Offices

22. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to merge jobcentres with unemployment benefit offices.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service is working progressively to bring jobcentres and benefit offices together under one roof to provide a new and improved one-stop service.

Over the next few years, the employment service will be working to establish a national network of some 1,100 to 1,200 employment service offices.

Labour Statistics

23. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time jobs have been *(a)* lost and *(b)* created in the inner city of Liverpool in the last six months.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available. The Department's statistics for local areas monitor only net changes in employment between census of employment dates, and the most recent figures are for September 1987.

24. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the current rate of employment in the United Kingdom and list those countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development whose rate of unemployment is higher.

Mr. Howard: In December 1989, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the United Kingdom was 5·8 per cent. On the OECD international definition the unemployment rate was higher in Ireland, Spain, Italy, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Denmark and Canada.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in long-term unemployment since April 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for 12 months or more was down 743,194 or 54·8 per cent. compared with April 1986. The comparison is affected by the change of the count from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations affecting those young people aged under 18 years.

87. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the change in numbers of unemployed in the Norwich travel-to-work area since 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in the Norwich travel-to-work areas was 5,918, a fall of 6,484 or 52·3 per cent. since the June 1987 election. The comparison is affected by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the new benefit regulations affecting those aged under 18, and are not seasonally adjusted.

88. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 55 years were unemployed at the latest count (i) for less than six months, (ii) for between six months and 12 months, (iii) for between 12 months and two years and (iv) over two years.

Mr. Nicholls: The requested information is contained in the following table.

Unemployed claimants over 55 years old in the United Kingdom October 1989 (unadjusted)

Duration of unemployment	*Male*	*Female*
Less than 6 months	41,795	9,489
6 to 12 months	22,173	5,298
1 to 2 years	19,965	6,377
Over 2 years	69,167	23,027

83. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on job losses in the east midlands in recent months.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no figures for job losses and job gains, but latest estimates show that the civilian work force in employment has risen by 34,000 over the year to September 1989. Estimates for the last year are as follows:

Civilian work force in employment in east midlands region unadjusted for seasonal variation

	Thousands
September 1988	1,777
December 1988	1,778
March 1989	1,782
June 1989	1,793
September 1989	1,810
Change September 1988 to September 1989	34
	per cent.
Percentage change September 1988 to September 1989	1·9

69. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many individuals are working in two jobs and are thus counted twice in the employment totals.

Mr. Nicholls: Evidence on the number of people with two jobs can be derived from the labour force survey (LFS), which estimated that 567,000, 2·6 per cent., employees in Great Britain had a second job as an employee in spring 1988.

However, the exact number of persons with two or more jobs included in the published employees in employment estimates is not known, since the estimates are based on figures collected from employers, who will not generally know if an employee is filling the post as a second job.

66. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest available unemployment rate for under-18s in the Holloway travel-to-work area.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested.

53. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement regarding the current level of unemployment in the city of Sheffield.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989 there were 23,347 unemployed claimants in the local authority area of Sheffield, a fall of 47·7 per cent. since unemployment in Sheffield began on a downward trend in July 1986.

52. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in Cumbria since June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Between June 1987 and December 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in the local authority area of Cumbria fell by 8,192 or 42·3 per cent. The comparison is affected by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the new benefit regulations affecting those aged under 18.

50. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the growth in jobs in Warwickshire since 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to give an estimate. The Department's statistics for the county monitor only net changes in employment between census of employment dates, and the most recent figures are for September 1987.

47. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest unemployment figure for the constituency of Liverpool, Riverside.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989, the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Liverpool, Riverside was 7,425.

48. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in unemployment in the last year.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 12 months to December 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom fell by 402,500 or 20 per cent.

37. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the fall in unemployment in the north-west from its peak to date.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989 the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in the north-west region was 237,700, a fall of 189,700 or 44·4 per cent. since its peak in June 1986.

35. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number and percentage of young people aged 16 to 20 years entering employment without training in Germany, Japan, the United States of America, Sweden and the United Kingdom for the most recent date for which information is available.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested.

Employment Training

25. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement regarding the availability of places on employment training schemes for people recently made redundant.

Mr. Nicholls: In certain circumstances redundant workers can have immediate access to employment training without satisfying the normal six months unemployed condition. The main examples are people wishing to train in locally identified skill shortage occupations; those wishing to train in business start-up or enterprise training; people who require training in English as a second language; and people with disabilities.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if will give *(a)* the total numbers of lone parents on employment training receiving financial assistance towards child care costs and *(b)* the total expenditure involved between September 1988 and December 1989 for each standard region, Wales, Scotland and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The estimated proportions of trainees receiving child care allowances at the end of December 1989, the latest date for which information is available, are given in table 1. As a guide, the in-training figure for 15 December 1989 has been provided for each region.

The total expenditure on child care payments between September 1988 and December 1989 is shown in table 2.

The information requested is not collected by standard region; the figures quoted are for Training Agency regions and Scotland and Wales.

Table 1
Employment training trainees in receipt of childcare allowances

Region	Per cent.[1]	Number[2]
South East	5	14,600
London	4	21,400
South West	3	12,200
West Midlands	4	23,100
East Midlands and Eastern	3	16,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	2	25,500
North West	3	29,200
Northern	2	24,600
Wales	1	16,500
Scotland	3	26,200
Great Britain	3	[3]211,000

[1] Proportion receiving child care allowances end December 1989.
[2] Numbers in training 15 December 1989.
[3] The Great Britain Total includes a small number of trainees at large Contractors Unit and Residential Training Centres who are not reflected in the individual regional figures.

Table 2
Child care expenditure by region

£ million

Region	Total expenditure September 1988 to end December 1989
South East	0·742
London	2·358
South West	0·518
West Midlands	0·895
East Midlands and Eastern	0·821
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·672
North West	1·375
Northern	0·665
Wales	0·351
Scotland	1·048
Great Britain	11·770

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of training managers for employment training in *(a)* the private sector employer, *(b)* local authorities, *(c)* voluntary organisations and *(d)* private training organisations in December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The total number of training managers participating in employment training at the latest available date is as follows:

	Number
(a) Private sector employers	201
(b) Local authorities	195
(c) Voluntary organisations	366
(d) Private training organisations	507

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount of employment training allowance paid in each of the months April 1989 to December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The following table shows the total amount of recorded expenditure in employment training (ET) trainee allowances (excluding travel, childcare and other allowances) in the months April 1989 to December for Great Britain.

1989	£ Millions
April	[1]Nil
May	45·639
June	[2]1·663
July	73·259
August	45·730
September	49·332
October	42·169
November	46·540
December	47·094

[1] Other than for the final month of a financial year, expenditure on ET trainee allowances is normally recorded in the month following the period of training concerned.
[2] There was a delay in recording expenditure on trainee allowances in June 1989.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the employment training initiatives sponsored by his Department in Essex.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training in Essex continues to play an important part in helping the unemployed obtain the skills and experience they need to get jobs and some 2,200 people are currently taking advantage of it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's follow-up survey of employment training by region; and how many people who have proceeded through the scheme now have full-time employment.

Mr. Nicholls: The first results from the exercise to follow up all employment training leavers indicates that 58 per cent. of all those trainees completing their planned training enter employment, self-employment or full-time training or further education. Information at a regional level is not yet available.

85. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the procedure currently being deployed by his Department to monitor expenditure on employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department monitors closely the level of expenditure on employment training through its financial management and accounting system. It also operates a system of financial appraisal and monitoring for all organisations contracted to deliver employment training, to ensure that public money is properly protected and spent for the purposes intended.

73. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees entered permanent employment immediately after leaving employment training in the period January to December 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available.

64. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the target for employment training places and *(b)* the number of filled places in the period from January to December 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Targets for the number of employment training places are for internal management purposes only. The number of filled places on employment training increased from 111,000 to over 210,000 in the period January to December 1989.

40. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time trainees spend on employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Trainees spend an average of about six months on employment training.

Training and Enterprise Councils

26. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils he anticipates giving approval to so that they will become fully operational on 2 April.

Mr. Eggar: A number of training and enterprise councils (TECs) will shortly be submitting their corporate and business plans for approval. The national training task force will consider these plans and will be making its recommendation to me.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of training and enterprise council groups awarded development funding.

Mr. Eggar: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country since we issued the invitation to form training and enterprise councils. Applications for development funding from 55 groups of senior employers from around the country have been approved. The table lists the areas which have received development funding.

List of TECs awarded development funding

1. *South East*
   - Essex
   - Hampshire
   - Heart of England (Oxfordshire)
   - Hertfordshire
   - Isle of Wight
   - Kent
   - Milton Keynes
   - Thames Valley

2. *London*
   - AZTEC (Kingston/Merton)

3. *South West*
   - Avon
   - Devon/Cornwall
   - Dorset
   - Gloucestershire
   - Somerset

4. *West Midlands*
   - Birmingham
   - Coventry/Warwickshire
   - Dudley
   - Sandwell
   - Staffordshire
   - Walsall
   - Wolverhampton

5. *East Midlands and Eastern*
   - Central and South Cambridgeshire
   - Greater Peterborough
   - Norfolk/Waveney
   - Northamptonshire
   - North Nottinghamshire
   - Suffolk

6. *Yorkshire and Humberside*
   - Barnsley/Doncaster
   - Calderdale/Kirklees
   - Leeds
   - North Yorkshire
   - Rotherham
   - Sheffield
   - Wakefield

7. *North West*
   - Bolton/Bury
   - Cumbria
   - East Lancashire
   - Manchester
   - Oldham
   - Rochdale
   - South and East Cheshire
   - St. Helens
   - Stockport/High Peak
   - Wigan

8. *Northern*
   - County Durham
   - Northumberland
   - Teeside
   - Tyneside
   - Wearside

9. *Wales*
   - Gwent
   - Mid Glamorgan
   - North East Wales
   - North West Wales
   - South Glamorgan
   - West Wales

77. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the typical budget of a training and enterprise council.

Mr. Eggar: The budget for each training and enterprise council (TEC) will be negotiated locally and will vary according to the size of its area. Budgets will range from around £5 million to around £35 million per annum.

75. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will report on the progress of the training and enterprise council network.

Mr. Eggar: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country since we issued the invitation to form training and enterprise councils.

We expect to have a complete network of training and enterprise councils throughout England and Wales by the end of the year.

71. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have now been awarded development funding.

Mr. Eggar: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country since we issued the invitation to form training and enterprise councils. Applications for development funding from 55 groups of senior employers from around the country have been approved.

68. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements he is making to ensure that the training and enterprise councils are able to recognise a need in respect of the disabled which spreads beyond the immediate territory within which they will be operating.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will set out their training proposals in their business plan. My Department will want to be satisfied that these proposals meet the training needs of all individuals in their local community, including people with disabilities, and encompass access to training outside the TEC's immediate locality where appropriate.

59. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the first training and enterprise council to be operational.

Mr. Eggar: I expect the first training and enterprise councils to be operational in the spring.

28. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total sum of money for which training and enterprise councils will have executive responsibility.

Mr. Eggar: As TECs become operational they will assume responsibility for the vast majority of expenditure which is currently managed by the Training Agency. This amounts to around £2·5 billion in 1990-91.

Small Firms Service

27. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many requests for advice and information have now been received by his Department's small firms service.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989 the small firms service in England handled 314,625 inquiries and provided 50,013 counselling sessions.

Training

29. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the numbers of employees receiving training in Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: A recent survey of employers estimated that 8·6 million employees received training through their employers in 1986-87. The survey excluded the armed forces, agriculture, and firms with fewer than 10 employees.

More recent figures from the labour force survey show that in the spring of 1988 2·8 million employees received job-related training in the four weeks prior to the survey.

30 **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number and percentage of employees receiving training in the four-week period prior to the labour force survey in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 2,773,000 employees of working age received job-related training in Great Britain in the four-week period prior to the labour force survey in 1988. This is 13·3 per cent. of all employees of working age.

34. Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on training provisions available to the unemployed.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government make training available for young people aged between 16 and 18 who are not in full-time education or employment through YTS. Employment Training (ET) is available primarily for adults aged over 18 and under 60 who have been continuously unemployed for at least 26 weeks. It is also open to certain special groups who do not need to satisfy the 26 weeks' unemployment criterion.

Currently there are 386,000 YTS trainees and 207,000 ET trainees.

32. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the amount of expenditure on employer-based training as a percentage of gross domestic product in Germany, Japan, the United States of America, and Sweden and the United Kingdom for the most recent date for which information is available.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that employers in Great Britain spent £18 billion in 1986-87 on training their work force. This is equivalent to 4·6 per cent. of gross domestic product.

Comparable figures are not available for the other countries listed.

Training Agents

31. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of training agents who have *(a)* had their contracts terminated and *(b)* gone into receivership between January and December 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Between January and December 1989, three training agents had their contracts terminated by the Employment Department Training Agency and none has gone into receivership.

Disabled People

33. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve employment services for disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: This Department's general employment services are designed to help meet the needs of as many people with disabilities as possible. They are supplemented as necessary by a range of provision specifically for people with disabilities including sheltered employment for those with severe disabilities. These services are the subject of a review, the results of which will be made available as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used when issuing quota exemption permits under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Eggar: Disablement resettlement officers are instructed to consider the availability of suitable registered disabled people, and the degree of commitment shown by employers towards meeting their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to ensure that firms not meeting their quota obligations without permits meet their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Eggar: This Department will continue to pursue a policy of education and persuasion designed to improve the policies and practices of employers in relation to the employment of people with disabilities. This includes advising them of their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act, and using the Department's wide range of services for the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities to help them meet those obligations.

Wages

36. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring his Department undertakes of wage levels for jobs being advertised at jobcentres.

Mr. Eggar: Jobcentres have a responsibility to check that employers notifying vacancies are complying with any relevant wages council orders. They also advise employers on locally prevailing rates of pay.

41. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of male and female manual workers earned less than £150 a week in earnings during *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information for full-time adult employees in Great Britain is published in table 1 of part A of the new earnings survey reports for each of the years, and in table 124 of part E of the same reports for full-time employees of all ages. Copies of the reports are in the Library.

Japanese Enterprises

38. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been created in Japanese industrial and commercial enterprises which have chosen to locate their main European research and development centres in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Our figures on jobs created by Japanese concerns in the United Kingdom do not differentiate between manufacturing jobs and those in research and development. However, it is estimated that to date 36,000 jobs have been created by the 117 Japanese companies which have chosen to locate here.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of employees working in the United Kingdom who are citizens of the empire of Japan; and how many United Kingdom citizens are employed in companies resident in the United Kingdom owned by commercial interests resident in the empire of Japan.

Mr. Nicholls: Data on the number of employees in the United Kingdom whose nationality is Japanese are not available.

The Department of Trade and Industry's Invest in Britain Bureau advises that there are 117 Japanese manufacturing companies known to be either currently operating in the United Kingdom or having announced a formal intention to operate. In total, it is estimated that these firms have created or will create some 36,000 jobs.

Social Charter

39. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with trade unions in the United Kingdom as to their views on the EEC social charter and employment opportunities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received no representations from the trade unions on the social charter.

Fairground Inspection

42. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress on harmonisation of inspection rules for fairground equipment throughout the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: The European Commission is currently preparing a proposal for a directive concerning trade in fairground equipment. The work is at an early stage but it seems likely that the proposal will cover the design, manufacture and initial testing of fairground equipment. It may also cover the installation and erection of fairground equipment as well as the systems of examination and testing which should be used. European Commission staff have indicated that a proposal for such a directive will be submitted to the Council of Ministers within about 12 months.

In anticipation of this directive, CEN (the European standards making organisation) has established a technical committee to prepare harmonised European standards for fairground equipment. These technical standards would support the directive by showing how its requirements could be met.

Farms

43. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits to farms have been made by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive in the last year; and how many inspectors exist for this task.

Mr. Nicholls: In the financial year ended 31 March 1989, 37,274 visits to farm premises (including horticulture and agricultural contractors) were made by Health and Safety Executive inspectors; on 1 January 1990, 149 inspectors were employed in the agricultural inspectorate field force for this purpose.

Trade Unions (Transfer of Membership)

44. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is planning to permit greater choice for trade unionists in transferring membership between unions.

Mr. Nicholls: None. This is entirely a matter for trade unions and their members.

Skills Shortages

45. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the problems of skills shortages among firms in the south-east.

Mr. Nicholls: It is for firms in the south-east, as elsewhere, to anticipate their future needs for skills and to deal with any existing shortfalls. In this they will wish to take full account of the challenges set by demographic trends, new technologies and international competition; and draw on the underused talents of unemployed people, women, ethnic minorities, older workers and people with disabilities.

The Government for their part have introduced a number of measures to help employers including the establishment of training and enterprise councils and launch of business growth training. We are also assisting young people and the unemployed to gain new skills through youth training (YT) and employment training (ET).

Job Creation

46. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met local authority representatives to discuss job creation.

Mr. Eggar: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State nor I have held meetings with local authority representatives to discuss job creation.

Training and Vocational Education Initiative

49. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is taking to ensure that TVEI equipment in schools is kept modern and in good working order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: TVEI is a development programme helping young people gain the skills required in the work force. Education authorities are given a fixed sum to deliver the TVEI programme, only a small proportion of which is normally spent on equipment.

TVEI was not designed to be a continuing source of funds. As TVEI becomes embedded into the learning experience, education authorities are expected to fund any further developments from within their existing resources.

European Commissioner for Employment

51. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the European Commissioner for Employment; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Howard: I met Mrs. Papandreou on 22 January 1990 when we discussed a range of employment issues.

Self-employment

54. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently self-employed; and what was the figure in June 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of people in self-employment in the United Kingdom in September 1989, the latest figure available, is 3,141,000. The estimate for June 1979 was 1,906,000. This shows an increase of 1,235,000.

78. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many self-employed people there are in Greater London; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates for Greater London are not available for 1979. The available estimates of self-employed are as follows:

Self-employed in Greater London
Unadjusted for seasonal variation

Date	*Thousands*
September 1981	274
September 1989	415
Change September 1981-September 1989	141
Percentage change September 1981-September 1989	51·2 per cent.

Job Clubs

55. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have received assistance through job clubs.

Mr. Eggar: Since the job club programme started in November 1984, over 365,000 people have received assistance. Of these over 200,000 have gone directly into jobs and over 52,000 have taken up some other options such as training, self-employment or further education.

80. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if job clubs are to become one of the conditions in the actively seeking work regulations implementing the Social Security Act 1989.

Mr. Eggar: For claimants to be regarded as seeking work actively, they must take reasonable steps to seek work in each week for which they claim. Active membership of a job club is a way of satisfying the new conditions and a good way of finding a job. Latest figures show that 69 per cent. of job club leavers go into a job, self-employment, further education or training. Membership is voluntary and the new legislation does not mean that claimants are required to join job clubs.

79. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the range of facilities available to users of job clubs in the more remote areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Members of job clubs in the more remote areas have available the full range of facilities available at other job clubs. These include payment of fares to attend job club. Additionally, an open learning package is provided to help members who cannot attend as often as is usual. The adequacy of facilities is kept under review.

The employment service seeks to provide access to job clubs for long-term unemployed people living in rural areas wherever possible. A further extension of the service occurred on 12 February 1990 with the opening of Portree job club on the Isle of Skye.

Creches

56. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the provision of workplace creches by employers throughout Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: Comprehensive information on the extent of provision of workplace creches by employers throughout Britain is not available. Figures in the "IMS Manpower Commentary No. 43, Retaining women employees" indicate that the percentage of organisations currently providing such facilities is small, only about 3 per cent. However, indications are that the provision of workplace creches by employers is growing.

Workplace creches can be successful but are only one possible way of helping parents with child care and are not necessarily the most appropriate in all cases. Other possibilities include help with child care costs in the local home area and rearrangement of working hours and holidays to fit in with school hours and terms.

Blacklisting

60. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to make blacklisting unlawful.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Employment Service

61. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will report on the progress of the plan to launch the employment service as an executive agency.

Mr. Nicholls: As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) announced on 1 December 1989, *Official Report* col 461, the employment service will be launched as an executive agency on 2 April. The framework document and annual performance agreement will be published and made available to hon. Members then.

Tourism

62. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many self-employed people are currently employed in the tourism industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available estimate from the labour force survey indicates that there were 204,000 self-employed workers in tourism-related industries in spring 1988, 4,000 more than in spring 1987.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total international tourism revenue figures for the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives the earnings from overseas visitors to the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 complete years plus the current year to date, at current prices.

Year	*Earnings (£ millions)*
1979	2,797
1980	2,961
1981	2,970
1982	3,188
1983	4,003
1984	4,614
1985	5,442
1986	5,553
1987	6,260
1988	6,193
[1]1989	6,285

[1]To November.

72. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the United Kingdom currently earns from international tourism; and what information he has on which countries earn more from international tourism than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that overseas residents spent £6·2 billion in the United Kingdom in 1988. In 1987 the United Kingdom was ranked 5th in terms of international tourism receipts after the United States of America, Spain, Italy and France.

70. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the number of jobs in the tourism industry in the 10 years to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Between September 1979 and September 1989, the estimated number of employees in employment in tourism-related industries in Great Britain rose by 216,000 to 1,374,000. In addition, it is estimated from the labour force survey that there were 204,000 self-employed workers in tourism-related industries in spring 1988, 41,000 more than in spring 1981.

67. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of expenditure in the United Kingdom by overseas visitors in 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: It is provisionally estimated that overseas residents spent £6,285 million in the United Kingdom during the first 11 months of 1989, the latest period for which results are available. This is 9 per cent. higher than in the equivalent period of 1988.

Inner Cities

63. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to create employment opportunities for the inner city jobless men, women and youth.

Mr. Eggar: My Department will continue to place high priority on the encouragement of enterprise and new and existing businesses in the inner city, and on helping inner city residents improve their skills and qualifications for work. The Department operates a wide range of national but flexible programmes and services directly relevant to these aims, as well as special measures for inner city areas such as schools-industry compacts and the pilot job interview guarantee scheme.

The fact that unemployment in the 57 urban programme areas in England has fallen by over a third since March 1988 demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach, which is pursued in partnership and close collaboration with other Departments and agencies working to improve inner city conditions and economic prospects.

Economic League

65. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the organisers of the Economic League; and what matters were discussed.

58. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met any member of the board of the Economic League; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the organisers of the Economic League.

Closed Shop

74. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees are currently employed in workplaces with a closed shop.

Mr. Nicholls: The Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment", which was published in March last year, estimated that around 2·6 million people are employed in jobs which are covered by all forms of the closed shop. This estimate was derived from a specially commissioned survey carried out between 22 February and 6 March 1989, a summary of which has been placed in the Library.

Health and Safety

76. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of directives under consideration which require subordinate legislation on employment matters involving health and safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Four directives recently adopted under article 118A (Health and Safety of Workers), and a further four draft such directives currently before the Council of Ministers are expected to require implementing legislation. The intention is to implement mainly by regulations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and in line with the regulatory philosophy of the Act. For those directives still in draft the present assessment is of course subject to final decisions on content. Implementation proposals will be published by the Health and Safety Commission for consultation in due course.

82. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission on 31 January when a range of matters relating to the responsibilities of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive were discussed.

Jobcentres

84. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of employees in jobcentres in Britain in 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Eggar: The gross numbers of staff employed in jobcentres as at 1 April 1979 and 31 December 1989 were 11,397 and 7,598 respectively.

No direct comparison can be drawn between the numbers of staff employed in jobcentres in Britain in 1979 and 1989, since a number of functions which would have been reflected in the 1979 figures are no longer carried out in jobcentres.

The 1989 figure does not include 4,781 counselling staff who work in unemployment benefit offices and other employment service premises.

YTS

86. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will examine the YTS run by Cleveland county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Currently, Cleveland county council provides about 1,300 YTS places for a wide range of young people. Two thirds of those leaving the scheme either gain employment or go on to further training.

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mr. Eggar: All staff employed by the Employment Department Group have a responsibility to safeguard cash and assets from misappropriation and theft. There are 34 auditors and 15 accountants who are specialised in their fields.

Labour Costs

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what labour costs were as a percentage per unit of output in manufacturing, by region, in the United Kingdom in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Regional data on manufacturing output are not available.

London Borough of Newham

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the reasons for the decline in unemployment in London being slowest in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Nicholls: In the period December 1987 to December 1989 unemployment in Newham fell by 28·3 per cent. The two London labour market studies commissioned by my Department have included Newham. In addition to the normal range of training and employment measures available in Newham as elsewhere there are a number of special projects in Newham to help local people into employment.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 February 1990

ENVIRONMENT

Dog Registration

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities and organisations representing local authorities, responding to the paper "Action on Dogs", were in favour of registration as a means of tackling the stray dogs problem;

(2) how many responses were received from local authorities, and organisations representing local authorities, to the Government's consultation paper "Action on Dogs".

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Out of 462 local authorities and organisations known to represent them, 247 responded to our consultation paper and 207 of those who responded supported a dog registration scheme of some kind.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to assess the dog registration scheme in Northern Ireland with a view to applying that scheme in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My officials have made contact with officials in the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, with a view to discussing with them their experience of the operation of the various dog control provisions in force in Northern Ireland, and in particular the enforcement of the requirement for dogs to wear identification tags. We believe that the enforcement of this existing requirement would be more effective than an elaborate registration scheme in solving the problems caused by irresponsible dog owners. Officials from my Department will be visiting Northern Ireland shortly for this purpose.

Toxic Waste Tips

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the danger posed by toxic waste tips to drinking water supplies and on current filling and safety regulations in respect of toxic tips; and what plans he has to amend these regulations in the future.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are a range of statutory controls which provide effective protection of drinking water supplies. First, there is a requirement for waste disposal authorities—in considering applications for disposal licences made under the Control of Pollution Act 1974—to have regard to possible risks of water pollution, and to consult with the National Rivers Authority. Under provisions in the current Environmental Protection Bill, we propose to strengthen and extend the licensing controls. Secondly, under the Water Act 1989, water undertakings are under a statutory duty to supply wholesome water, and it is an offence to supply water which is unfit for human consumption. Thirdly, we have recently announced the formation of a new drinking water inspectorate whose job it will be to check that supplies meet the standards defined in the new water quality regulations. Fourthly, the NRA also have extensive programmes for monitoring the quality of ground and surface waters. Consequently, we now have a strong set of safeguards for drinking water supplies and I have no plans to amend the basic system of controls in this area.

Council Properties, Bolton

Mr. Thursham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council-owned properties in the Bolton metropolitan borough area were renovated in 1989 and during each of the last 10 years; and what was the amount of Government grants given in respect of this work during the same period.

Mr. Chope: The number of renovations completed on local authority-owned dwellings in England appears in "Local Housing Statistics" [volumes 55 (table 9), 58 (table 7) and table 4 of volumes 65, 69, 73, 77, 81, 85, 89, 90 and 91 (first half 1989)].

Copies are available in the Library.

The cost of renovation works undertaken by a council is included in the calculation of its entitlement to main housing subsidy. Bolton received £3,070,669 in subsidy in 1981-82 and £126,447 in 1982-83. It has since been out of subsidy.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for the number of people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Chope: Latest estimates of households temporarily resident in bed-and-breakfast accommodation appear in table 4(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the percentage of persons listed on community charge registers who will fail to pay the charge in 1990-91 for English shire counties; and what guidance he has issued to local authorities as to the estimates they should make for default when deciding on the amount of charge to meet their planned expenditure.

Mr. Chope: The Department has made no estimates of the proportion of charge payers who may fail to pay community charges and sees no need to offer advice on this to charging authorities. We have issued practice notes on steps that charging authorities may take to minimise arrears, and more flexible instalment regimes and improved powers of enforcement should improve authorities' ability to obtain arrears compared with that under the domestic rating system.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the totals of spending in 1990-91 by *(a)* Somerset county council and *(b)* Taunton

Deane borough council assumed for the purposes of his calculations of illustrative combined capital value rates and local income tax published on 6 November 1989.

Mr. Chope: The assumed spending was the same as that used for the provisional assumed charges also published on 6 November.

The assumed spending figures for 1990-91 were:

	£ million
Somerset county council	222·367
Taunton Deane borough council	4·306

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East on 6 February, *Official Report*, columns *582-83*, if he will list all departmental circulars, excluding practice notes, issued by his Department in connection with the community charge, giving in each case, the date of issue and an outline of the contents; and if he will indicate whether copies of such have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* No numbered departmental circulars have been issued about the community charge. A number of letters have been sent to all charging authorities. These are as follows:

Date of issue	*Contents*
1988	
25 July	Community charge costs: Price Waterhouse study
5 August	Local Government Finance Act
15 December	Community charge regulations: Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals
16 December	Community charge preparation costs
1989	
31 January	Community charge students regulations
31 January	Implementation of the community charge
28 February	Community charge implementation and minority language translations
17 March	Implementation of rates reform
3 May	Implementation of the community charge and NNDR: questionnaire
5 May	Leaflet: "The community charge (the so-called Poll Tax): how it will work for you"
5 May	Payment of specific grant for community charge
10 May	United Kingdom service personnel
10 August	Community charge registration and data protection
18 September	Amendments to practice notes
11 October	Safety net and transitional relief
13 October	Payment of specific grant for community charge preparation
20 October	Community charge transitional relief
20 October	Community charge bill
26 October	Amendments to practice notes
3 November	Exemption for those severely mentally impaired
9 November	Community charge transitional relief
16 November	Local Government and Housing Act 1989: amendments to Local Government Finance Act
22 November	Transitional relief scheme—details
15 December	Community charge bill—details
28 December	Community charge: amendments to practice notes
1990	
10 January	Community charge transitional relief regulations
9 February	Designation of Ministry of Defence Establishments

Details of those letters amending practice notes are placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide comparable figures to his November estimate of the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult as against rates for each region and each metropolitan area and county council.

Mr. Chope: The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures are consistent with the assumed charges published on 11 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he proposes to use to charge-cap those authorities whose proposed community charge is unacceptably high; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North-West (Mr. Stern) on 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *252-3*.

Rural Housing

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received over the shortage of council houses in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time from hon. Members' interest groups and members of the public. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 13 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 711.

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on control of the transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes.

Mr. Trippier: Government policy is to encourage international action to reduce transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste for disposal to the environmentally justified minimum and to monitor and control effectively, those movements that are necessary. These objectives are being pursued in discussions with the European Community, OECD and UNEP and through the provisions of national legislation.

Waste Dumps

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in Northumberland the location of mine shafts currently in use as dumps for waste or special waste.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has no record of any mine shafts currently in use in Northumberland for the disposal of controlled waste.

Water Supplies

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of poison dumps which threaten water supplies; and what

assessment he has made of the danger posed by such dumps to water supplies within the Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Mr. Trippier: These are matters for waste disposal authorities. They are required to operate disposal licensing controls under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, acting in consultation with what is now the National Rivers Authority, in order to prevent risks of water pollution. Under provisions in the Environmental Protection Bill, waste regulation authorities will also be required to inspect and monitor closed landfill sites.

The recently publicised 1974 survey was a desk assessment to assist the relevant authorities in carrying out their statutory responsibilities. Since then, the Department has had an active research programme into the behaviour and characteristics of landfill sites, the results of which have been reflected in a series of waste management papers issued by the Department.

Council Contracts

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to prevent councils from avoiding competition by submitting contracts to tender in a way guaranteed to favour their own work force.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department investigates all complaints of anti-competitive practices by local authorities on their merits. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has powers of sanction under sections 19A and 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and sections 13 and 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 and will use them where necessary. To date, notices under section 19A of the 1980 Act have been served on the metropolitan borough of Wirral and the London borough of Brent. A direction was subsequently given to the metropolitan borough of Wirral under section 19B of that Act. Notices under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988 have been served on five local authorities—the London borough of Hillingdon, Bristol city council, Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council, Knowsley metropolitan borough council and Charnwood borough council. My right hon. Friend is currently considering responses received from these authorities.

Homelessness

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures of acceptances of homeless households by local authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest estimates of households accepted as homeless in England appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pollution

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to help Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities recover the costs of regulating pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), on Tuesday 30 January 1990, *Official Report*, columns *173-74*.

Right to Buy

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to extend the right to buy to all tenants of non-resident landlords.

Mr. Chope: No.

Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what loss of income will accrue to Lambeth council when uniform business rates are not paid within the year to which demands relate.

Mr. Chope: Under the Non-Domestic Rating Contributions (England) Regulations 1989 (SI 2435), charging authorities in inner London, in calculating their provisional contributions to the national non-domestic rating pool, may deduct an allowance for possible losses of 0·45 per cent. of their estimated rate yield for the year. The regulations provide for all losses to be offset against contributions to the pool at outturn stage, subject to audit. Provision may be made at outturn stage for amounts which may have to be written off, again subject to audit. These arrangements were agreed by the local authority associations.

Revenue Support Grant, Northamptonshire

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 1990-91 revenue support grant entitlement per head of population, before safety net adjustments, for each borough and district council in Northamptonshire, in descending order of magnitude.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is shown in the table:

1990-91 Revenue support grant per adult before safety net adjustments

Area	*RSG before safety net (£ adult)*
Northampton	239
Corby	233
Wellingborough	223
Kettering	222
Daventry	213
East Northamptonshire	212
South Northamptonshire	204

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the issue of liability in respect of damage caused to the environment as a result of the release of a genetically engineered organism.

Mr. Trippier: Part VI of the Environmental Protection Bill refers to the setting up of a statutory control system for genetically modified (engineered) organisms, making provision for criminal offences in the case of breach, including the general duties for preventing damage to the environment. Express provisions relating to civil liability are not included. However, Lord Lewis, chairman of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, referred to the question of strict civil liability in his letter to the Secretary of State of 6 February. I am considering the position further.

Derbyshire County Council

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1981 the expenditure of Derbyshire county council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Net current expenditure—Derbyshire county council

	Cash terms	*Real terms—1981-82 prices*	*Cash terms per head*
	£ million	*£ million*[1]	*£*[2]
1981-82	268·0	268·0	294
1982-83	296·8	276·8	326
1983-84	313·3	279·2	344
1984-85	365·9	310·6	401
1985-86	357·4	287·9	392
1986-87	397·4	309·7	433
1987-88	442·2	327·3	481
1988-89	486·2	335·5	526
1989-90	503·3	324·6	544

[1] Using the GDP deflator to convert from cash values to constant prices.

[2] Population figures used to derive per capita values are latest available Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1981 the staffing levels of Derbyshire county council *(a)* full time, *(b)* part time and *(c)* in total.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Derbyshire county council: All services at June

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1981	20,517	17,891	38,408
1982	20,217	18,455	38,672
1983	20,765	18,342	39,107
1984	20,817	18,764	39,581
1985	20,764	19,252	40,016
1986	20,903	21,234	42,137
1987	21,412	23,501	44,913
1988	22,569	25,081	47,650
1989	22,712	23,593	46,305

Planning Appeals

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority planning decisions were overruled by his Department in 1989.

Mr. Moynihan: The figure is 7,681. This amounts to less than 2 per cent. of all planning decisions.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) for what type of Property Services Agency the Thesis computer system has been designed;

(2) what is the projected cost of equipping the Property Services Agency with the Thesis computer system.

Mr. Chope: The Thesis system is designed to provide IT support to PSA's maintenance management and associated operations throughout the United Kingdom. The equipment is estimated to cost £12·8 million over the next two years. The system is reviewed periodically against PSA's changing requirements. A review is now in progress in the light of PSA's transition to a commercial organisation and subsequent privatisation.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the discussions between representatives of the United States air force and the Property Services Agency about the implications for the United States air force of Property Services Agency privatisation.

Mr. Chope: Talks are continuing, and I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *436*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the time it is expected to take for the Property Services Agency to move from vote accounting to full commercial accounting in a trading fund.

Mr. Chope: It is planned to introduce full commercial accounts with effect from 1 April 1991. So long as the PSA remains a Government Department, it will retain vote accounts in parallel. There are no plans to establish PSA as a trading fund.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many grades 6 and above were working in the Crown Suppliers on 1 February 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Chope: At 1 February 1988, there were eight grade 6 staff; four grade 5 staff and one grade 3. At 1 February 1989, there were eight grade 6 staff; three grade 5 staff and one grade 3. At 1 February 1990, there were six grade 6 staff; five grade 5 and one grade 3.

Waste Sites (West Sussex)

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment what action his Department is taking to deal with the West Sussex toxic and domestic waste sites posing some risk to water in his Department's list of landfill sites in England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The 1973-74 survey, featured in a recent newspaper article, was a desk assessment of possible risks to assist statutory authorities in controlling and monitoring waste disposal sites under public health legislation and, subsequently, the licensing requirements of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The information was made available to the appropriate authorities at the time.

Since then, West Sussex county council and the Southern water authority will have monitored waste disposal sites and ground and surface waters in their areas in accordance with their responsibilities under the Water Act 1973 and the Control of Pollution Act 1974, which include powers to take action over pollution where this occurs.

Detailed, up-to-date information is not held centrally on the location of waste disposal sites and safeguards taken. Under the Water Act 1989, the National Rivers Authority now has responsibility for monitoring ground and surface waters and is currently reviewing the scope of these programmes. We are providing it with the list of sites identified in the 1973-74 survey for possible reference purposes.

SSAs, Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the reasons for the variations in the standard spending assessment between the Harrogate borough council on a per capita basis, York city council and Scarborough borough council.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The standard spending assessments for these three authorities have been calculated in accordance with the formulae set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). The table gives details for the three authorities of the amount of SSA in £/adult which is attributable to each of the indicators used to calculate their SSAs. The indicators are defined in annex A to the distribution report.

SSA £/per head of relevant population

Indicator	*Harrogate*	*York*	*Scarborough*
Resident population	81	75	77
Daytime net inflow	−1	3	0
Visitors nights	1	1	5
Ward weighted density	10	26	12
Social index	−21	−1	−14
Sparsity	14	0	11
Transfer to North Yorks CC	−8	−8	−8
County level services	1	1	1
Flood defence	1	1	0
Coast protection	0	0	2
Interest receipts	−2	−3	−2
TOTAL OTHER SERVICES	75	95	84
TOTAL CAPITAL FINANCING	6	6	8
TOTAL SSA	81	102	91

Recycled Paper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider financial measures that would encourage local authorities to use recycled stationery.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* Financial measures are not necessary; stationery made from recycled fibre can already fulfil most requirements adequately at a competitive price. It is important for local authorities to consider whether they are over-specifying and demanding a quality of paper that is too good for the purpose. An expert working group set up under the aegis of the recycling forum chaired by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is specifically considering such issues.

Metals (Recycling)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the recycling of metals.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

My Department's environmental programme includes a number of initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of recycling, and at achieving increases in the levels of United Kingdom domestic and industrial waste now being recycled. The recycling advisory group which I formed last year is currently considering the best means of securing such increases for a range of products and materials, including metal containers, and Warren Spring laboratory has been co-operating with industry on research into techniques to reclaim more metals from the waste stream. My Department has also helped to organise the recycling of metalliferous materials international conference to be held in Birmingham in April.

The Environmental Protection Bill also contains proposals which are intended to increase recycling levels, and it is the Government's intention to publish a White Paper on the environment later this year; this may also have implications for recycling.

Packaging

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the packaging industry about the need for minimum packaging policies to reduce waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

My Department's environmental programme has given priority to waste minimisation issues and the "Cutting Your Losses" brochure published last year emphasised the importance of reducing waste in all industrial sectors, including the packaging industry. We are now organising a design for the environment conference at the national exhibition centre on 28 March; this will consider environmental design problems and in particular will examine how products can be redesigned to minimise waste during the manufacturing and packaging process. The conference will act as a springboard for other design-related initiatives to promote awareness in this area. My Department is also of course in frequent touch with the packaging industry on the full range of environmental issues.

Forestry

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hectares of forest have been planted in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The information is given in the table. This covers the total new planting undertaken or grant-aided by the

Forestry Commission in the years stated, rounded to the nearest 1,000 hectares. It does not include the restocking of woodland after felling.

Year ended 31 March	Total new planting (hectares)
1980	24,000
1981	20,000
1982	23,000
1983	21,000
1984	25,000
1985	21,000
1986	23,000
1987	24,000
1988	29,000
1989	29,000

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Educational Needs

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what means his Department is monitoring Government policy on the integration of children with special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The principal means used by the Department are the statistical returns from local education authorities and schools, HMI reports, surveys and research projects. Evaluation studies of the Education Reform Act will also take account of the position of pupils with special educational needs, where appropriate.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the findings of Her Majesty's inspector's report on education, he has proposals designed to improve the quality of education available to students with learning disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government announced on 18 December their programme for the local education authority training grants scheme for 1990-91, under which £9·7 million will be devoted to six national priority areas in the field of special needs and issued for consultation on 9 January a draft circular on staffing for pupils with special educational needs, which sets out a number of considerations which local education authorities should take into account in reviewing local provision for these pupils in their areas. These measures will contribute to the achievement of the Government's education reforms which are intended to secure the best possible return from the resources which are invested in the education service and to raise the standards of achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

GCSE

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received from schools complaining about the dates of the GCSE examinations in 1989 and 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received about 25 representations on this issue.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the first and last dates of GCSE examinations in 1989 and in 1990 together with similar information for GCE O-levels in 1987.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1989, the first GCSE examination was on 15 May, the last on 23 June. In 1990, the first examination will be on 14 May, the last on 22 June.

In 1987 the GCE O-level examinations of most of the boards ran from the beginning to the end of June.

Since GCSE replaced GCE O-level and CSE, any comparison must also take into account the dates of the CSE examinations: in 1987, these generally ran from the end of April or the beginning of May to mid-June.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements exist for his Department to make representations to the GCSE examination boards about the dates of examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Officials are in regular contact with the examining groups about this issue.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the policy of his Department about the proportion of the summer term which should be regarded as available for GCSE examinations and the relation of this to the spring bank holiday.

Mrs. Rumbold: The GCSE examining groups are independent bodies, wholly responsible for the administration of their own examinations. Ministers have no powers to intervene directly in their day-to-day affairs. Nevertheless, I am concerned that the examination season should not encroach unnecessarily on the summer term. I am assured that the groups are aware of the anxiety which has been expressed on this issue, and that although it is now too late to change the timetable for 1990, the groups are looking very carefully at the position for 1991 and beyond.

Neurosciences Projects

Mr. Rhodes James: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for the years 1979-80 and 1989-90 *(a)* total applications, *(b)* alpha applications, *(c)* awards and *(d)* alpha applications unfunded in Medical Research Council grants to cell systems and neurosciences projects.

Mr. Jackson: The following table lists the figures for academic years 1979-80 and 1988-89. Figures for the academic year 1989-90 are not yet available.

Project grants and year	Neurosciences	Systems	Cell	Total
Total applications				
1979-80	272	425	280	977
1988-89	322	380	290	992
Alpha applications				
1979-80	147	225	179	551

Project grants and year	Neurosciences	Systems	Cell	Total
1988-89	231	233	207	671
Awards made				
1979-80	142	228	166	536
1988-89	121	130	119	370
Alpha applications not funded				
1979-80	6	5	4	15
1988-89	110	103	88	301

The Medical Research Council has reduced in recent years the proportion of funds available for short-term awards to universities in order to concentrate on long-term programmes both in universities and Medical Research Council establishments and to meet new problems such as AIDS.

Secondary School Buildings

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for renovating secondary school buildings, in the light of Her Majesty's inspector's second annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities are responsible for deciding which building projects to undertake at individual county and voluntary controlled secondary schools, in the light of local needs and circumstances. For 1990-91, £485 million is available in annual capital guidelines for capital expenditure on schools and colleges in England, compared with £352 million under the old system of allocations for 1989-90. Local authorities are free to spend above the level of their annual capital guideline, by using capital receipts as permitted within the flexibilities of the Local Government Acts. In addition, £118 million of grant is available for voluntary aided, special agreement and grant-maintained schools.

Computers

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he makes of the number of computers per 100 pupils in *(a)* maintained secondary schools and *(b)* city technology colleges.

Mr. MacGregor: Four per 100 in maintained secondary schools and 25 per 100 in the city technology colleges established to date, none of which yet has its full complement of pupils.

TRANSPORT

Trains (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will obtain a copy of the year-round survey produced by the Railway Development Society's "Yorkshire Rail Review", which covers express and local trains and records their punctuality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have a copy of this report and I have noted its contents.

London Docklands Railway

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the docklands light railway to meet the requirements of the docklands after its extension in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have asked the docklands light railway to prepare for my consideration a strategic review of the options for future development following the completion of the City and Beckton extensions, having regard to forecasts of demand and the planned extension of the Jubilee line to docklands.

Cyclists

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations his Department has given to the impact on cyclists of the plans to dual trunk roads; and what steps will be taken to minimise the effects.

Mr. Atkins: In planning new trunk roads and improving existing ones, close attention is paid to the suitability of the route for cyclists and to the design of junctions and other locations where cyclists are known to be at particular risk. Published material is available for the guidance of highway planners and engineers.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further research and publications his Department intends to undertake in 1990 to encourage cycling.

Mr. Atkins: We are pressing ahead with implementation of the remaining aspects of the cycle routes programme of research and application studies.

Research continues into innovatory traffic engineering techniques to help cyclists. Currently, the main projects are concerned with finding further methods of improving safety on roundabouts; refining the use of advance stop lines for cyclists; and identifying a more efficient form of shared use crossing for cyclists and pedestrians.

Our aim in undertaking research and publishing technical guidance on cycling issues is to assist highway authorities and others in efforts to create safer conditions for cyclists.

So far, four local transport notes and 27 traffic advisory leaflets have been produced using the results from our cycling research. Further material on cycling will be published as the results of studies become available.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum number of passengers permitted on the Woolwich ferry under existing safety regulations; and what steps are currently taken to ensure that this figure is not exceeded.

Mr. McLoughlin: Each of the three Woolwich ferries is allowed to carry a maximum of 300 passengers. The owner and master have the responsibility for ensuring that this number is not exceeded. Random checks are carried out by the Department's marine surveyors.

Severn Crossing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now decided upon the method of financing the proposed second Severn crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No; the decision on whether to use private or public finance will depend on our final evaluation of the tenderers' corresponding proposals.

Mersey Tunnels

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is in a position to respond to Merseytravel's case for Government financial assistance for the Mersey tunnels.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has today written to Councillor Ingham of Merseytravel to say that we have considered very carefully the case presented for Government financial assistance for the Mersey tunnels. In that letter, he explained that the merits of the case did not justify Government assistance. Indeed, our examination of the case suggests that the tunnels could become financially self-supporting in a few years' time.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Convention

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance is issued to English courts in respect of references to the European convention in continuing domestic legislation.

The Attorney-General: It is not appropriate for the Government to issue guidance to the courts on how legislation should be interpreted, and they do not do so.

Land Covenants, Ashworth

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about relator proceedings on land covenants at Ashworth.

The Attorney-General: The solicitors to the relators in the proceedings against Barratt Manchester Limited and Bolton metropolitan borough council have supplied me with a copy of the judgment of Mr. Justice Scott which is now being considered.

Tax Law

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what discussions he has had with the Law Society concerning the introduction of a fair disclosure pact with the Inland Revenue in tax avoidance cases;

(2) what discussions he has had with representatives of the legal profession concerning the duties of solicitors and members of the Bar in cases of *(a)* tax avoidance, *(b)* tax evasion and *(c)* cases where the Inland Revenue seeks to discover documents to assess the difference between avoidance and evasion.

The Attorney-General: None. The Inland Revenue has statutory powers to require persons, including members of the legal profession to provide information in specified circumstances, where it is relevant to a taxpayer's affairs, except where the position is covered by privilege. In addition, the legal profession has codes of conduct which prevent members assisting clients in any unlawful activity, whether concerned with tax or otherwise.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Favell: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his response to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr Fraser), *Official Report*, 12 February, column 67, if he will make a further statement on the role of the Crown prosecution service in relation to the case of Coren and Greenwood.

The Attorney-General: Primary responsibility for the enforcement of insider dealing legislation rests with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The case of Coren and Greenwood involved a civil servant within the Office of Fair Trading, and because of the relation between that office and the DTI, the Crown prosecution service undertook the conduct of the proceedings. My assertion that this case was brought by the DTI was therefore incorrect, and I regret the mistake.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Passports

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many individuals currently resident *(a)* in South Africa and *(b)* in the rest of the world (i) hold a British passport and (ii) have the right to return to live in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no means of assessing accurately how many British nationals overseas hold British passports. British nationals resident in South Africa are estimated to number between 500,000 and 1 million. Most of them have the right to live in the United Kingdom. British nationals in the rest of the world, including dependent territories, are estimated to number 8 million to 8·5 million. Of these, it is estimated that 5 million have the right to live in the United Kingdom. However, many of these are likely to be dual nationals currently holding only the passport of their country of residence.

Chile

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes there have been in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Chile since the democratic elections in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: With our European partners, we have welcomed the transition towards democracy in Chile, and look forward to a deepening of our bilateral relations.

British Embassy, Bangkok

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are awaiting interview at the British embassy in Bangkok for consideration for entry into the United Kingdom either as husbands or wives of British citizens.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 13 February 1990 there were two men and 97 women awaiting settlement interviews at the embassy in Bangkok.

Hong Kong

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many suicide attempts have occurred in Hong Kong detention camps for Vietnamese boat people since the inception of the camps: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Eight people have inflicted injuries upon themselves in Hong Kong's detention centres since the closed camp policy started on 16 June 1988. One of those people was found to be suffering from a psychiatric illness and two gave their reasons for injuring themselves as family problems. Five people gave their reasons as a desire to protest against the policy of screening and repatriation. None sustained life-threatening injuries.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is given generally to Vietnamese boat women in Hong Kong detention camps as to the health attributes of the contraceptive drug Depo Provera and its consequences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Family Planning Association offers the usual range of contraceptive techniques to Vietnamese women. In offering Depo Provera it explains that it is a drug administered by injection and that it is effective for 12 weeks. It also explains all the possible side-effects. Depo Provera has been approved for use by the World Health Organisation. It is made available to Vietnamese women in detention centres on the same basis as it is offered to the general population in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the staff in Hong Kong detention camps have administered the contraceptive drug Depo Provera to Vietnamese boat women held there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Various methods of contraception are offered to Vietnamese boat people on an entirely voluntary basis by staff of the Family Planning Association. Some Vietnamese women have chosen to use Depo Provera.

Kurds

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the reported poisoning of Kurdish refugees in Turkey; and whether he intends to raise the matter with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and of the Turkish Government.

Mr. Maude: Staff from HM embassy have been in touch with the office of the UNHCR in Ankara which confirms that approximately 100 Iraqui Kurds at Diyarbakir entered hospital on 1 February after eating contaminated bread. We understand that all have been discharged. Samples of the bread are being analysed by the Turkish authorities.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

David Lloyd George

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will arrange for the Refreshment Department to offer a special menu to commemorate the centenary of the election of David Lloyd George, MP, ex-Prime Minister, to Parliament on 10 April 1890.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member's request will be considered by the Catering Sub-Committee.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Duchy of Lancaster has not employed any security firms during the period in question.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many Metropolitan police officers and how many person hours were spent on observation duties of public lavatories in the N division between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many men were arrested by Metropolitan police officers engaged on observation duties of public lavatories in the N division between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989;

(3) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many men were arrested by Metropolitan police officers engaged on observation duties of the public lavatories located at Highbury crescent, London N5, between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the only police observation duties of public lavatories in the N division area during the period were at Highbury crescent, London N5. The operation involved the deployment of four officers over a total period of 239 hours, and 35 arrests were made.

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of staff in his Department have been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data held by his Department within the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no central record of any disciplinary proceedings on such a basis in the last five years.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to the police; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(2) what kinds of personal data held by his Department are transferred to the police; and whether records are kept of such transfers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are frequent transfers of personal data between the Home Office and the police as part of the day-to-day business of the Department. I regret that more detailed information about the basis and frequency of such transfers could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NATO Courses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* Government Departments and *(b)* private or public bodies in the United Kingdom which send participants to the bi-annual courses on civil-military co-operation held by NATO at Oberammergau.

Mr. John Patten: Such courses cover civil emergency planning as well as civil-military co-operation, and are attended by civil and military personnel who are directly involved in NATO planning. Members of staff from a number of Government Departments and the armed services have participated in the courses. We are not aware that any representatives from private or other public bodies in the United Kingdom have so far attended.

Boundary Commission for Wales

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the parliamentary boundary commission for Wales appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The parliamentary boundary commission for Wales is an entirely independent body and the disclosure of internal management information of this kind is more appropriate for the commission itself.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by the parliamentary boundary commission for Wales declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The parliamentary boundary commission for Wales makes no appointments. From time to time my right hon. and learned Friend appoints assistant commissioners to conduct local inquiries for the commission. Before their appointment, candidates are asked for an assurance that they have not been involved in political activity. There are no such assistant commissioners at present.

Dart Guns

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dart gun firearms certificates have been granted; how many persons now have such weapons in England and Wales, broken down by police force areas; and how many are held by *(a)* deer farmers and *(b)* others.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reassess the answer of the Minister of State to the Adjournment debate on Colin Wallace's manslaughter conviction, *Official Report*, col 948-52, 27 June 1989, in the light of the most recent ministerial replies in relation to Colin Wallace.

Mr. John Patten: I have nothing to add to the answer given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 30 January 1990 at column *119*.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he is going to publish guidance on the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance on the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 has today been laid before Parliament, in accordance with section 21(1) of the Act. The Animal Procedures Committee has been fully consulted about this guidance, in accordance with section 21(3) of the Act. The guidance will be published tomorrow as HC182 and a copy will be sent to every holder of a certificate of designation issued under sections 6 and 7 of the Act.

The publication of this guidance is the last major step in the bringing into force of the 1986 Act. The changeover to the new legislation has been carried out swiftly and according to the timetable that we set ourselves. This is a major achievement, reflecting the positive response which the scientific community is giving to the 1986 Act. This guidance sets out fully how the strict controls of the Act are now operating.

THE ARTS

Royal Shakespeare Company

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the latest position concerning the work of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its funding, taking into account the recent announcement of an increase in funding.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the level of its grant to individual companies in the light of their artistic importance and a range of other factors.

In the case of the Royal Shakespeare Company, its national and international importance is not in doubt. The Arts Council has awarded the RSC an 11 per cent. increase in its grant for next year, taking it to over £6 million. This is a very substantial increase, well above the rate of inflation, and should help the company balance its books.

In 1984, the Government wrote off the RSC's deficit and increased its baseline grant in order to put the company on a firm footing from which to plan its future programmes. This was in response to two of the three recommendations of the Priestley report. The recommendation to index-link the RSC's grant was not accepted.

I understand that the company is to cancel the winter season planned at the Barbican for 1991. This is a management decision by the RSC, and it is entirely for it to make. It will continue production as normal in its other venues, and will reopen at the Barbican in spring 1991. It will continue to tour widely. I am sure that it will maintain its excellent attendance levels.

The company has generated substantial income from the box office and the private sector, including generous sponsorship from Royal Insurance of £1·1 million over three years. I have every hope and confidence that the RSC will continue to build on its success.

Works of Art

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since he last made an announcement on the subject to the House.

Mr. Luce: Since my announcement on 22 January at column *536*, I am pleased to announce that four offers of items have been accepted in lieu of tax; a collection of 20 modern paintings, a collection of Anglo-Saxon and medieval coins, a painting by Constable and an 18th century harpsichord. In accordance with the condition on which it was offered the coin collection will be allocated to the Fitzwilliam museum, Cambridge. It satisfied £418,429·20 tax and followed the precedent set by the acceptance of Picasso's "Weeping Woman" in that the Fitzwilliam agreed to pay the owner the difference (£108,128·80) between that tax liability to be satisfied and the special price of £526,558. The collection of modern paintings satisfied £82,742 tax and will be allocated to the Abbot Hall art gallery, Cumbria. No decision on allocation has yet been taken regarding Constable's "Farm Cart with Horse in Harness" or the harpsichord which satisfied £50,025 and £25,432·79 tax respectively. These items will be advertised to institutions in the usual way.

Finally, I have decided that Cezanne's "Allée à Chantilly", accepted in lieu of tax in 1988-89, should be allocated to the National gallery.

CIVIL SERVICE

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Luce: My Department currently has two contracts with Securiguard Services Limited, to the annual value of £85,420 and £14,175. The contracts provide for five employees, four of them operating in shifts. The total value of all contracts with private security firms in each financial year since 1984-85 is:

Year	*£*
1984-85	45,000
1985-86	48,000
1986-87	70,600
1987-88	77,200
1988-89	69,700
1989-90	84,600

Occupational Health Department

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects to computerise information held by the Civil Service occupational health department at Murray house.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* There are no plans to computerise the information held by the Civil Service occupational health service at Murray house. During 1990-91 a study is to be undertaken into the computerising of various financial and operational procedures, leading to the introduction of a new computer system serving the headquarters and all regional offices in 1991-92.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Waste Recycling

16. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the current level of incentive for industry to recycle its waste.

Mr. Forth: A very strong incentive—that of market economics—already exists, and I am pleased that many United Kingdom companies are saving money by recycling a very high proportion of their recyclable process scrap. I congratulate those companies but more could be done, and my Department is actively encouraging others to recognise the economic and environmental benefits of waste minimisation and recycling.

53. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to encourage investment in capital equipment for the purpose of recycling of waste materials in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth: Investment in capital equipment for this purpose will flow naturally when effective waste separation and processing systems are in place, when consumer demand for products manufactured from recycled materials is secure, and when commercial operations are in prospect. My Department is working closely with the Department of the Environment, industry, consumer groups and the voluntary sector to develop a coherent national approach to recycling, and this is also expected to lead to an increase in investment in capital equipment.

Post Office

19. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what was discussed.

40. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what was discussed.

84. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what was discussed.

Mr. Forth: I last met the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson, on 11 January. We discussed various matters of mutual interest.

Insider Dealing

20. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last reviewed the regulations to deal with insider dealing; and whether he has any plans to bring forward amendments.

39. **Mr. Mesle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last reviewed the regulations to deal with insider dealing; and whether he has any plans to bring forward amendments.

Mr. Redwood: As I told the House on 8 December, the Government that day published a consultative document on proposals for changes to the law on insider dealing. A copy is in the Library. I will consider carefully any constructive proposals that may emerge from the consultation.

Product Safety

21. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering to ensure greater product safety.

47. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering to ensure greater product safety.

75. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering to ensure greater product safety.

Mr. Forth: Product safety will continue to be a high priority for my Department. Provision is being made for the collection and analysis of accident statistics, the promotion of effective safety campaigns to raise public awareness, and for comprehensive statutory protection against unsafe goods. The Consumer Protection Act 1987, for example, makes it a criminal offence to supply any consumer product that is not safe. This is supported by specific safety regulations where necessary, and by my approval of specific safety standards, and the promotion of reasonable standards of safety in the marketing of consumer products.

Telephones (Number Displays)

22. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make it his policy to encourage the telecommunications industry and Oftel to promote the introduction of telephones which display the caller's number.

Mr. Forth: The provision of calling line identification facilities is primarily a matter for the network operators. I know that the Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, is keeping the position under close review.

Japan

23. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current trade deficit with Japan; and how much of the deficit is accounted for by manufactured goods.

102. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current trade deficit with Japan; and how much of the deficit is accounted for by manufactured goods.

Mr. Redwood: In 1989 the deficit in total visible trade with Japan was £4·8 billion. In the same period the deficit for manufactured goods was £5·0 billion. Last year United Kingdom exports to Japan increased by £525 million to £2·3 billion, an increase of 30 per cent. over 1988.

Technological Standards

24. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he will be making to the report produced for the European Commission by the university of Louvain in respect of its assessment of the United Kingdom's technological standards; and if he will make a statement.

93. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he will be making to the report produced for the European Commission by the university of Louvain in respect of its assessment of the United Kingdom's technological standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report does not actually highlight the United Kingdom's technological backwardness. The Government are well aware of the challenge of 1992 and we have policies in place to help firms in all regions to rise to it.

Trade Deficits

25. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the European Economic Community countries with which the United Kingdom has a manufacturing trade deficit.

61. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the European Economic Community countries with which the United Kingdom has a manufacturing trade deficit.

104. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the European Economic Community countries with which the United Kingdom has a manufacturing trade deficit.

Mr. Redwood: In 1989 the United Kingdom had a manufacturing trade deficit with the following countries:

France
Belgium/Luxembourg
Netherlands
Federal Republic of Germany
Italy
Denmark
Portugal.

Public Ownership

26. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the Government's policy as to the circumstances under which they would consider taking an industry or company into public ownership.

37. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on taking industries or companies into public ownership.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's policy is to return industrial and commercial activities to the private sector wherever practicable. I can think of no industry or company now in the private sector which would benefit from nationalisation.

Manufactured Imports

27. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the growth in imports of manufactured goods from the European Community since 1979.

105. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the growth in imports of manufactured goods from the European Community since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from the European Community have risen from £16 billion in 1979 to £52·5 billion in 1989, an increase of £36·5 billion.

Credit Unions

28. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department has taken to encourage the growth of the credit union movement in inner-city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department has not taken any action to support credit unions in the inner cities.

Information Technology

29. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans to encourage research and development in information technology.

67. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans to encourage research and development in information technology.

86. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans to encourage research and development in information technology.

Mr. Forth: DTI policy and arrangements to encourage research and development in information technology were set out in the White Papers "Information Technology" (Cm. 646) and "DTI—the department for Enterprise" (Cm. 278). The Government have no plans to change these arrangements.

Trade Barriers

30. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is taking to ensure that the European Economic Community does not erect protectionist trade barriers.

Mr. Redwood: I am against protectionism. I will certainly ensure that any European Community proposals for protectionist trade policy action are rigorously opposed by the United Kingdom.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

31. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to change the role of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

90. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to change the role of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Ridley: I have no such plans.

Eastern Europe

32. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures in 1989 with *(a)* the USSR, *(b)* East Germany, *(c)* Poland, *(d)* Czechoslovakia and *(e)* Romania.

76. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures in 1989 with *(a)* the USSR, *(b)* East Germany, *(c)* Poland, *(d)* Czechoslovakia and *(e)* Romania.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier to the question of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

46. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to encourage increased trade between the United Kingdom and eastern Europe.

85. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what his Department is doing to promote trade and investment by British companies in eastern Europe.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is encouraging business men to look hard at the new commercial opportunities in eastern Europe. DTI Ministers are playing their part both by receiving incoming delegations and by leading business missions themselves. At the end of last year the Minister for Trade and I led business teams to the USSR and Hungary respectively. In the course of the next two months the Secretary of State and I will be taking business men to the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania whilst the Minister for Trade will be visiting British stands at the Leipzig fair in the GDR.

My Department is also encouraging British business to take full advantage of the several United Kingdom, EC and multilateral assistance schemes becoming available to help explore the new opportunities for direct investment, joint ventures and other forms of industrial co-operation.

Financial Institutions (Self-regulation)

33. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of self-regulation of the financial institutions.

34. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of self-regulation of the financial institutions.

98. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of self-regulation of the financial institutions.

Mr. Redwood: The Securities and Investments Board is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate standard of protection for investors is provided by the self-regulating bodies recognised under the Financial Services Act.

EC Financial Markets

35. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made in discussions within the European Economic Community on the opening up of financial markets throughout the Community.

Mr. Redwood: We are fully committed to the liberalisation of the EC's financial services sector. It is a fundamental element of the single market programme not only because of the beneficial effects of liberalisation which will be passed on to other sectors.

The capital liberalisation directive adopted on 24 June 1988 will enable the free movement of capital across the Community. Remaining exchange controls will be abolished. Many member states have already removed most if not all their controls.

More recent progress includes the adoption of the second banking co-ordination directive on 15 December 1989, which sets out the conditions on which credit institutions (broadly banks and building societies) may establish a branch in, or provide a wide range of cross-border services into, another member state on the basis of home state authorisation. The related solvency ratios directive adopted on 18 December and own funds directive adopted on 17 April set out minimum standards of capital adequacy for credit institutions.

The life services directive awaits the opinion of the European Parliament. The directive lays down rules for the writing of life assurance by an insurer established in a member state other than that of the policyholder.

Other measures at an earlier stage of discussion will, when implemented, open further the single market in financial services. The investment services directive will provide a similar single passport for investment firms to that available to banks under the second banking co-ordination directive. The supporting capital adequacy directive has not yet been presented to the Council, but the Commission hopes to propose a draft text in March. Its aim is to set out capital requirements for firms doing investment business.

The Commission has recently announced plans for a single licence approach to life and non-life insurance, similar to the single passport concept in the banking and investment service fields.

Manufacturing Industry

36. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

60. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

71. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

103. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department maintains regular and frequent contacts with the Confederation of British Industry at all levels on a wide range of matters relating to manufacturing industry.

78. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have met representatives of the Confederation of British Industry on several occasions recently, and discussed with them matters relevant to the prospects of manufacturing industry.

101. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

119. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most contacts that my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

64. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the director general of the National Economic Development Council to discuss manufacturing industry.

79. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the director general of the National Economic Development Council to discuss manufacturing industry.

106. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the director general of the National Economic Development Council to discuss manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I expect to meet the director general of the National Economic Development Office on 4 April, at the next meeting of the National Economic Development Council. The council will discuss several items relevant to manufacturing industry.

Consumer Guarantees Bill

38. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has had from consumer organisations in respect of the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

97. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has had from consumer organisations in respect of the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

116. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has had from consumer organisations in respect of the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

Mr. Forth: There have been representations from various organisations both for and against aspects of the proposal. Unless agreed otherwise with the parties concerned, these representations have been made in confidence and it would be inappropriate to name the organisations or to indicate the interests they represent.

100. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the representations he has received for or against the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

117. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the representations he has received for or against the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

Mr. Forth: There have been numerous representations both for and against various aspects of the proposal. Unless agreed otherwise with the parties concerned, these representations have been made in confidence and it would be inappropriate to list them.

Technology (Co-operation)

41. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to submit new proposals for co-operation in technology within the conference on security and co-operation in Europe process at the forthcoming conference on economic co-operation in Europe to be held in Bonn on 19 March to 11 April.

Mr. Redwood: It is intended that proposals by the 12 member states of the European Community will be co-ordinated at Community level, but we will be considering whether or not to propose any separate national initiatives to complement the Community's efforts.

1992

42. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet the European Commission to discuss the implications of 1992 for British industry.

52. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet the European Commission to discuss the implications of 1992 for British industry.

Mr. Redwood: I continue to keep in close contact with the EC Commission across a broad range of issues.

118. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent by his Department on awareness-raising about the implications of the single European market among British businesses; and if he will launch a survey of how many British companies are aware of the implications of 1992.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure to date on the DTI's "Europe Open for Business" campaign to encourage businesses to prepare for the single market is £13·6 million. A weekly survey of business attitudes to the single market amongst firms employing 10 or more people is already undertaken on behalf of DTI. A hundred different firms are surveyed each week. The results show that business awareness of the single market is in excess of 95 per cent. Some 50 per cent. of firms are currently taking action to prepare themselves for the single market.

94. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent assessment that his Department has made of the effects upon British industry of the completion of the European single market in 1992.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The single market will provide enormous opportunities and challenges to firms in all parts of the United Kingdom. The overall impact will depend on how individual firms respond. About 50 per cent. of firms throughout the United Kingdom are now taking action to prepare for the single market and a further 10 per cent. are considering action.

Consumers' Association

43. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Consumers' Association; and what was discussed.

91. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Consumers' Association; and what was discussed.

111. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Consumers' Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. Forth: I visited the Consumers' Association on 6 February 1989 and a number of current issues relevant to consumers were discussed.

EC Ministers

44. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what subjects will be discussed.

63. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what subjects will be discussed.

109. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Redwood: I continue to keep in close contact with my EC counterparts on a whole range of matters.

Industrial Development

45. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the financing of industrial development.

107. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the financing of industrial development.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. I find it most helpful to discuss industrial financing and other matters of mutual interest with the governor from time to time.

Privatisation

48. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies have been returned to the private sector by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 9 January at columns 517-18. My Department has primary responsibility for returning seven companies to the private sector.

Product Warranties

49. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering taking to ensure that products carry effective warranties.

95. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering taking to ensure that products carry effective warranties.

99. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is considering taking to ensure that products carry effective warranties.

Mr. Forth: The issue is being considered in the context of the private Member's Bill on consumer guarantees being put forward by the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones). The Government are considering their position on the Bill and will make a statement in due course. The Government's concerns about the implications of the Bill are already on record.

Textiles

50. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which issues he will raise in relation to the international trade in textiles when he next meets his European Economic Community counterparts.

Mr. Redwood: The main issues for discussion with European Community colleagues will be the further development of the Community's position in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations on the return of trade in textiles and clothing to strengthened GATT rules. Discussion will be likely to focus on the method of phasing out the MFA after the current arrangements expire next year and the parallel strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines. These issues were fully debated in the House on 12 January 1990.

57. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in the textile industry.

88. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in the textile industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Latest available figures show that imports of textiles (SITC division 65) exceeded exports by £1,576 million in the 12 months to November 1989.

Hosiery and Knitwear

51. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the hosiery and knitwear industry in Leicestershire concerning the United Kingdom's trading position in this sector.

Mr. Redwood: The difficulties facing the knitwear industry in Leicestershire were the subject of an Adjournment debate in the House on 12 December 1989. They have also been the subject of correspondence and meetings between industry representations and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade.

Securities and Investments Board

54. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and what will be discussed.

56. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and what will be discussed.

69. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss a range of topics concerning the regulation of financial services as frequently as is necessary. No date has been fixed for the next such meeting.

West Germany

55. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in manufactured goods with West Germany.

120. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in manufactured goods with West Germany.

Mr. Redwood: In 1989 imports of manufactures from the Federal Republic of Germany exceeded United Kingdom exports to that country by £9·6 billion.

Structural Funds

58. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to encourage British firms to compete for structural funds-related business.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government attach considerable importance to British firms competing effectively for structural funds-related business. To that end, my Department has organised two major conferences. These have been supplemented by a number of regional events. The Department also offers an information service to United Kingdom business men interested in pursuing opportunities.

The more recent conference on 23 November 1989 was timed to coincide with the publication of the approved spending plans for the less developed regions of the Community. I addressed the conference and referred to the need for industry, Government and our diplomatic staff overseas to work together in order to identify the opportunities available. It is the efforts and enterprise of those in the private sector which will then determine how much of this new business is won by Britain.

Package Holidays

59. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to introduce any further measures to offer greater consumer protection to people who contract for package holidays and travel arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Government have no imminent plans to introduce further measures in this area. However the common position reached by EC Ministers at the 21-22 December Council on the draft package travel directive portends that consideration will need to be given in due course to its implementation in the United Kingdom. The Association of British Travel Agents has already announced that its new codes of practice will take effect during this year.

Consumer Protection

62. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to increase consumer protection.

70. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to increase consumer protection.

73. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to increase consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways including the introduction of an order under the Prices Act 1974, as amended, on price indications and unit pricing, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

Bankruptcies

65. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for bankruptcies.

Mr. Redwood: During 1989, a total of 8,115 bankruptcy orders were made against individuals.

Exporters

66. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new plans to assist British exporters.

83. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new plans to assist British exporters.

Mr. Redwood: My Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide through the export initiative a wide range of practical help, advice and support.

It is only a year since my Department announced a significant package of improvements to our export promotion effort to ensure that it meets United Kingdom exporters' needs more effectively. Response to the package has been encouraging and we continue to monitor the performance and relevance of our services to United Kingdom exporters' demands closely.

Industrial Activity (North-West)

68. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Manchester chamber of commerce and industry to discuss the chamber's recent survey of industrial activity in the north-west.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I was pleased to see the results of the recent survey published by the Manchester chamber of commerce and industry, however I have no plans to meet any of its representatives.

Car Manufacturers

72. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the major car manufacturers; and what will be discussed.

115. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the major car manufacturers; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the major car manufacturers; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government have regular contacts with the major car manufacturers on a range of issues of interest to the industry. No meetings are currently planned.

CBI Regional Bodies

74. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met a Confederation of British Industry regional body; and what was discussed.

82. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met a Confederation of Business Industry regional body; and what was discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department maintains regular contact with the CBI at all levels on a wide range of matters relating to industry.

C. J. How

77. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will initiate an investigation under the Companies Acts into the activities of the finance company C. J. How.

Mr. Redwood: No. On 7 November 1989, a bankruptcy order was made in the Cheltenham county court against Mr. Christopher John How, financial consultant, of the Coach House, Winchcombe road, Sedgeberrow, near Evesham. His affairs are under investigation by the Official Receiver pursuant to section 289 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Departmental Structure

80. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the future structure of his Department.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for the reorganisation of his Department.

Mr. Ridley: I am reviewing various aspects of the work of my Department but have no changes to announce at present.

Stock Exchange

81. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the stock exchange; and what will be discussed.

110. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the stock exchange; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) earlier today.

Dixons Group (Takeover Bid)

87. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to reach a decision on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed acquisition of Kingfisher plc of Dixons Group plc.

Mr. Redwood: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is due to submit its report on the proposed acquisition to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by 27 April this year. The report will be published as soon as is practicable after that. It would be inappropriate to speculate about its possible findings.

Exports

89. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action is being taken by his Department to further increase exports.

Mr. Redwood: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 12 February at column *45*.

Electrical Goods

92. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received about competition in the electrical goods sector.

Mr. Redwood: I have received various representations from hon. Members and others about competition issues, including representations specifically about the proposed acquisition of Dixons Group plc by Kingfisher plc which is currently under investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Securities Industry (Supervision)

96. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is considering transferring any departmental securities industry supervision functions to the SIB.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans for any major change in the distribution of powers between my Department and the SIB.

No-dividend Policy

108. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate his Department has made of the effects of a no-dividend policy upon British industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Dividend policy is a matter for the directors of individual companies.

Sunderland

112. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last visited Sunderland; and what was discussed.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry visited Sunderland on 5 October 1989, when he met Tyne and Wear development corporation, Sunderland borough council, the Wearside Opportunity and the Sunderland shipyards campaign committee. My right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster visited Sunderland on three occasions in 1989. On these occasions discussion centred upon NESL and the package of remedial measures, following its closure. My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry was in Newcastle on 25 January and met representatives of Sunderland borough council to discuss these issues.

Regional Aid

113. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the cost-effectiveness of regional selective assistance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An evaluation of regional selective assistance (RSA) by DTI and the Scottish and Welsh Offices was completed last year. Its main conclusions were that offers of RSA made in the evaluation period (1980-84) had assisted the creation or safeguarding of over 1·1 million net job years (or 56,000 permanent jobs) in assisted areas in Great Britain at a cost of some £580 per job year (or £11,600 per job), after taking account of jobs which were not additional and of displacement effects. The report on the evaluation is due to be published by HMSO in the near future.

North East Shipbuilders Limited

114. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his current plans regarding the facilities of North East Shipbuilders Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British Shipbuilders remains in discussion with the two parties interested in purchasing the assets of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. We are seeking to progress outstanding issues as quickly as possible. I hope these will be resolved soon.

Japanese-owned Industry

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the percentage of manufacturing industry output and employment in Britain which is Japanese owned.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The results of the latest (1987) annual census of production indicate that Japanese-owned

companies had 0·22 per cent. of employment in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom. The figures for gross output and net output respectively were 0·45 per cent. and 0·21 per cent.

Petrol

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will publish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I am today publishing the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of petrol by wholesale in the United Kingdom.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has concluded that petrol wholesaling is a competitive industry at present. It has found that neither the structure, the practices nor the profits in the industry operate against the public interest. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has accordingly made no recommendations for change.

The supply of petrol is a key part of the nation's economy and a matter of considerable interest to individual consumers. Petrol alone accounts for 3 per cent. of consumer expenditure. Any defects in competition could have serious consequences for the public interest. It is right that issues that have caused public concern should have been subjected to close and careful scrutiny and I am grateful for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's expert work in carrying out this investigation.

The main findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are that:

- the price of petrol is primarily governed by movements in the underlying price of crude oil and the international market price for petrol, and particularly by their prices on the Rotterdam market;
- United Kingdom pump prices are not out of line with those in European countries or movements in consumer prices;
- price rises are not implemented more quickly than price falls;
- there is no evidence of collusion between the companies;
- petrol exchanges between wholesalers reduce costs to consumers and are pro-competitive;
- petrol company profits on wholesaling have been no more than moderate in recent years and on their downstream operations as a whole they have been low;
- there are no significant barriers to entry to the wholesale market;
- the hypermarkets and independent chains provide strong and growing competition in the retail market, and
- most consumers can choose from a range of prices and standards of service.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission found that a complex monopoly exists in favour of 69 oil companies that supply over 95 per cent. of the market. However, it concludes that the facts found do not operate against the public interest, that no steps are being taken by the monopolists to exploit the situation, and that the market is a competitive one. Since there are no adverse findings in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report, the question of remedies does not arise.

I have received the Director General of Fair Trading's advice on the report. He endorses the overall conclusions the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has reached on the public interest. The director general agrees with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that future changes could increase the scope for anti-competitive behaviour in the industry. Accordingly he believes that his office should, in three years' time subject to any developments in the meantime, carry out a review of company ownership in the industry and an assessment of developments in competition. In the meantime, he will keep under review any major changes which affect conditions of competition in the industry, though without seeking all the further more detailed information suggested by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I agree that the director general should proceed in this way and I shall keep the House informed of any developments.

I accept the analysis in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report and am grateful to the commission for having produced a substantial document reflecting the outcome of a wide-ranging and intensive investigation.

Toyota Factory, Derbyshire

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the European Commission is conducting, or proposes to conduct, an investigation into the proposed Toyota factory in Derbyshire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* When the Toyota project was announced in April 1989, the Government informed the European Commission that the company had decided to locate in the United Kingdom without seeking any financial assistance from the Government; that discussions were in progress between the company and the local authorities in Derbyshire about a possible modest package of local measures; and that, once the elements of the package had been defined, the Government would consider whether any of them required notification to the Commission under the terms of the Community's rules on state aids to the vehicle sector. My Department has recently told the Commission that in our view the package envisaged included nothing which could be regarded as an aid to Toyota. We have made clear our readiness to meet Commission officials to explain the content of the package and the reasons for our conclusion.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many complaints concerning abuse on the amateur bands have been received by his Department from the Radio Society of Great Britain;

(2) how many complaints of abuse on GB 35L, GB 3BM and GB 3NA have been received by his Department;

(3) what response he has made to the Radio Society of Great Britain with regard to its criticism of amateur radio repeaters in the categories GB 35L, GB 3BM and GB 3NA which are licensed by his Department.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The Radio Society of Great Britain has raised the issue of abuse on amateur radio repeater stations with the Department, and my officials are holding discussions with them about the matter.

Paper Recycling

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will add improved pulping and de-inking technology used to recycle waste paper to those projects currently supported by his Department.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* Government involvement in research into de-inking and pulping has taken place for some years, particularly through support for projects at the paper and board

division of PIRA, the research association for the paper printing and packaging industries. Current projects are specifically looking at de-inking (due to be completed in autumn 1990), the difficulties of pulping and refining raw materials of the future (completion due spring 1992), and a new project approved to commence in April 1990 to investigate recycling of waste paper into higher grades of paper.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will initiate a campaign to encourage the use of recycled paper in manufacturing processes.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* In 1989 United Kingdom paper and board manufacturers consumed approximately 2·5 million tonnes of waste paper. This represents 53 per cent. of the fibre requirement of the industry.

The Department is keen to promote the use of recycled fibre in production processes whenever it is technically and economically viable to do so. With this aim in mind, a joint DTI-industry working group has drawn up specifications for educational and computer papers containing 75 per cent. recycled fibre which will shortly be published. An advisory group set up by the Department is currently examining ways of increasing the utilisation of waste paper in all paper products.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will initiate a publicity campaign to encourage the use by the public of products made from recycled paper.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The Department is keen to encourage the use of products which are manufactured using recycled fibre. Currently an advisory group set up by the DTI is examining ways of increasing the utilisation of waste paper in all paper products.

Tissue Products

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will examine the regulations governing the content of waste newsprint in tissue products.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* There are no regulations governing the content of waste newsprint in tissue products. Members of the Association of Makers of Soft Tissues do, however, abide by an industry code of practice which recognises that recycled paper in various forms is a satisfactory substitute for virgin woodpulp after proper selection and treatment.

An advisory group set up by the Department is currently examining ways of increasing the utilisation of waste paper in all products.

WALES

Public Bodies

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will name the current members of *(a)* each community health council in Wales, *(b)* each district health authority in Wales, *(c)* the all-Wales advisory panel on the development of services for people with mental handicaps, *(d)* each family practitioner committee in Wales, *(e)* the health policy board and *(f)* the health promotion board who have been appointed by himself or his predecessor either solely or in conjunction with other Ministers; and what is their attendance record at meetings (i) since their appointment and (ii) during 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: The current members appointed by myself are as follows:

(a) the Community Health Councils

Vale of Glamorgan
Mr. W. Mason
Mrs. M. A. Campbell
Mrs. S. L. Greensmith
Mr. J. W. Phillips

Neath/Port Talbot
Mr. J. Warman
Mrs. B. E. Wheadon
Mrs. J. D. Chatterton
Mrs. B. I. Tyler

Swansea/Lliw Valley
Mr. J. D. Lloyd
Rev. A. E. Pierce
Mrs. M. J. Thomas
Mrs. B. C. Rees

Ogwr
Mrs. Y. M. Griffiths
Mrs. M. C. Evans
Captain M. Wilcox

Aberconwy
Mrs. M. Priddle Higson
Mrs. J. A. D. Doll
Mr. J. Cockburn

Arfon/Dwyfor
Mr. H. Williams
Mrs. W. F. T. Watkin
Mr. E. T. Jones
Mr. E. Wright

North Gwent
Dr. J. K. Hardy
Mrs. F. I. Earl
Mr. R. W. Batten
Mrs. V. Withers

Cardiff
Ms. J. A. Gasson
Mrs. A. Davies
Mr. E. G. Owen
Mrs. A. Butlin

Montgomery
Mr. D. H. Evans
Mrs. K. M. Roberts Jones

Brecknock/Radnor
Mrs. G. D. Jones
Mr. B. R. P. Couzens
Mrs. D. M. J. James
Mr. W. G. Phillips

Merthyr/Cynon
Mrs. B. Brown
Mrs. D. M. Griffiths
Mr. C. T. Jones
Mr. P. E. Linton

South Gwent
Mr. A. R. Bradley
Mr. A. T. Sawyer
Mrs. J. C. Phillips
Mrs. A. Meredith

Pembrokeshire
Mrs. C. I. Howells
Mrs. M. L. Rashley

Mr. W. R. Stocker
Miss M. J. Thomas

Ceredigion
Mrs. M. E. Jenkins
Miss M. M. Henllys Jones
Mr. R. Gardner
Mr. H. Lewis

East Glamorgan
Miss A. M. Yates
Mr. E. J. Thomas
Mrs. J. E. Evans
Mrs. D. H. Thomas

Rhymney Valley
Mrs. M. Roberts
Mr. C. Fenton
Mrs. N. Rowlands
Mr. K. Perryman

Merionydd
Mr. E. M. Davies
Mrs. A. J. Noble

Ynys Môn
Mrs. P. A. Ade
Mr. R. A. Johnson
Mr. M. J. Bonnie

Carmarthen/Dinefwr
Mrs. S. M. A. Roberts
Mrs. Z. Jenkins
Mr. D. G. Williams
Mrs. P. M. Carpenter

Clwyd North
Mrs. M. O. Davies
Mr. L. Jones
Mrs. B. A. Thompson
Mrs. J. B. Thomas

Clwyd South
Lt. Col. J. P. Margarson
Mr. E. Williams
Mr. J. Wainwright
Mrs. S. C. Cope

Llanelli/Dinefwr
Mr. G. Jones
Mr. W. T. Davies
Mr. D. T. James
Mrs. M. W. Hopkin Thomas

to *(b)* District Health Authorities:

Clwyd
Chairman—Mr. E. M. W. Griffith

Dr. T. M. Hayes
Mr. A. Williams
Dr. W. E. Lewis
Mrs. M. Williams
Mr. J. O. Morris
Mr. S. G. Badland
Mrs. D. R. Mars Jones
Mrs. A. Roberts
Mr. R. F. Drennan
Mrs. C. Owen

Gwent
Chairman—Mr. J. N. Headlam

Prof. A. Richens
Mr. W. B. Peeling
Dr. B. Davies
Mrs. B. Miles
Mr. W. D. G. Morgan
Mr. R. Newton
Mr. R. D. Owen
Mrs. P. A. White
Mrs. F. N. Peel
Mr. G. Rosser

Pembrokeshire
Chairman—Captain H. W. Phillips

Dr. E. Verner Jones
Dr. D. J. Jones
Dr. B. W. Barton
Mrs. A. V. Males
Mr. I. Page
Mr. D. R. S. Clarke
Mr. B. S. Hearne
Mr. J. E. Lloyd
Mr. B. M. Skyes
Mrs. M. Thomas
Rev. T. A. Thomas

East Dyfed
Chairman—Mr. J. S. Thomas

Mr. J. Williams
Dr. A. G. Davies
Dr. H. Herbert
Mrs. D. M. Tyler
Mr. T. G. Evans
Mrs. V. J. Bourne
Mr. D. P. Williams
Mrs. H. M. Jones
Dr. J. Clough Davies
Mrs. L. George
Mr. D. J. Thomas

Gwynedd
Chairman—Mrs. N. L. Edwards

Dr. J. H. Jones
Mr. R. H. P. Oliver
Dr. J. B. T. Griffiths
Mrs. M. P. William
Mr. T. Thomas
Mr. G. W. Jones
Lt. Col. Prescott Walker
Lady Jane Stanley
Mr. G. Hulse
Mr. J. L. Williams

Powys
Chairman—Hon. Mrs. L. Price

Mr. R. G. S. Mills
Dr. K. G. Mohon Bhakta
Dr. M. Riley
Mr. D. W. Williams
Mr. S. Morris
Mr. W. P. Pryce
Mrs. G. Raikes
Archdeacon J. W. J. Rees
Lady B. Davies
Major M. Dyer

Mid Glamorgan
Chairman—Mr. B. Davies

Prof. O. P. Gray
Mr. D. E. B. Powell
Dr. P. D. R. Williams
Mr. D. Thomas
Mr. V. Williams
Mr. G. L. Down
Mr. E. Jowett
Mr. R. Mitchell
Mrs. A. M. Morris
Mr. A. C. Williams
Mrs. D. Lees
Mr. D. W. C. Morgan

South Glamorgan
Chairman—Mr. A. S. Jones

Prof. Sir H. L. Duthie
Prof. N. R. E. Robertson
Prof. G. H. Elder
Mr. D. L. Crosby
Dr. S. G. Gang
Mrs. C. M. Owen
Mr. S. M. Jones
Mrs. M. Box
Mr. D. Gwynne Evans
Mr. N. J. Butcher
Dr. R. M. Pill
Mrs. J. G. Rees
Cllr. J. Sainsbury

West Glamorgan
Chairman—Prof. W. M. Williams

Prof. A. L. Bloom
Dr. P. A. Steane
Dr. P. Mellor
Miss V. Burns
Mr. J. F. Ryan
Mrs. M. O. Chilcott
Mr. C. C. Lea
Mr. G. Lawler
Mrs. B. K. Bose
Mr. E. Fuge

Clwyd FPC
Chairman—Councillor Tom W. Jones

Dr. Ewan D. Deas
Dr. Gruffydd O. Jones
Dr. William E. Lewis
Dr. Malcolm D. Manson
Dr. John N. Taylor
Dr. David L. Williams
Dr. Peter Wykes
Mr. Thomas Birchall
Mr. Gareth W. Lloyd
Mr. Konrad J. Saunders
Mr. Richard B. Harrison
Mr. Alexander S. Young
Mr. Geoffrey C. Seys-Llewellyn
Mr. William J. Ridgway
Mr. Ronald F. P. Drennan
Mrs. A. L. Roberts
Mrs. Irene J. Train
Mrs. Cathleen T. Owen
Cllr Peter Morris
Cllr Neil A. Formstone
Cllr David Messham
Mrs. Eurwen H. Edwards
Mrs. Lynne Hughes
Dr. Zuzana Hughes
Mr. Robert W. Manners
Mr. Christopher B. Swale
Mrs. Angharad Waters
Mr. David J. Wells

Gwent FPC
Chairman—Dr. Gerald L. Goodwin

Dr. Anthony L. Calland
Dr. Frederick R. Cranfield
Dr. Gregory I. Graham
Dr. H. S. Sahni
Dr. Derwyn F. Jones
Dr. David L. Phillips
Dr. Christopher J. Wintle
Dr. Ramnik B. Shah
Mr. Stuart Geddes
Mr. William D. G. Morgan
Mr. Hugh C. Tagg
Dr. Dilwyn Jones
Mr. David T. Owen
Mr. Wilfred H. Phillips
Mr. John H. Bowen
Cllr Peter J. Law
Mrs. Beth Miles
Mrs. Doreen Moore
Mrs. Patricia A White
Cllr Maldwyn J. Harris
Cllr Richard E. Murray
Cllr Alan L. Brown
Cllr Mrs. V. Smith
Mr. Anthony J. Bell
Mrs. Judith O. Cox
Mrs. Susan E. Gregory
Mr. Bernard W. J. Jarvis
Mrs. Kathleen D. Jordan
Mr. Douglas E. Waters
Miss Zena Williams

Gwynedd FPC
Chairman—Dr. John E. A. Kenrick

Dr. John B. T. Griffiths
Dr. Huw I. Humphreys
Dr. Elwyn T. Jones
Dr. Owen P. Jones
Dr. Geoffrey D. King
Dr. Ian E. Roberts
Dr. John G. Roberts
Dr. Jitendra J. Tolia
Mr. Robert J. Jones
Mr. Timothy H. Poole
Mr. John R. E. Stagg
Mr. Michael L. Ashley
Mr. Richard N. Thomas
Mr. William E. Roberts
Mr. Arthur W. Jones
Mr. George Guyse Barker
Mr. G. Morris Jones
Mr. Gwilyn Wyn Jones
Mrs. Meiriona P. Wiliam
Cllr. Morgan L. Vaughan
Cllr. Mrs. Betty Williams
Cllr. Mrs. Blodwen Jones
Cllr. Thomas E. Walker
Mr. Barry J. Owens
Mr. William R. Roberts
Mrs. Margaret A. Saracco
Mrs. Lorna Scharer
Mr. Simon G. L. Simcox
Mr. John Williams
Mr. Meirion T. Wynne

Dyfed FPC
Chairman—Mrs. Edith M. Herbert

Dr. Beryl M. A. Callaghan
Dr. Walford F. T. Davies
Dr. Gareth James
Dr. James M. Lewis
Dr. Roger G. Paul
Dr. Beryl A. Roberts
Dr. Derek B. Scourfield
Dr. Hilary K. R. Loxdale
Cllr. Trevor T. Griffiths
Mr. Thomas Lloyd
Mr. Ken Owen
Mr. T. C. Williams
Cllr. Edwyn P. Parry
Mr. Adrian F. Murphy
Mr. Stuart H. Watts
Mrs. Elizabeth B. Hardcastle
Mr. Anthony C. Richardson
Rev. Thomas A. Thomas
Mrs. Vanessa J. Bourne
Cllr. Kenneth V. Owens
Cllr. Geoffrey Sizer
Cllr. William H. Hitchings
Cllr. Mrs. June Williams
Mr. David Bentham
Mrs. Anne Bowen
Mr. David Gwynne
Mr. John K. Harris
Mr. William D. L. Lloyd

Mrs. Mona R. Morris
Mr. B. L. Davies

Mid Glamorgan FPC
Chairman—Mr. J. Devonald Williams
Dr. Subrahmanyam Ganesh
Dr. Robert Jones
Dr. John B. R. Lewis
Dr. Christopher J. L. Morgan
Dr. David Parry
Dr. Bipkin K. Shah
Dr. John C. Tiarks
Mr. Leslie Cooper
Mr. Ian Price
Mr. William A. Tucker
Mr. Roy Jones
Mr. Colin H. Thomas
Mr. J. Neville G. Davies
Mr. Peter Jenkins
Miss Anne D. M. Harris
Mr. Eric Jowett
Mrs. Anne M. Morris
Mr. Alan C. Williams
Cllr. Leslie J. Rees
Cllr. M. J. Ing
Cllr. Arthur J. Davies
Cllr. David E. Morgan
Mr. Michael W. Davies
Mrs. Brigit C. Dimond
Mr. Brian Griffiths
Mrs. Roseilia M. Lewis
Mrs. Daphne M. Morris
Mr. Jeffrey H. Silcock
Mr. Edward H. Tiltman

The hon. Member would need to write to the chairman of each of these bodies for details of attendance.

Powys FPC
Chairman—Archdeacon J. W. J. Rees

Dr. Anthony V. Evans
Dr. Peter O. Faulkner
Dr. John Harries
Dr. Keith Hughes
Dr. John Wynn-Jones
Dr. Simeon Ovis
Dr. Derek Wilson
Dr. Barbara K. Wynne-Evans
Mr. Timothy E. Powell
Mrs. Jean R. Wynne-Griffith
Mr. Stuart L. Danby
Mr. Paul G. J. Davies
Mr. William G. Cawley
Mr. Anthony V. Jones
Mrs. Patricia A. Antill
Mrs. Margaret J. Dodd
Mr. Selwyn Morris
Mrs. Kathlen Scott
Cllr. Eifion H. Lewis
Cllr. Mrs. Marilyn Roberts
Cllr. Mrs. M. C. Lennox-Smith
Cllr. Mrs. Ivy B. Lewis
Mrs. Catherine A. Bartholomew
Mr. R. E. Jones
Miss Barbara Hughes
Mrs. Margaret R. O'Hare
Mrs. Jean Ryder
Mr. Colin J. Spackman
Mrs. Anne M. T. Usborne

South Glamorgan FPC
Chairman—Dr. Richard G. Lloyd

Dr. O. M. Parkash Aggarwal
Dr. Raphael Cantor
Dr. S. Keith Holgate
Dr. Geoffrey F. Morgan
Dr. Anthony S. Parsons
Dr. Margaret V. Williams
Dr. C. W. Allanby
Mr. A. R. Fuge
Mr. Leslie Greenbaum
Mr. P. J. Naish
Mr. Peter J. Cummins
Mr. Ian Phillips
Mr. Richard N. Roberts
Mr. Anthony W. Blasebalk
Dr. Roisin M. Pill
Mrs. Mary K. Provis
Mr. Gerald Rapport
Mrs. Moira Griffiths
Cllr. Russell V. Goodway
Cllr. Peter H. Jarvis
Cllr. Mrs. Susan L. Essex
Cllr. Emlyn T. Williams
Mr. Richard C. Daniel
Cllr. Ian B. Hermer
Mrs. Linda James
Mr. James H. Leighton
Mrs. Mary Mossford
Mrs. Gerald N. Robinson
Mr. David G. Thomas

West Glamorgan FPC
Chairman—Dr. Paul Mellor

Dr. Prydderch D. Davies
Dr. Stuart P. Jenkins
Dr. Ian M. Millington
Dr. E. M. Williams
Dr. Richard G. Pincott
Dr. Edward M. Roberts
Dr. Neil Upton
Dr. Marion Lesley Howells
Mr. Peter L. Evans
Mr. Peter Lloyd
Mr. Michael L. Mills Davies
Mr. Peter K. Howard
Mr. Gerald Thomas
Mr. Keith MacDonald
Mr. Andrew J. H. Bevan
Mr. John N. Clement
Mrs. Margaret M. Evans
Mr. Gerard Lawler
Mrs. Margaret F. Williams
Cty. Cllr. Norman R. Thomas
Cty. Cllr. Miss Sarah M. Thomas
Cllr. R. Francis-Davies
Cllr. Harry I. Thomas
Mrs. Margaret E. Coleman
Mrs. Jane V. Davies
Mr. Ioan H. Durban
Mr. Thomas W. Harries
Mrs. Gwyneira Harris
Mr. Graham L. Jones
Mr. William G. Rees

to *(c)*:

The all Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for People with a mental handicap.

	Attendance record percentage since appointment	*in 1989*
Mr. D. E. A. Jones	100	100
Professor M. Chazan	100	100
Dr. D. Dickens	100	100
Mr. D. Sines	84	100
Dr. D. Towell	84	100
Mr. R. G. Davies	84	84
Mr. M. Weinberg	100	100
Mr. G. Wistow	100	100
to *(e)*:		
The Health Policy Board		
Mr J. W. Lloyd	100	100
Mr. R. W. Jarman	100	100
Mr. J. W. Owen	100	100
Dr. D. Ferguson Lewis	100	100
Miss M. P. Bull	100	100
Mr. D. G. Evans	88	100

	Attendance record percentage since appointment	in 1989
Rear Admiral J. P. Edwards	92	100
Mr. R. Tydesley	100	100
Mr. A. G. Thornton	100	100

to *(f)* correctly titled The Health Promotion Authority for Wales
Dr. S. A. Smail—Chairman
Mr. J. Thomas
Mrs. M. Bond
Mr. A. Crabbe
Mr D. Francis
Professor R. Hodgson
Mrs. C. James
Councillor T. Jones
Dr. M. Keen
Dr. B. Littlepage
Miss E. Muir
Mrs. S. Sandham
Ms. V. Sugar
Mrs. I. Train

The hon. Member would need to write to the chairman of the authority for details of attendance.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of *(a)* the Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee, *(b)* the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, *(c)* the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales, *(d)* the Agricultural Valuation Panel for Wales, *(e)* the agricultural wages committee, *(f)* the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales, *(g)* the Audit Commission and *(h)* the British Wool Marketing Board, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee.

Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Department of Health officials provide the secretariats of both of these bodies.

The hon. Member may wish to pursue this with my right hon. and learned Friend.

Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 13 February.

Agricultural Valuation Panel for Wales:

Agricultural Valuation Panel for Wales

	Attendance record percentage Since appointment	In 1989
Mr. M. S. Argles	71	100
Mr. N. E. Elliott	86	100
Mr. F. Grounds	100	100
Mr. J. H. Harris	—	—
Mr. H. B. Knight	100	100
Mr. J. R. Mathias	100	100
Mr. J. A. Pallister	67	100
Mr. T. W. Sale	100	100
Mr. T. G. Sherman	100	100
Mr. R. Thomas	86	100
Mr. G. W. Wadsworth	100	100
Mr. G. T. Williams	100	100

Agricultural Wages Committees:

Clwyd		
Mr. J. E. Ambrose	100	100
Mr. T. Jones	100	100
Mr. I. G. Richards	100	—
Dyfed		
Mr. T. E. Davies	96	100
Mr. C. F. Hosking	100	100
Mrs. E. D. Williams	100	—
Glamorgan		
Mrs. S. E. L. Reeve	100	100
Mr. P. Hart	90	50
Mr. D. R. I. Williams	95	50
Gwent		
Mr. J. L. Evans	50	0
Mr. J. M. H. Stephens	100	100
Mr. P. A. Thomas	100	100
Gwynedd		
Mr. E. Lloyd Evans	57	100
Mr. R. R. Harris	100	—
Mr. T. H. Morgan	100	100
Powys		
Mr. W. G. Davies	87	100
Canon E. J. John	100	100
Mrs. G. L. Thomas	80	0

Audit Commission:

The Audit Commission is an independent body entirely responsible for regulating its own affairs. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman.

British Wool Marketing Board:

This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the secretary of the board.

Ancient Monuments Board

	Attendance record percentage Since appointment	In 1989
Professor Glanmor Williams	100	100
Mr. G. C. Boon	100	100
Professor R. R. Davies	83	100
Mr. R. B. Heaton	50	50
Mr. R. J. Keen	100	100
Miss F. Lynch	100	100
Mr. D. Moore	100	100
Mr. P. Smith	83	100

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of *(a)* the Farm Animal Welfare Council, *(b)* the Forestry Commission Reference Committee for Wales, *(c)* the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, *(d)* Housing for Wales, *(e)* the Land Authority for Wales, *(f)* the Library and Information Services Council (Wales), *(g)* the Local Government Boundary Commission and *(h)* the national parks committee appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Farm Animal Welfare Council

The secretariat for this body is provided by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food officials. The hon. Member may wish to inquire of my right hon. Friend.

Forestry Commission Reference Committee for Wales

The Forestry Commission reference committee panels comprise persons who can be called upon to form committees to advise the Secretary of State on felling licences etc. appeals referred to him under the terms of the Forestry Act 1967. No such appeals have been made so no committees have met.

Historic Buildings Council for Wales

	Attendance record Since appointment per cent.	Since 1989 per cent.
Marquis of Anglesey	100	100
Dr. Prys Morgan	100	100
Professor J. Eynon	100	100
The Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor	100	100
Mr. Lindsay Evans	70	60
Mr. R. Haslam	100	100
Mr. T. Lloyd	100	100

Housing for Wales Land Authority for Wales

This information is not collected centrally for these bodies. The hon. Member may wish to write to the respective chairmen.

Library and Information Services Council

Per cent.

	Attendance record Since appointment	Since 1989
Mr. G. W. F. Ewins	67	95
Miss M. Cooper	67	77
Mr. Tim Heald	0	75
Miss Tudfil Adams	100	71
Dr. Brynley Roberts	100	90
Mr. Hywel Roberts	100	100
Dr. Ian Lovesy	67	80
Mr. Ieuan Edwards	67	80
Mr. Gwyn Williams	100	75

Local Government Boundary Commission

This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the secretary of the local Government Boundary Commission.

National Parks Committee

The information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the relevant national parks committees in Wales (Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast).

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of *(a)* the National Radiological Protection Board, *(b)* the North-Western and North Wales sea fisheries committee, *(c)* the Place Names Advisory Committee, *(d)* the rent assessment panel, *(e)* the Saundersfoot Harbour Commission, *(f)* the Sports Council for Wales and *(g)* the South Wales sea fisheries committee appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB):

The secretariat of this body is provided by NRPB officials. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman.

North-Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee:

This is a local authority committee. The hon. Member may wish to write to the clerk and chief fisheries officer of the committee.

Place Names Advisory Committee:

The business of this body is conducted entirely by correspondence.

Rent Assessment Panel:

Rent assessment panels are convened as necessary from a general list of members who are prepared to serve on panels from time to time. It is not meaningful to give a breakdown of individual attendances.

Saundersfoot Harbour Commission:

This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the clerk to the harbour commissions.

Sports Council for Wales:

This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman.

South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee:

This is a local authority committee. The hon. Member may wish to write to the clerk and chief fisheries officer of the committee.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of *(a)* the Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(b)* the committee for the Welsh scheme for the development of health and social research, *(c)* the Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering, *(d)* the Council for National Academic Awards, *(e)* the courts and councils of (i) the National Library and (ii) the National Museum of Wales, *(f)* the Curriculum Council for Wales and *(g)* the Development Board for Rural Wales, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not collected centrally for any of the bodies listed.

(a) Cardiff Bay Development Corporation.

(d) Council for National Academic Awards.

(f) Curriculum Council for Wales

(g) Development Board for Rural Wales

The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the chairmen of each of these bodies.

(c) Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering.

The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the secretary.

(e) The courts and councils of (i) the National Library and (ii) the National Museum of Wales.

The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the respective presidents.

(b) The committee for the Welsh scheme for the development of health and social research.

This scheme is administered on my behalf by the university of Wales College of Medicine, to which the hon. Gentleman may wish to write.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh health common services authority are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Sports Council for Wales are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: Four.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Sports Council for

Wales during the last year where figures are available and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The published accounts of the Sports Council for Wales for the year ended 31 March 1989 show total expenditure of £5,746,706.

(a) Expenditure on administration in general (including relevant staff costs and computerisation) was 14 per cent. of the total.

(b) Users of the Sports Council for Wales' facilities are charged a commercial fee. The costs of any meetings or conferences arising from the Sports Council for Wales' work are subsumed in the administrative costs.

(c) No payments are made for attending meetings. The total expenditure on reimbursement of members' travel and subsistence costs for 1988-89 was 0·4 per cent. of the total expenditure of the council.

(d) Nominees from outside bodies who attend council meetings receive no payment from the Sports Council for Wales.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the agricultural dwelling house advisory committee panel of chairmen, Wales, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(2) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the training enterprise and education advisory group declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(3) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the urban investment appraisal panel declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(4) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him for the Welsh Development Agency declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(5) how many nominees for current appointments made by him either solely or jointly with another Minister to the Welsh committee for postgraduate pharmaceutical education declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(6) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Wales committee on drug misuse declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(7) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh language board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(8) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the standing working group of the Wales advisory body declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae and of those declaring a political affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(9) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh industrial development advisory board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(10) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh national board for nursing, midwifery and health visiting declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(11) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh health common services authority declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(12) how many of the nominees to the current appointments made by him either solely or jointly with another Minister to the Wales tourist board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(13) how many nominees for current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the teamcare valleys steering group declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(14) how many of the nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the agricultural training board declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political

affiliation, how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(15) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the council of University College, Lampeter, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(16) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court of the University College, Swansea, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(17) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court and council of the University of Wales, Bangor, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru;

(18) how many nominees for the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court and council of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, declared a political affiliation in their curricula vitae; and of those declaring a political affiliation how many showed allegiance to *(a)* Conservatives, *(b)* Labour, *(c)* the Liberal Democrats, *(d)* the Social Democratic party, *(e)* the Green party and *(f)* Plaid Cymru.

Mr. Peter Walker: I do not require candidates for public appointment to indicate their political affiliation, as this is not a qualification for appointment.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made by him either solely or jointly with another Minister to the Welsh committee on drug misuse are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: Six.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the standing working group of the Wales advisory body are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: Two.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the agricultural dwelling house advisory committee panel of chairmen, Wales, are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: Three.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the training enterprise and education advisory group are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The training, enterprise and education advisory group has one female member.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh language board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: One.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the parliamentary boundary commission for Wales are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the urban investment appraisal panel are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Wales tourist board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: One.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh industrial development advisory board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the Welsh Development Agency are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will name the current members of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committee panel of chairmen, Wales, who have been appointed by himself or his predecessor either solely or in conjunction with other Ministers; what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committee panel of chairmen, Wales, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows. Panel members with no meetings recorded by their names have not yet been called upon to chair meetings.

	Attendance	
	Since appointment	*During 1989*
Clwyd	*(a)*	*(b)*
Mr. J. E. Ambrose	—	—
Mr. I. G. Richards	—	—
Dyfed		
Mr. C. F. Hosking	—	—
Mrs. E. D. Williams	—	—
Glamorgans		
Mr. P. T. Hart	1 out of 1	—
Mrs. S. E. L. Reeve	—	—
Gwent		

	Attendance	
	Since appointment	*During 1989*
Clwyd	*(a)*	*(b)*
Mr. J. L. Evans	—	—
Mr. J. M. H. Stephens	2 out of 2	—
Gwynedd		
Mr. R. R. Harris	—	—
Mr. E. Lloyd Evans	—	—
Powys		
Canon E. C. John	—	—
Mrs. G. L. Thomas	1 out of 1	1 out of 1

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will name the current members of the Wales tourist board who have been appointed by himself or his predecessor either solely or in conjunction with other Ministers; and what is their attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: The current members of the Wales tourist board are listed below. They have each been appointed solely by the present Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. I. Prys Edwards *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Lorna Minors
Mr. Christopher L. Pollard OBE
Mr. E. Glyn Davies
Mr. Elfed Roberts
Mr. David H. Griffith
Mr. John Dunscombe

Information on their attendance record at meetings is not collected centrally. The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the chairman.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will name the current members of the Welsh committee for postgraduate pharmaceutical education who have been appointed by himself or his predecessor either solely or in conjunction with other Ministers; what is their attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is shown in the following table:

Members	*Attendance record percentage*	
	Since appointment	*1989*
Mr. M. A. Pollard	100	100
Miss C. Wynne-Howells	79	67
Prof. I. W. Kellaway	79	67
Mr. T. D. Turner	57	67
Dr. N. A. Armstrong	67	67
Mr. H. A. O. Hughes	100	100
Mr. K. C. Rew	100	100
Miss M. G. E. Price	100	100
Mr. P. Hollyman	67	67

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, of the current appointments made by him either solely or jointly with another Minister to the Welsh committee for postgraduate pharmaceutical education, how many posts are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: Two.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Welsh health common services authority appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: See following table:

		From appointment *Includes columns (e) and (f)*		*1989 only*	
Member	*Start date*	*Attended*	*Total No. held*	*Attended*	*Total No. held*
(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*(e)*	*(f)*
J. W. Owen[1]	April 1985	51	51	10	10
D. W. C. Morgan	March 1982	75	82	9	10
K. C. White	February 1982	72	83	9	10
J. N. Headlam	September 1984	52	58	9	10
G. I. Harrhy	July 1987	20	26	8	10

[1] Chairman.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Welsh industrial development advisory board appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: Attendance levels at meetings for current members of the Welsh industrial development advisory board are as follows:

Name	*Attendance since appointment percentage*	*During 1989 percentage*
P. J. Phillips OBE	85	92
N. D. Penfold MBE	85	92
M. Wallace	47	38
D. Jenkins	88	92
A. Folwell	73	62
K. Hodge	78	77

Name	*Attendance since appointment percentage*	*During 1989 percentage*
H. G. Jones	[1]100	n/a
T. G. Jones OBE	[1]0	n/a

[1] Appointed 1 January 1990.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Welsh national board for nursing, midwifery and health visiting appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Members	Attendance Since appointment Per cent.	1989 Per cent.
Professor C. M. Chapman OBE (Chairman)	88	83
Mrs. E. Walker (Deputy Chairman)	88	83
Dr. S. K. Armitage	88	83
Mrs. C. G. Ball	95	83
Mrs. J. Y. Beese	100	100
Mr. D. J. Black	88	83
Mr. G. Boulton	75	67
Mr. G. Castledine	100	100
Mrs. A. C. D. Davies	69	50
Mrs. J. Davies	63	50
Miss A. Doyle	85	83
Mrs. S. M. Drayton	87	67
Mr. P. W. Ebenezer	65	50
Mr. E. R. Edwards JP	77	67
Mrs. J. E. M. Edwards	75	67
Mrs. S. E. Gregory	50	33
Dr. D. Harrett (from April 1989)	75	75
Miss M. Hughes JP	85	88
Mrs. S. C. Hunt	100	100
Mr. D. C. Jones-Davies	60	67
Mrs. D. A. Keddie	100	100
Mrs. A. Kelly	75	67
Mrs. A. V. Males	97	83
Miss J. Martin	100	100
Dr. J. S. Morris	70	67
Mrs. S. B. Nuttall	92	100
Mrs. T. J. Parry	88	83
Miss R. M. Phillips	88	83
Mr. P. J. Pye	80	67
Ms. L. I. Silverton	88	100
Ms. R. Thome	88	83
Mr. N. S. Towns (from April 1989)	50	50
Mrs. A. Whitehead	100	100
Mrs. B. Wroe	100	100

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the standing working group of the Wales advisory body appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not held centrally; the hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the secretary of the Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the urban investment appraisal panel appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessors.

Mr. Peter Walker: The urban investment grant appraisal panel was constituted on 8 July 1987. The record of attendance is shown in the following table:

Panel Member	Possible Attendance Level	Actual Attendance Level
(a) Record of Attendance since appointment:		
Sir Melvyn Rosser	9	9
Mr. David P. Schwarz	9	8
Mr. Ray Lacey	9	9
Mr. Stuart Lindsay	9	9
Mr. Peter Laing	9	9
Mr. Kevin Doolan	2	1
Mr. Rhys James	2	1
(b) Record of Attendance during 1989:		
Sir Melvyn Rosser	3	3
Mr. David P. Schwarz	3	3
Mr. Ray Lacey	3	3
Mr. Stuart Lindsay	3	3
Mr. Peter Laing	3	3
Mr. Kevin Doolan	1	—
Mr. Rhys James	1	1

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the training enterprise and education advisory group appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessors.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between March 1989, when the group was established, and December 1989 there have been four meetings; the percentage of members attending was 90 per cent.; 77 per cent., 62 per cent. and 92 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Welsh language board appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Welsh Development Agency appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: This is primarily a matter for the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the Wales committee on drug misuse appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse was established in December 1986. Since then there have been 13 meetings, four of which were in 1989. The following table lists the current members and their attendance record:

	Percentage attended since appointment	Percentage attended in 1989
Dr. N. J. B. Evans (Chairman)	100	100
*Mr. D. Allen	0	0
Dr. D. Bevan	92	100
Dr. W. B. Clee	100	100
Mr. R. Evans	100	100
Dr. G. W. Hughes	100	100
Mrs. S. Jones	100	100
Miss M. H. Jones	46	25
Dr. M. R. Keen	92	100
Ms. C. Lambert	92	75
*Mr. K. J. McDonogh	0	0
*Dr. S. Palmer	0	0
Mr. R. Pates	100	100

	Percentage attended since appointment	Percentage attended in 1989
Mrs. L. Quinn	100	100
Dr. D. J. Temple	100	100
Mr. D. T. Williams	77	75
Mr. P. M. Williams	85	75
Dr. B. O. Wilson	85	100
Mr. J. Wreford	100	100

Those marked * were appointed in December 1989 and were not able to attend the December meeting.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committee panel of chairmen, Wales, during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. There are six panels of chairmen in Wales, whose members chair meetings of ADHACs on an ad hoc basis. One member of the panel chaired an ADHAC meeting in 1989 but he did not claim his fees or expenses. The minimal servicing costs for the meeting were absorbed by my Department.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the standing working group of the Wales advisory body during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not held centrally; the hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the secretary of the Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the training enterprise and education advisory group during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: Figures for expenditure on administration are not available. Between March 1989, when the group was established, and December 1989 accommodation and catering costs totalled approximately £1,055 and members' travel and subsistence costs approximately £1,238. The chairman of the group is paid £11,393 per annum; no other allowances are paid to members.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the urban investment appraisal panel during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: During 1989 urban investment grant appraisal panel expenditure was £719 of which £200 was spent on hosting of meetings, the balance of £519 being the cost of members' attendance at meetings.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Wales tourist board during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: Total expenditure by the Wales tourist board during 1988-89 was £11·709 million. Of this, £4·060 million or 34·7 per cent. is attributable to operating or administrative costs. Details of expenditure on meetings and conferences is not separately identifiable. Allowances for attending meetings are met from within the total travel and subsistence element of the board's operating costs, amounting to £0·337 million or 2·9 per cent. of the total expenditure in 1988-89.

In the period April to October 1988, actual salaries for part-time commitment paid to the chairman and other members of the board were £23,913 and £4,725 respectively. These rose to £24,234 and £4,790 in the period November 1988 to March 1989. In addition, board members were entitled to claim within an authorised scale travelling and incidental expenses incurred on the business of the board.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh committee for postgraduate pharmaceutical education during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees of the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh committee for postgraduate pharmaceutical education receives funding from my Department and from other sources. It is therefore not possible to provide a figure for total expenditure. However, my Department in the financial year 1988-89, provided funds for *(a)* the maintenance of the office of the director, his staff, and for some limited courses for hospital pharmacists in the sum of £71,938; and *(b)* a further £15,000 was expended on providing courses for community pharmacists.

Of the sum at *(a)* above, 80·77 per cent. was expended on administration in general, and 3·39 per cent. on members' allowances for attending meetings. There was no expenditure on the hosting of meetings, and since the committee has no nominees, there was no further expenditure under this heading.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh committee on drug misuse during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh committee on drug misuse is an advisory committee and as such does not have an operational budget. The only expenditure associated with it is as follows:

(a) Secretariat and administrative support is provided by staff of my Department as part of their wider duties.
(b) £4,601·18 (1988-89).
(c) Travel and subsistence claims are where possible met by employing authorities or organisations. Where this is not possible they are met centrally. The amount for 1988-89 was £2,198·06.
(d) Appointments are unpaid although a financial loss allowance is available to eligible members. The amount for 1988-89 was £206·25.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is contained within the agency's latest annual report and accounts, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, with the exception of expenditure incurred in hosting meetings and conferences. This information is not separately recorded.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh health common services authority during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: During the last financial year, the Welsh health common services authority spent a total of £26,431,669. The further information requested by the hon. Gentleman is not available centrally.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh industrial development advisory board during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the 1988-89 financial year, expenditure in respect of the Welsh industrial development advisory board totalled £3,783[1], of which £2,353 were travel and subsistence expenses for board members, and £1,430 was for hospitality at board meetings. No fees or general allowances are payable to board members.

[1] Excluding Welsh office administration costs, which are published annually in "Public Bodies".

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Welsh language board during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total expenditure on administration of the Welsh language board during the financial year 1988-89 was £90,807, of which the amount spent on meetings and conferences was £654. Expenses paid for attending meetings of the board and its working groups totalled £6,833. Members of the board do not receive a fee for their work.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the agricultural training board are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: One.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the teamcare valleys steering group are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: One.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the agricultural training board appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: The attendance record is:

	(a) Since appointed	*(b) During 1989*
Mr. J. E. Smith (Chairman)	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. M. J. Curtis (Deputy Chairman)	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Prof Kathleen Anderson	4 out of 5	3 out of 4
Mr. G. J. Baird	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. J. Burnett	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. A. H. Fooks	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. J. A. Kilgour	41 out of 46	5 out of 6
Mr. N. J. Mallett	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. I. Monkton	5 out of 5	4 out of 4
Mr. M. D. Pollard	27 out of 27	6 out of 6
Mr. D. H. Roberts	26 out of 27	6 out of 6

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since the appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of current members of the court and council of the University of Wales, Bangor appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessors.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the registrar at the college.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the teamcare valleys steering group appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessors.

Mr. Peter Walker: There were only two meetings during 1989 of the teamcare valleys steering group, which was established on 1 June 1989.

Current membership and attendance record of the group is listed in the table:

	Attendance since appointed in 1989 Per cent.
Chairman—Dr. P. Elwood	100
Professor N. Stott	100
Professor T. Hayes	50
Professor B. Davies	100
Mr. J. P. Williams	100
Mr. J. Butcher	100
Mrs. E. M. Lovell	100
Dr. G. Graham	50

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the teamcare valleys steering group during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to *(a)* administration in general, *(b)* hosting of meetings and conferences, *(c)* allowances for attending meetings and *(d)* general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The teamcare valleys steering group is an advisory body, established on 1 June 1989, and does not have an operational budget. The only expenditure of the group is as follows:

(a) Secretariat and administrative support is provided by staff of my Department as part of their wider duties;
(b) Nil to date;
(c) Travel and subsistence claims are, where possible, met by members' nominating authorities or organisations. No claims have been received to date;
(d) Appointments are unpaid although a financial loss allowance is available to eligible members. No claims have been received to date.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made by him to the council of University College, Lampeter, are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court and council of the University of Wales, Bangor, are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court and council of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the current appointments made solely or jointly by him to the court of University College, Swansea, are held by women.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the council of University College, Lampeter, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor;

(2) what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the court and council of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor;

(3) what is the attendance record at meetings *(a)* since their appointment and *(b)* during 1989 of the current members of the court of University College, Swansea, appointed solely or jointly by him or his predecessor.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Gentleman may wish to write to the registrars at the colleges.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for the international convention on rain forest problems, as outlined in the Kew lecture on 6 February by the Prince of Wales.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government intend to pursue the proposal for an international convention on the world's forests, including tropical forests, in the context of negotiations on a climate convention and related protocols.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Doctors and Nurses

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify the number of doctors and nurses employed in Northern Ireland *(a)* now and *(b)* in June 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information, which is available for September of each year, is as follows:

Year	Doctors (including GPs)	Nurses
September 1979	2,931	18,711
September 1989	3,459	20,780

Industrial Development Board

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the destination by parliamentary constituency of jobs created by the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland from inward investment into Northern Ireland in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89;

(2) what was the destination, by parliamentary constituency, of the jobs created by the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. The table details jobs promoted in each parliamentary constituency during the years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89:

	1986-87				1987-88				1988-89			
	Inward		Home		Inward		Home		Inward		Home	
Parliamentary constituency	Foreign	GB	NI	Total	Foreign	GB	NI	Total	Foreign	GB	NI	Total
Belfast, East					8			8				
Belfast, North		40	38	78								
Belfast, South			103	103		15	20	35		243	60	303
Belfast, West		93	5	98			44	44				
East Antrim	15		22	37	44	136	50	230	87	124	389	600
East Londonderry	44		65	109	20	245	160	425	7	190	73	270
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	10		127	137	180	6	459	645	34	192	178	404
Foyle	99	111	17	227	89		304	393	354	88	36	478
Lagan Valley		108	147	255		93	30	123	939	66	44	1,049
Mid Ulster	28	190	4	222		50	280	330			16	16
Newry and Armagh	30		107	137	123		311	434	74		103	177
North Antrim	72		23	95	165	4	63	232		16	90	106
North Down	168	75		243	73	136		209			14	14
South Antrim	124	1,268	263	1,655	212	374	306	892	793	440	153	1,386
South Down		82	28	110	63		108	171	171		261	432
Strangford		26	221	247		144	177	321	18	78	153	249
Upper Bann	72	200	162	434	281	40	487	808	91	12	66	169
Total	662	2,193	1,332	4,187	1,258	1,243	2,799	5,300	2,568	1,449	1,636	5,653

Factory Space

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount of factory space available for letting from the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland and the Local Enterprise Development Unit at 30 September 1989 analysed by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Needham: Information on the amount of factory space available from the Industrial Development Board is set out at table A.

While the Local Enterprise Development Unit does not normally provide factory space for letting, it assists local enterprise agencies to provide workspace accommodation for small firms. In addition, its private developers scheme encourages the private sector to provide industrial property for letting to small businesses. Figures are not available by parliamentary constituency for LEDU-related property and are therefore provided by district council area in table B.

Table A
Industrial Development Board

Parliamentary constituency	Factories square metres	Small units square metres	Total
North Belfast	—	1,020	1,020
East Antrim	1,580	200	1,780
East Londonderry	3,070	300	3,370
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1,508	—	1,508
Foyle	7,853	—	7,853
Lagan Valley	—	—	—
Mid Ulster	3,799	944	4,743
Newry and Armagh	1,500	401	1,901
North Antrim	4,990	—	4,990
North Down	3,842	—	3,842
South Armagh	700	307	1,007
South Down	1,580	—	1,580
Strangford	—	483	483
Upper Bann	3,000	—	3,000
Total	33,422	3,655	37,077

Supplementary Note—Table A

1. The figures shown are an aggregate of factory space and include small units held primarily for LEDU clients (under 700 sq metres).
2. The analysis includes factories and small units which are ready for immediate occupation, together with those which require some refurbishment, and those which are surplus to requirements, pending disposal on the open market.

Table B
Local enterprise development unit
Factory space available for letting at 30 September 1989

District council area	Lettable factory space (square meters)
Armagh District Council	202
Ballymena District Council	108
Belfast City Council	4,407
Carrickfergus Borough Council	740
Coleraine Borough Council	645
Craigavon Borough Council	63
Derry City Council	1,189
Down District Council	753
Dungannon District Council	1,035
Fermanagh District Council	334
Larne Borough Council	257
Magherafelt District Council	550
Newry & Mourne District Council	2,120
North Down Borough Council	198
Omagh District Council	1,484
Strabane District Council	100
Total	14,184

Notes:

1. LEDU's local enterprise programme assists local community based groups to play an active role in economic regeneration and local industrial development by providing assistance to these groups to establish local enterprise agencies. These agencies provide workspace accommodation for small businesses in addition to business advisory services and administrative support.
2. The private developers scheme is aimed at encouraging private sector developers to provide new industrial premises for letting to small businesses. A shortfall grant, representing the difference between the local cost of providing the premises and their commercial value on completion, is available to developers from LEDU.
3. In one particular case in County Fermanagh, LEDU has purchased an industrial estate which is let directly to small businesses. This unique situation arose in order to ensure that eleven LEDU client companies could continue operating at the Necarne estate which had been in danger of closure. LEDU is currently negotiating the sale of the property.

"Working for Patients"

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of the Association of District Committees for the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland in the light of "Working for Patients".

Mr. Needham: The Association of District Committees will cease to exist if district committees are stood down following the prepared replacement by four area councils under the forthcoming Order in Council. The need for a central association of the proposed area councils will be for those bodies to determine.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on arrangements for ensuring a voice for the consumer in the Health Service in Northern Ireland after implementation of the proposals contained in "Working for Patients"; what will be the arrangements for ensuring that the role of monitoring and visiting will be carried out; and how many places on area councils and boards will be set aside for representatives of patients.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services has consulted on the advisory and consultative arrangements for health and social services boards and is considering the representations received. An announcement will be made soon. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, boards will no longer have places set aside for representatives. All members will have an interest in securing the best possible services for their board's resident population and non-executive members will be appointed solely on the basis of the contribution they can make.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current categories of membership of each health and social services board, together with a table showing the categories of membership of each proposed board giving their method of appointment under the present system, and that proposed in "Working for Patients".

Mr. Needham: The chairman and vice-chairman of each board are appointed by the Department of Health and Social Services. Board members are appointed by the Department in proportions as follows:

about 30 per cent. with a minimum of one member per council on the nomination of district councils;
about 30 per cent. after consultation with professional bodies; the balance after consultation with the universities and other interested bodies including the trade unions, employers organisations and voluntary bodies.

Subject to the necessary legislation being made it is proposed that boards will consist of a chairman and non-executive members appointed by the Department, prescribed officers of the board including the general manager, and a number of officers of the board appointed by the chairman, non-executive members and the general manager. The number of officer members will not exceed the number of non-executive members.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current categories of membership of each district committee in Northern Ireland together with a table showing the categories of membership of the proposed area councils along with the method of appointment under the present system and that under the proposals contained in "Working for Patients".

Mr. Needham: District committees in Northern Ireland comprise 16 to 24 members and are appointed by the relevant health and social services boards on the basis of nominations drawn from voluntary and community organisations (at least one third of the membership but not more than one half), district councils (at least one quarter with a minimum of one member per council) with the balance drawn from trade unions, employers organisations and Churches.

The Department of Health and Social Services has consulted on the membership and method of appointment of the proposed area councils and is considering the representations it has received.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture Council

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Agriculture Council held on 12 and 13 February.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

The Council considered in detail some of the Commission's proposals for the 1990 price fixing. I explained the United Kingdom position which I also outlined to the House recently. In particular I made it clear that the devaluation proposed for the green pound was insufficient.

The Council will resume consideration of the price proposals at its next meeting on 5 and 6 March.

Biotechnology and Seed Companies

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an assessment of the implications for British farmers and British agriculture of the purchase of biotechnology companies and seed companies by agrochemical companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Because of the long-term nature of plant breeding and the heavy investment involved in biotechnological and seed research, larger companies already involved in the agricultural industry and which have the necessary financial resources and research facilities are particularly well placed. Provided there is adequate competition between them and between the United Kingdom companies and their international competitors in the United Kingdom market and that there is room for innovative small companies to identify market opportunities, I see no cause for concern.

Animal Feedingstuffs

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the controls which exist to regulate the use of therapeutic medicants in animal feedingstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: Therapeutic medicines may be used in animal feedingstuffs only if they are licensed for incorporation under the Medicines Act 1968. Where appropriate, a veterinarian's written direction is required before incorporation of a medicine or sale of a medicated feedingstuff.

Veterinary Medicines (Withdrawal Periods)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what checks have been carried out to ensure animals treated against warble fly have not been sent for slaughter before the withdrawal period recommended by the manufacturers has expired; and if he will publish the results;

(2) which checks have been carried out to ensure sheep dipped in an organophosphorous solution have not been sent for slaughter before the withdrawal period recommended by the manufacturers; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Maclean: Withdrawal periods for licensed veterinary medicines, where stipulated, are designed to ensure that any residues in products from the treated animal are at safe levels. Residue levels are checked by my Department through its extensive programme of monitoring at slaughterhouses and on farms. For maximum effectiveness monitoring is carried out on a carefully randomised basis, not on target groups, but the results to date have not given any evidence of problems which could be attributed to warble fly treatment or sheep dipping.

Antibiotics (Milk)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks he has carried out to establish the presence or otherwise of antibiotics in milk destined for human consumption; what the results show; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: All antibiotic products must be licensed under the Medicines Act. One of the licence conditions is that the product label must include details of the withholding period to be observed before milk can be taken for human consumption. The working party on veterinary residues in animal products keeps the position under review and, in addition, the Milk Marketing Board operates a strict testing regime for antibiotics in milk and applies severe penalties if consignments fail.

Food Labelling

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to extend food labelling requirements relating to contents to wine and beer.

Mr. Maclean: I expect the Commission of the European Communities to discharge its commitment in this area and to make proposals to the Council shortly for ingredient listing on the labels of all alcoholic drinks.

Safety Tests

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department conducts into the safety of commercially marketable products to check on industrially sponsored safety tests.

Mr. Maclean: The Department commissions and draws upon a wide range of research to fulfil its responsibilities for the safety and standard of food products, pesticides and veterinary medicines.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food over what period he expects to have results from his recently announced research programme on bovine spongiform encephalopathy; whether he intends to publish it; whether the research covers milk as well as meat; and whether animals other than cattle, pigs and chickens will be tested.

Mr. Curry: The results of the research programme on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) initiated by the Department in 1987, will become available at intervals over the next 10 years. We shall follow our general policy of publishing the results of the research that we fund. Already since 1987, major papers have been published announcing the discovery, the transmission of the agent, the structure of the protein associated with infectivity and the results of epidemiological studies.

The Department will be funding research into the infectivity of a wide range of organs, tissues and secretions, including milk, from BSE-affected cattle.

Experiments are in progress or planned to determine the transmissibility of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to a range of host species including goats, hamsters, marmosets, mice, mink and sheep, in addition to cattle, chickens and pigs.

Sheepmeat Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's procedures to ensure that the European Community sheepmeat premium is paid only in respect of eligible sheep.

Mr. Curry: The Department carefully checks every claim for sheep annual premium to verify that the scheme rules have been complied with, and that payments are made only in respect of eligible animals.

Turkeys (Feed Compounds)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what on-the-spot checks by his officials have been made in the last 12 months at turkey-rearing units owned by companies that mix their own feed compounds, to ascertain what kind of antibiotics have been added.

Mr. Maclean: Under the terms of the Medicines Act 1968 and regulations made under it, all businesses that manufacture medicated feedingstuffs are required to register with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and are subject to regular inspection by the society to ensure compliance with the requirements of medicines legislation.

Meat Processing

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what controls there are on the use of processing aids to allow meats to absorb water.

Mr. Maclean: Products containing water retention agents are subject to the provisions of the Food Act 1984, the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, the Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 and the Miscellaneous Additives in Food Regulations 1980. There are also Community regulations controlling the water content of frozen chickens. Any ingredient used to increase the water content of meat would have to be declared in the list of ingredients. Where added water comprises more than 5 per cent. of the finished product it must also be declared in the list of ingredients. There are special labelling rules covering the declaration of added water in cured meats.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Payroll Tax

121. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any estimate of the additional costs to industry of a payroll tax of 0·5 per cent. of total payroll.

122. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made by his Department of the impact on industry of payroll taxes.

125. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any estimate of the additional costs to industry of a payroll tax of 0·5 per cent. of total payroll.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) on 13 February at columns *121-22*.

Manufactured Goods

123. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactured goods *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1989.

124. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactured goods *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1989.

126. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactured goods *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information may be found in *(a)* table A9 of the mid-year supplement of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and *(b)* table 12 of the latest monthly press notice on the current account of the balance of payments, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Interest Rates

127. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of the current level of interest rates upon United Kingdom export performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the fourth quarter of 1989, the volume of exports (less oil and erratics) was 4 per cent. higher than in the previous quarter and 15 per cent. higher than a year earlier. This is clear evidence that production is being switched to export markets as domestic demand has slowed in response to the tightening of policy.

Trade Deficit

128. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the trade deficit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend receives a few letters each month from members of the public concerning the trade deficit.

Share Ownership

129. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the numbers of new shareholders since 1979; and whether he intends to promote measures to further encourage the growth of individual share ownership.

Mr. Lilley: The joint Treasury and stock exchange survey carried out in January and February 1989 estimated that approximately 9 million people own shares directly—20 per cent. of the adult population; a threefold increase since 1979.

Capital Investment

130. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for capital investment by business.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates of business investment are given in the table. In the two years to 1988 business investment grew by over 30 per cent. to reach £51·4 billion at constant 1985 prices. In the first three quarters of 1989 it was 12 per cent. higher than in the same period a year earlier, seasonally adjusted and at constant 1985 prices.

Business investment, seasonally adjusted at constant 1985 prices

	£ billion
1986	39·5
1987	43·7
1988	51·4
1988 Q1	11·7
Q2	12·8
Q3	13·3
Q4	13·6
1989 Q1	13·9
Q2	14·2
Q3	14·4

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many members of staff in Customs and Excise have been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data within the last five years;

(2) if he will set out the procedure within Customs and Excise for authorising transfers of personal data to other Government Departments; and at what level such decisions are authorised;

(3) on what grounds decisions are taken to transfer personal data held by Customs and Excise to other Government Departments;

(4) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from Customs and Excise to the police; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(5) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from Customs and Excise to other Government Departments; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(6) what internal guidelines covering the transfer of personal data to other Government Departments are available to staff in Customs and Excise; and whether he will place a copy of any such guidelines in the Library;

(7) what kind of personal data held by the Customs and Excise, whether on computer or manually, are transferred to other Government Departments;

(8) what kinds of personal data held by Customs and Excise are transferred to the police; and whether records are kept of such transfers;

(9) what plans exist in Customs and Excise for the transfer of personal data via the Government data network; and what new procedures have been adopted to prevent unauthorised transfers of such data;

(10) what records are kept of transfers of personal data from Customs and Excise to other Government Departments; and whether the Data Protection Registrar has access to the relevant records;

(11) whether records will be kept of all personal data transferred from Customs and Excise, to other Government Departments via the Government data network;

(12) whether the rules governing the transfer of personal data from the Customs and Excise to other Government Departments are the same for data held manually as for data held on computer.

Mr. Ryder: Much of the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Customs and Excise maintain extensive records, many of which contain personal data. These records may be either manually recorded or computerised, and they cover a wide range of different subjects.

Where the information is computerised disclosure is made in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984. This Act allows the Data Protection Registrar access to computerised personal records. Customs and Excise do not maintain a record of personal data disclosed.

Currently Customs and Excise do not exchange data with any other Government Departments via the Government data network other than for updating and returning personal data relating to staff employment (salary, overtime and so on) on the Chessington pay system, because the Chessington computer centre acts as an agent for payroll processing. Customs and Excise have no plans to maintain records, or to issue specific instructions dealing with the transfer of personal data over the Government data network.

Disclosure of personal information is made in accordance with statutory provisions or where it is in the public interest. The authority to disclose is given at no lower than grade 7. There are a number of legal provisions providing for disclosure:

Data Protection Act 1984: S.34 (6)(b)
Finance Act 1972: S.127
VAT Act 1983: S.44
Gaming Act 1968, Schedules 2, 3 and 4
Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1982, Schedule 2 paragraph 8
Finance Act 1969: S.59
Customs and Excise Management Act 1979: S.9 (b)

All these are held in the Library of the House.

Instructions to staff are contained in various standing instructions based on the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, the Data Protection Act, and the Finance Act 1972 in particular. Customs and Excise have no record of any member of their staff having been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data within the last five years.

VAT

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement as to how far charities and non-profit-making organisations other than local authorities are covered by article 13A1 of the sixth European Community directive on harmonisation of value added tax.

Mr. Ryder: Services and goods supplied by charities are exempt from VAT under article 13A1 of the EC sixth VAT directive if they are linked to welfare and social security work, or the protection of children and young people. VAT exemption under article 13A1 also applies to services closely linked to sport or physical education and certain cultural services supplied by non-profit-making organisations (but some member states, including the United Kingdom, under a permitted derogation, continue to tax such supplies); to children's or young people's education, school or university education, vocational training or retraining provided by bodies established for this purpose; to certain supplies of staff by religious or philosophical institutions; to activities of public radio and television bodies other than those of a commercial nature; and, provided that exemption is not likely to cause distortion of competition, to services and closely related goods supplied by a wide range of non-profit-making organisations to their members, and to services and goods supplied by such organisations and by various charitable bodies in connection with their fund-raising events. Furthermore, charities and other non-profit-making organisations engaged in certain activities, such as hospital and medical care, specified by article 13A1 as being in the public interest, may exempt their services if carried out in recognised establishments or by staff with a statutory qualification.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost if the value added tax levied on energy efficient appliances and insulation material was reduced to *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* zero.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available on which to base estimates.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of reducing the value added tax levied on recycled material to *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* zero.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available on which to base estimates.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of reducing the value added tax rate levied on non-recyclable, non-biodegradable packaging to *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* zero.

Mr. Ryder: There would be no measurable revenue loss because normal packaging is regarded as an integral part of the goods it contains and is therefore taxed at the same rate when the goods are supplied.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer and the expected take-up of fitting cars with catalytic converters if the value added tax of fitting catalytic converters was reduced to *(a)* zero *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* 10 per cent.

Mr. Ryder: Information on which to base an estimate is not readily available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised if the value added tax levied on energy efficient appliances and insulation material was increased to *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 25 per cent. and *(c)* 30 per cent.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available on which to base estimates.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised if the value added tax rate levied on non-recyclable, non-biodegradable packaging was *(a)* kept to 15 per cent. and *(b)* raised to (i) 20 per cent., (ii) 25 per cent. and (iii) 30 per cent.

Mr. Ryder: No measurable extra revenue would accrue because normal packaging is regarded as an integral part of the goods it contains and is therefore taxed at the same rate when the goods are supplied.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much value added tax was paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on three quarters of average male earnings, his wife and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for 1978-79 have been placed in the Library of the House and estimates for 1989-90 were given in reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 8 January 1990, at column *559*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much value added tax was paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on *(a)* twice and *(b)* three times average male earnings, his wife and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate;

(2) how much value added tax was paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on half of average male earnings, his wife and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate.

Mr. Ryder: The levels of earnings specified fall outside the range for which reliable estimates of household VAT payments can be made.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much would be raised if the value added tax levied on recycled material was increased to *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 25 per cent. and *(c)* 30 per cent.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available on which to base estimates.

Excise Duties

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions he has reached from available information on the regressive nature of excise duties on tobacco and alcohol.

Mr. Ryder: The amount of duty paid by a household depends on the expenditure it makes on tobacco and alcohol. As households are free to choose that expenditure in accordance with their own preferences, there is no necessary link between duty payments and income.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the impact of indexation of excise duties by product on *(a)* inflation and *(b)* revenues in 1990-91 and a full year.

Mr. Ryder: The impact of indexation of excise duties by product on the retail prices index and revenues in 1990-91 and a full year is shown in the table:

Duty Item	*Retail prices index Per cent.*	*Revenue/Yield 1990-91 £ million*	*Revenue/Yield Full year £ million*
Tobacco	0.16	265	290
Petrol	0·14	480	495
Derv	0·01	110	115
Beer	0·07	160	175
Wine	0·06	55	55
Spirits	0·04	80	85
Vehicle excise duty	0·06	230	230
Cider	negligible	5	5
Rebated oils	negligible	15	15
Total	0.54	1,400	1,465

The indexation factor used is the 7·7 per cent. rise in the retail prices index between December 1988 and December 1989.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of excise duties, broken down by product, paid by those on different incomes.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to an article entitled "The effects of taxes and benefits on household income, 1986" in the December 1988 issue of *Economic Trends*.

European Monetary System

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about sterling's participation in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: I have received a number of representations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the prospects of the United Kingdom seeking to place sterling within the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have made it clear that the United Kingdom will join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS during stage 1 of the Delors plan. The conditions for entry were set out following the Madrid summit.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the effect on sales has been of raising the minimum purchase of premium bonds to £100.

Mr. Ryder: In the six months since the change premium bond purchases averaged some 58,300 a month to a value of about £19·7 million. During the corresponding period in 1988, premium bond purchases averaged around 166,400 per month to a value of some £26·4 million.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many complaints he has received to date about the increase in the minimum value of a purchase of premium bonds to £100.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations about the increase in the minimum purchase of premium bonds from right hon. and hon. Members on behalf of constituents and from members of the public.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the number of people investing in premium bonds each month since the change to a minimum investment of £100, *(b)* the number of persons who purchased bonds in each of the six months before the change and *(c)* the value of the bonds purchased in each of those months.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The minimum purchase for those aged 16 and over was increased to £100 on 1 July 1989. The number and value of premium bonds purchased in each month since the change are:

1989	*Number (000s)*	*Value (£ million)*
July	57·4	21·4
August	63·2	24·7
September	60·2	22·0
October	60·4	20·1
November	58·8	17·0
December	49·6	13·1

The number and value of premium bonds purchased in each of the six months prior to the change are:

January	197·3	29·6
February	170·4	25·2
March	171·9	24·4
April	170·5	24·6
May	163·2	25·1
June	190·4	22·5

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average value of the holdings of premium bonds.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The average value of each holding since premium bonds were introduced in 1956 is around £95.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of interest on premium bonds; and how much of the monthly and annual interest is paid out in prizes.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The rate of interest used to calculate the total prize fund is currently 6·5 per cent. per annum of the value of bonds eligible for each prize draw.

Import Duties

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the sum collected by the Customs and Excise in import duties at London Heathrow airport for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: Customs and anti-dumping duties and agricultural levies collected at London Heathrow and Gatwick airports for the financial year ended 31 March 1989 totalled £300 million. Separate figures for Heathrow are not available.

Local Government Finance

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications for economic policy of a 15 per cent. increase in local authority spending in 1990-91.

Mr. Major: The Government's firm control of public expenditure, and the reduction in general Government expenditure as a share of gross domestic product, have played a major part in the successful conduct of economic policy. The Government are determined that this should continue. There is no doubt that an increase of that order in local authority spending would be unhelpful, and would impose a heavy burden on community charge payers, for which the responsible local council would be accountable.

Cigarettes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the tax paid on a pack of 20 cigarettes in each EEC country as a percentage of the total price and the average price of a pack of 20 cigarettes in each country; and what were the figures five years ago.

Mr. Ryder: The figures for current and 1985 taxation and price levels of a pack of 20 cigarettes in each EC country are as follows:

Excise duty and VAT on 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category: as at 12 February 1990[1]

	RSP[2] *(pence)*	*Factor*[3] *cost (pence)*	*Total duty (pence)*	*VAT (pence)*	*Total tax (pence)*	*Total tax as percentage of RSP*
Belgium	104	30	68	6	74	71
Denmark	239	34	162	43	205	86
France	104	36	52	16	68	65
Germany	149	41	90	18	108	72
Greece	41	13	17	11	28	68
Ireland	188	48	102	38	140	74
Italy	91	25	52	14	66	73
Luxembourg	82	23	50	9	59	72

	RSP[2] (pence)	Factor[3] cost (pence)	Total duty (pence)	VAT (pence)	Total tax (pence)	Total tax as percentage of RSP
Netherlands	108	32	59	17	76	70
Portugal	60	15	36	9	45	75
Spain	57	25	26	6	32	56
United Kingdom	161	43	97	21	118	73

[1] Rates of exchange as at 12 February 1990.
[2] Retail selling price.
[3] Cost exclusive of duty and VAT.
Source: EC excise duty tables.

Excise duty and VAT on 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category: as at 27 February 1985

	RSP (pence)	Factor cost (pence)	Total duty (pence)	VAT (pence)	Total tax (pence)	Total tax as percentage of RSP
Belgium	69	20	45	4	49	71
Denmark	175	22	121·5	31·5	153	87
France	43	11	21	11	32	74
Germany	102	26	63·5	12·5	76	74·5
Greece	26	10	15	[1]—	16	[2]61·5
Ireland	140	36	78	26	104	74
Italy	57	16	32	9	41	72
Luxembourg	53	18	32	3	35	66
Netherlands	88	26	48	14	62	70
United Kingdom	127	34	76·5	16·5	93	73

[1] Greece had not yet introduced VAT in 1985.
[2] Includes sales tax.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many members of staff in his Department have been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data held by his Department within the last five years;

(2) if he will set out the procedure within his Department for authorising transfers of personal data to other Government Departments; and at what level such decisions are authorised;

(3) on what grounds decisions are taken to transfer personal data held by his Department to other Government Departments;

(4) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to the police; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(5) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to other Government Departments; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(6) what internal guidelines covering the transfer of personal data to other Government Departments are available to staff in his Department; and whether he will place a copy of any such guidelines in the Library;

(7) what kinds of personal data held by his Department are transferred to the police; and whether records are kept of such transfers;

(8) what kind of personal data held by his Department, whether on computer or manually, are transferred to other Government Departments;

(9) what records are kept of transfers of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments; and whether the Data Protection Registrar has access to the relevant records;

(10) whether the rules governing the transfer of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments are the same for data held manually as for data held on computer.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested concerning the number of transfers of personal data to other Government Departments is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

It is Government policy that information obtained about a member of the public should be used only for the purpose for which it was acquired. Information held in social security records, both in manual and computerised form, is considered to have been given to the Department for social security purposes only and it is not normally available to other Government Departments. There is, however, statutory provision for the transfer of certain limited information from the Department to the Inland Revenue in connection with the PAYE, national insurance and statutory sick pay schemes.

In other circumstances, where there is no statutory function, requests for information from social security records made by other Government Departments are considered only if the information would prevent the duplication of public funds, help the prosecution of a serious crime, meet the welfare needs of the individual concerned or would be in the public interest.

Information may be disclosed in confidence, in individual cases, to the police in circumstances which involve serious crime.

Where information is held on computer, disclosure to other Government Departments and the police is made only as permitted by purposes 41 to 70 of the Data Protection Act 1984. Under that Act, the Data Protection Registrar has no automatic right of access to individual personal records.

Instructions concerning the disclosure of information are issued to all staff dealing with social security business. These are in the process of revision and we will consider placing a copy in the Library in due course.

During the past five years, 13 members of staff have been reprimanded at a local level for minor breaches of the rules governing disclosure of information and 10 have been reprimanded at headquarters level for more serious breaches of the rules.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans exist in his Department for the transfer of personal data via the Government data network; and what new procedures have been adopted within the Department to prevent unauthorised transfers of such data.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department plans to use the Government data network for the provision of computer services to the offices of the Department, the employment service and the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland as part of the operational strategy. Additionally the Department plans to use the Government data network for other departmental systems as required. Organisational and technical safeguards which apply to all the Department's networks, including the Government data network, ensure that access to personal data is in accordance with authorisations.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether records will be kept of all personal data transferred to other Government Departments via the Government data network.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The types and purposes of transfer of personal computer data to other Government Departments, whether via the GDN or otherwise, are recorded in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Outturn Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of outturn expenditure for Department of Social Security offices in each local authority area on *(a)* single payments in 1987-88, *(b)* social fund 1988-89, *(c)* social fund 1989-90, up to the latest available date and *(d)* budget allocations for the social fund 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Information on the basis of local authority areas is not available. Information by local office relating to single payments in 1987-88, and the social fund in 1988-89 and the period April 1989 to December 1989, is in the Library. Budget allocations for 1990-91 will be announced in due course.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the maximum delays occurring in cases where hospital medical reports are required for consideration by social security appeal tribunals, resulting in adjournments for appellants; and what is being done to reduce such delays.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Figures showing the delays caused to social security appeal tribunal cases while awaiting hospital medical reports are not collected centrally. We are, however, aware of the delays that these reports can create. Provision of the reports is not part of hospital doctors' terms of service and the Department is entirely dependent on the good will of consultants.

In 1988 my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale wrote to the chairmen of all regional health authorities explaining the problem to them and asking them to encourage consultants to provide reports when requested and to do so with the least possible delay. We know from the replies that subsequently came to the Department that this request was widely disseminated to consultants. In addition, medical and lay staff in the Department's regional offices take every opportunity to remind consultants and their secretaries of the problems caused for claimants by these delays.

Pensioners

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what percentage of, women pensioners receive a full national insurance retirement pension on the basis of their own national insurance contributions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that it is possible to provide figures in the form requested on a Great Britain basis only. Of the 2,173,730 women resident in Great Britain who receive a category A pension, based upon their own contributions, approximately 73 per cent. receive a full rate pension.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the relationship between social fund claims and receipt of, and level of, other social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: Budgeting loans and community care grants are available to income support recipients, and crisis loans to anyone without resources in an emergency. The number of social fund applications in the periods 1988-89 and April 1989 to December 1989 and the national income support caseload are set out in the table:

	Community care (000's)	*Budgeting loans (000's)*	*Crisis loans (000's)*	*Income Support caseload[1] (000's)*
1988-89	315	933	501	May 4,350 August 4,420 November 4,260 February 4,350
1989-90 (April-December)	375	840	464	May 4,160 August 4,310 November 4,352

[1] As derived from the Quarterly Statistical Enquiry and rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in respect of a man who becomes entitled to invalidity benefit at the age of 60 years in each of the tax years 1990-91, 2000-01, 2010-11, and 2020-21, after having paid full class 1 contributions in each prior tax year from 1978-79, what he estimates will be *(a)* the maximum and average amounts of such a man's invalidity benefit, including invalidity allowance and additional pension at 1989-90 prices, (i) if clause 4 of the Social Security Bill is enacted, (ii) if the present position remains unchanged, *(b)* the corresponding amounts of retirement pension such a man will receive at normal retirement date if he remains on invalidity benefit until that date and then retires and *(c)* the corresponding amounts of widow's pension the widow of such a man will receive if he dies on the day after he becomes entitled to invalidity benefit and she is eligible for a widow's pension.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The right hon. Member's question calls for calculations relating to circumstances which would occur infrequently. Furthermore, projections of the average amounts of invalidity benefit for the circumstances stated are not available. The figures set out in the final column therefore relate to the entitlement of a man on average male earnings in each year from 1978-79, with assumptions about earnings growth in the future. In 1987-88, the latest year for which information is available, the average amount of additional pension payable to a 60-year-old man newly entitled to invalidity benefit was £13·64 per week. This compares with a figure of £20·16 which results from the application of average male earnings over the period since 1978-79. Invalidity allowance is not payable for men aged 60 or over when incapacity begins.

The information is as follows:

(a) (i) Invalidity benefit under clause 4 proposals[1-4]

Year becoming entitled to IVB	*Maximum amount (£)*	*Amount based on average male earnings (£)*
1990-91	90·97	77·45
2000-01	98·95	83·75
2010-11	86·80	75·00
2020-21	82·25	71·85

(a) (ii) Invalidity benefit under present arrangements[1-4]

Year becoming entitled to IVB	*Maximum amount (£)*	*Amount based on average male earnings (£)*
1990-91	90·97	77·45
2000-01	128·95	109·95
2010-11	125·60	110·90
2020-21	131·60	118·25

(b) Retirement pension[1-4]

Year reaching age 65	*Maximum amount (£)*	*Average amount (£)*
1995-96	96·15	81·30
2005-06	131·75	111·95
2015-16	132·60	116·75
2025-26	139·10	124·75

(c) Widows pension[1,2,4,5]

Year of entitlement	*Maximum amount (£)*	*Average amount (£)*
1990-91	90·97	77·45
2000-01	86·25	76·80
2010-11	84·60	77·25
2020-21	87·60	80·95

[1] All figures at 1989-90 prices.

[2] All amounts include the standard rate of invalidity pension, retirement pension or widows pension as the case may be (£43·60); to the extent that there is entitlement to increase for dependants these amounts will increase by £26·20 for an adult and £8·95 for each child.

[3] Maximum amount assumes earnings at the upper earnings limit in each year from 1978-79.

[4] Average amount assumes average male earnings in each year from 1978-79. The figures assume real earnings growth of 1½ per cent. per year.

[5] Amounts of widows pension, assume the widow is aged 55 or over and no guaranteed minimum pension in payment.

HEALTH

Practice Nurses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many practice nurses are based at general practitioners' surgeries at the current time; and what were the corresponding numbers for the previous five years *(a)* in the Bolton health authority area, *(b)* in the North West regional health authority area and *(c)* in England and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the numbers of practice nurses employed by general practitioners under the ancillary staff scheme is given in the table. Figures are for England only; information in relation to family practitioner services in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	Bolton		*North Western Region*		*England*	
Year	*Number of nurses*	*Whole-time equivalents*	*Number of nurses*	*Whole-time equivalents*		
1988	33	13	333	167	6,878	3,514
1987	10	5	210	89	5,752	2,983
1986	9	5	175	83	4,956	2,501
1985	8	4	152	74	4,392	2,211
1984	8	3	121	61	3,891	1,924
1983	7	3	93	49	3,284	1,657

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will set out the procedure within his Department for authorising transfers of personal data to other Government Departments; and at what level such decisions are authorised;

(2) on what grounds decisions are taken to transfer personal data held by his Department to other Government Departments;

(3) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to the police; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(4) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from his Department to other Government Departments; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(5) what internal guidelines covering the transfer of personal data to other Government Departments are available to staff in his Department; and whether he will place a copy of any such guidelines in the Library;

(6) what kind of personal data held by his Department, whether on computer or manually, are transferred to other Government Departments;

(7) what kinds of personal data held by his Department are transferred to the police; and whether records are kept of such transfers;

(8) what plans exist in his Department for the transfer of personal data via the Government data network; and what new procedures have been adopted within the Department to prevent unauthorised transfers of such data;

(9) what records are kept of transfers of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments; and whether the Data Protection Registrar has access to the relevant records;

(10) whether records will be kept of all personal data transferred to other Government Departments via the Government data network;

(11) whether the rules governing the transfer of personal data from his Department to other Government Departments are the same for data held manually as for data held on computer.

Mr. Freeman: The majority of personal data held by the Department relates to departmental staff records. This information is held in manual and computer systems and access is restricted on a need-to-know basis. This information is transferred to other Government Departments on a regular and routine basis by executive and clerical staff, normally in conjunction with actual or prospective career transfers of the staff between Departments.

Personal data about patients having legally induced abortion is supplied by doctors to the Department's Chief Medical Officer in accordance with the Abortion Regulations 1968, (SI 1968 No. 390 as amended by SI 1969 No. 636, SI 1976 No. 15 and SI 1980 No. 1724). The regulations restrict disclosure of that information except to the persons and in the circumstances specified in the regulations.

Some personal data is held by the Department in respect of young people detained in youth treatment centres and in connection with the activities of the regional medical service, the dental reference service and the social services inspectorate. Where personal medical data have been referred for a second opinion, this is not disclosed for any other purpose unless the individual's consent has been obtained.

The Department also holds some data about the remuneration of general medical practitioners and others in the health services. The regional medical service holds personal data about GPs, but these are not disclosed to other Government Departments.

Regional medical service doctors, in common with any other doctor, have a statutory duty to notify the Chief Medical Officer at the Home Office about individuals considered to be or suspected to be addicted to certain drugs.

All personal data held on computer systems are subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984; this is so whether or not there is any connection to the Government data network.

The only circumstances in which the Department might transfer personal data to the police would be where the Department itself had an interest in an offence, or in other cases where serious crime was involved; no records are kept of such transfers.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve the range and availability of infertility treatment.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve the range and availability of infertility treatments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on 23 January at columns *660-61*.

Consultants

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of consultant surgeons within the National Health Service work on a part-time basis in the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No information is collected on National Health Service consultants' work in the private sector. Consultants on National Health Service whole-time contracts are permitted private practice earnings up to 10 per cent. of gross whole-time salary. Sixty-nine per cent. of consultant surgeons have maximum part-time or part-time contracts which place no limits on private practice earnings. The Government's proposal to introduce full job plans for all consultants should improve their accountability to local management and make it easier for managers to monitor whether consultants are fulfilling their contractual commitments.

Family Planning Clinics

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implications of the changes in the National Health Service on family planning clinics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the National Health Service review proposals, districts will be responsible for

ensuring that their resident populations have access to a comprehensive range of services and this will include family planning. The new funding arrangements will be particularly helpful to family planning clinics which provide services to residents of many districts. Clinics will be able to obtain resources from all authorities whose residents use their services.

Kidney Machines

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many kidney dialysis machines are currently in use in the Durham area health authority; and how many patients are receiving dialysis in the area.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold information centrally about the number of kidney dialysis machines in use by health authorities. The hon. Member may care to contact the chairman of the Durham health authority for the information.

Hospital Inventories

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the 1967 report on hospital inventories remains the basis of good practice in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The National Association of Health Authorities published a security manual in 1984 which the Department commended to the NHS as a good practical guide on matters relating to security of equipment, stock and premises.

AIDS

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the level of section 64 grant funding since 1984 for each Lighthouse, Terrence Higgins Trust, Mildmay, National AIDS Trust and ACET.

Mr. Freeman: Under the rules of the general grant scheme established under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 the Department can offer four sorts of grant. Most grants are awarded to national voluntary organisations towards their headquarters administrative costs. The Department has made the following section 64 grants to the voluntary organisations identified:

(£000s)

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
ACET	—	—	—	—	50·0
London Lighthouse					
Core revenue grant	—	—	100·0	170·0	300·0
Capital grant	—	—	500·0	750·0	—
Project grant	—	—	—	37·9	—
Mildmay Mission					
Core revenue grant	—	—	79·0	162·0	130·0
Capital grant	—	—	321·0	94·0	—
National AIDS Trust (includes pro rata contributions from other Health Departments)					
Core revenue grant	—	—	47·6	127·0	228·5
Project grant	—	—	500·0	—	—
Terrence Higgins Trust	40·0	100·0	300·0	400·0	430·0

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to make a decision on AIDS Care Education and Training's application for section 64 funding.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 5 February at column *486*.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any progress is being made as a result of the waiting list fund.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The £119 million made available through the waiting list fund over four years has enabled thousands of additional patients to be treated from the waiting lists. Particularly impressive reductions have been made in the Mersey region, which has reduced the number of patients waiting over a year by a quarter in the nine months to December 1989. The region plans to be the first to have no patient waiting longer than two years for treatment.

We are determined to tackle the problem of excessive waiting, and have sent a management team into the 22 districts with the longest waiting lists, backed by money from the waiting list fund. As a result waiting lists in those districts have reduced by 12 per cent. and the number of patients waiting over a year by 17 per cent., with further reductions planned. This work will continue in 1990-91, when the team will be investigating the 100 longest district specialty lists in the country. Nationally, provisional figures for September 1989 suggest that waiting lists have fallen since March, and in particular the numbers waiting over a year.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the members of the Mental Health Act Commission with their qualifications and occupations.

Mr. Freeman: There are no specific qualifications required for appointment to the Mental Health Act Commission.

The following list shows the current commissioners, sub-divided according to their category of membership:

Legal
Mr. L. Blom-Cooper *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Dimond
Mrs. V. Bellau
Mrs. C. Bennett
Mr. J. Bowyer
Mrs. C. Goonatillake
Miss G. Richardson
Ms L. Scott Moncrieff
Ms L. Sinclair
Mr. C. N. S. Watts
Mr. J. D. Finch
Mrs. J. Forman Hardy
Mr. M. Napier
Mr. A. Parkin

Medical
Professor E. Murphy *(Vice Chairman)*
Dr. R. M. Evans
Dr. R. Dolan
Dr. S. Fernando
Dr. K. Hamadah
Dr. P. Hettiaratchy
Mr. D. Hide
Dr. N. Seberatnum
Professor D. West
Dr. D. Gaspar
Dr. M. Harper
Dr. M. Malcom
Dr. Oyebode
Dr. R. M. Philpott
Dr. P. Harper
Dr. K. A. Day
Dr. D. Dunleavy
Dr. H. Ghadiali
Dr. N. L. Gittleson
Dr. E. B. Gordon
Dr. A. Hauck

Social Work
Mr. R. Lingham
Mrs. V. Lipscombe
Mrs. M. Meacher
Mrs. I. Midforth
Miss I. Nutting
Mr. R. Stables
Mr. J. Allan
Mrs. J. Deeley
Mrs. C. L. Jones
Mr. A. Ball
Mr. D. Parkin
Mr. H. Vickers

Nurse
Mr. M. Brown
Mr. E. A. R. Chitty
Miss G. Linton
Mr. S. Manikon
Mrs. Soo Lee
Mr. B. Thorne
Mr. M. Graham
Ms. A. Aiyebusi
Mrs. C. Selim
Mr. H. A. Teaney
Mr. R. Wix
Mr. P. Brotherhood
Mrs. R. M. Fraser
Mr. H. McClarron

Psychologist
Miss C. Bollinger
Dr. A. Broadhurst
Ms. P. Spinks
Mr. D. Torpy
Mr. J. Graham-White
Dr. J. Ashcroft
Mr. D. A. Black
Mr. A. Dabbs
Mr. L. J. Wilson

Lay/Specialist
Dr. A. J. Blowers
Mr. G. Bye
Mrs. T. Jowell
Mrs. B. Stroll
Mr. M. Taylor
Rev. A. J. Hawes
Mrs. L. Mason
Dr. M. Barnes
Mrs. P. Entwistle
Mrs. E. Owen
Mrs. A. Samuels
Mrs. M. R. Morris
Mr. B. Smith
Mr. A. Milligan

Dispensing Doctors

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the current average discount percentage deducted from dispensing doctors' remuneration;

(2) when the last inquiry was held into discounts received by dispensing doctors on their drug purchases; and what is the date of the next inquiry.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988-89, the latest period for which figures are available, the discount scale for dispensing doctors withheld an average of 5·7 per cent. of the price of drugs obtained by dispensing doctors. The last discount inquiry established the average discount available to dispensing doctors in 1983. No date has yet been set for a further inquiry.

Deaths on Arrival

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many deaths on arrival were delivered by the police, armed services and voluntary organisations in December 1989 for each of the health authorities operating in West Yorkshire; and what was the cause of death;

(2) how many deaths on arrival were delivered to the health authorities operating in West Yorkshire in December 1987 and December 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information on number of deaths on arrival at hospitals covered by West Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance service during December 1987, 1988 and 1989 is given in the following table. There have been no military ambulances deployed in West Yorkshire.

Number of deaths on arrival

Health authority	*December 1987*	*December 1988*	*December 1989*	*Number carried December 1989*	
				Police	*Voluntary*
Leeds Eastern	17	14	20	n/a	n/a
Leeds Western	7	14	16	0	0
Bradford	34	30	29	29	0
Pontefract	n/a	16	20	0	0
Airedale	8	3	9	0	0
Calderdale	16	8	12	0	0

Health authority	December 1987	December 1988	December 1989	Number carried December 1989 Police	Voluntary
Dewsbury	10	11	19	0	0
Huddersfield	13	4	7	0	0
Wakefield	8	8	7	0	0
TOTAL		108	139		

n/a—Not available.

Details of the cause of death could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Figures for the number of deaths on arrival can fluctuate significantly, depending on the range of cases in a particular month and if there has been any temporary increase in illness locally, for example, as a result of a flu epidemic.

Depo Provera

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the contraceptive drug Depo Provera is approved for use in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Depo Provera is licensed in the United Kingdom for use in short-term contraception where an oral contraceptive is contraindicated or considered inappropriate, for wives of men undergoing vasectomy and for women being immunised against rubella; it is also licensed for long-term use in women for whom other contraceptives are contraindicated or have caused unacceptable side-effects. In addition, the product is licensed for the treatment of endometriosis, and of certain malignant tumours.

NHS (Financial Management)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what decisions have been taken on the type of information needed for the central assessment of the financial management performance of buyers' activity under the proposals of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is one of the issues addressed in our consultative paper "Framework for Information Systems: Information"; see annex 11, section 3. Copies are in the Library. No firm decisions will be taken until completion of the consultation exercise which ends on 30 March.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated total saving that it is hoped will follow the introduction of the changes in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill; and what is the breakdown of these savings by category, including hospital closure, more rapid throughput of patients and reductions in drug expenditure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The object of our reforms of the Health Service is to improve the choice and quality of services available to NHS patients rather than to produce savings. Some of the proposals will lead to the more considered and cost-effective use of resources and this will enable the Health Service to increase the level of patient care it provides.

NHS Reform

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount spent to date on the preparation of the changes proposed in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill on *(a)* additional staff costs, *(b)* staff diverted from other work, *(c)* materials and *(d)* contracts placed with non-National Health Service bodies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Additional funds allocated to health authorities in this financial year are for the preparation of the NHS review proposals. None of these central allocations has been directed to specific clauses in the Bill.

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *231*, (1) if he will give his reasons for deciding that local authorities will have to contribute more to the support of people in homes under their own management than to that of people in private homes;

(2) what are the reasons why Government contributions to support people living in homes for the elderly are not to be calculated on the same basis, irrespective of whether the home is publicly or privately run.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answers 9 February and 12 February 1990]:* As the White Paper "Caring for People" makes clear, the Government recognise that local authorities will need adequate resources to enable them to discharge their new responsibilities from April 1991 including meeting the care costs of people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes. We shall therefore transfer to local authorities the resources which would otherwise have been used to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. The arrangements for paying social security benefits to people in local authority-managed homes will not change.

We want to ensure that local authorities encourage a mixed economy of care and make full use of the independent sector when placing people in residential settings. This will provide residents with a wider choice of accommodation and enable more rational use to be made of public resources.

DEFENCE

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many private security firms are currently hired by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the services; how many firms have been hired for each of the last 10 years; and what is the value of the contracts at 1989 prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 7 February 1990]:* Twenty-one private security contractors are currently employed by the Ministry of Defence, at both service and civilian establishments. The total number of security contractors employed by the Ministry of Defence in each year from 1983 to 1989 is shown in the table. Figures for the years 1980 to 1982 are not held centrally.

Year	*Number of firms*
1983	5
1984	9
1985	10
1986	9
1987	10
1988	17
1989	22

The total values at 1989 prices of the private security contracts in each financial year from 1983-84 are as follows:

Information for earlier years is not available.

Financial year	*Total value ('000s at 1989 prices)* £
1983-84	345
1984-85	461
1985-86	750
1986-87	1,329
1987-88	1,549
1988-89	2,033
1989-90	4,418

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used in deciding between competing private security firms for Ministry of Defence contracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 7 February 1990]:* All contractors who wish to obtain MOD contracts must be listed on the defence contractors list. Companies that apply to join this list are scrutinised by MOD, for financial viability and technical competence. The references of the listed executives are also checked. Many of these companies are members of the British Security Industry Association and the International Professional Security Association, although they do not necessarily have to be members to join the defence contractors list.

When a decision is taken, by unit and command, after careful evaluation, that a guarding contract is to be placed, the contracts branch is asked to submit the details of the requirement to those companies listed on the defence contractors list. A company that wishes to be considered for tender or be awarded a contract must be on the defence contractors list.

The decision to award a contract for security guarding is based on the company's ability to meet the technical requirements of the tasks together with value for money. Technical compliancy is decided upon by a technical evaluation panel which includes security experts from the unit/command/department in question. This examines all technical aspects, that is, the firm's ability to perform the tasks effectively and efficiently. All the competing firms are then placed in an order of compliancy. A financial analysis of each tender is carried out by the contracts branch alone. The contracts branch then decides, using the technical panel's information on compliancy, with which contractor it will place the contract.

SCOTLAND

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of persons who *(a)* were on remand and *(b)* had not been convicted amongst the Scottish prison population on any one day; and how many were (i) males and (ii) females.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table:

Average daily remand population[1] in Scottish penal establishments during January 1990

	Untried	*Convicted awaiting sentence*	*Total on remand*
Males	575	144	719
Females	31	4	35
Total	606	148	753

[1] Provisional.

Prisoners

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current prison population in Scotland in total; how many are *(a)* males and *(b)* females; and what were the corresponding figures for (i) 1985, (ii) 1986, (iii) 1987, (iv) 1988 and (v) 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table:

Average daily population in Scottish penal establishments for the month of January 1985-90

	Males	*Females*	[2] *Total*
1985	4,718	144	4,863
1986	5,191	171	5,361
1987	5,220	176	5,396
1988	5,115	152	5,267
[1]1989	4,826	147	4,973
[1]1990	4,489	124	4,612

[1] Provisional.
[2] Some of the numbers do not total due to rounding.

Fishing Industry

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the past five years he has provided compensation or payments to the Scottish fishing industry as a result of losses caused by inclement weather; what was the basis of such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dart gun firearms certificates have been granted, how many persons now have such weapons in Scotland, broken down by police force areas; and how many are held by *(a)* deer farmers and *(b)* others.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Guns that are specially designed or adapted to discharge tranquillising darts are defined as prohibited weapons under the terms of section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968 and as such may not be purchased, acquired or possessed by anyone without the prior authority in writing of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the consequent issue of a firearm certificate by the chief constable of the area in which the applicant is based.

The available information is set out in the table:

Police force	*Total number of current S.5 authorities relating to dart guns*	*Number of S.5 authorities relating to dart guns known to be issued to deer farmers*
Central Scotland police	5	2
Dumfries and Galloway constabulary	6	Nil
Fife constabulary	4	1
Grampian police	17	2
Lothian and Borders police	11	1
Northern constabulary	17	2
Strathclyde police	8	1
Tayside police	7	2

In addition one registered firearms dealer in the Fife constabulary area has been given authority under section 5 to deal specifically in tranquillising dart guns.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Rehabilitation Service

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when Egham residential employment rehabilitation centre was established; and for how long 24-hour medical cover has been available.

Mr. Eggar: Egham employment rehabilitation centre was officially opened in December 1943. Twenty four-hour medical cover has been available since that time.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to transfer the employment rehabilitation service from the Training Agency to the employment service.

Mr. Eggar: The organisation of the employment rehabilitation service is among the subjects being considered as part of my Department's internal review of services to people with disabilities. A consultative document covering the conclusions of the review will be published soon.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to withdraw 24-hour medical cover from Egham residential employment rehabilitation centre, and what assessment he has made of how this will affect the access to the centre for people with severe disabilities.

Mr. Eggar: There are no plans to withdraw 24-hour medical cover from Egham employment rehabilitation centre.

Exeter Asset Centre

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which organisation is financing the posts of two occupational psychologists at Exeter asset centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Grand Metropolitan Community Services employs two occupational psychologists based at Exeter asset centre, which is otherwise staffed by the Training Agency. This initiative for people with disabilities in the Exeter area is a welcome demonstration of the value of co-operation between the Government and the private sector.

Tobacco Products

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are employed in *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Wales in the manufacture of tobacco products; what percentage of the total working population that represents in each of these areas; what is the tax revenue for their products in each country; and what percentage of the total of tobacco producers is produced in each of the four constituent areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about employment in the tobacco industry by country is available only from the census of employment. The most recent figures are for September 1987. Due to confidentiality restrictions only figures for Northern Ireland and Great Britain can be given. These are as follows:

Employees in employment[1] in the tobacco industry[2] at September 1987

	Number (thousands)	*Percentage[3]*
Northern Ireland	2·1	0·4
Great Britain	15·0	0·1

[1] Excludes the self-employed.
[2] Activity Heading 4290 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.
[3] Percentage of all employees in employment.

Information relating to taxation on tobacco products and tobacco products sales is not available on a regional basis. The United Kingdom figure for tax on tobacco products, including imports, is estimated at £5,800 million for the financial year 1987-88. United Kingdom home-produced tobacco product sales amounted to £6,423 million in 1987.

Homeworkers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many homeworkers are employed in England and Wales and in what industries, giving the most recent figures by year for each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 24 January 1990]:* The detailed information requested is not available. However, in 1981 a survey estimated that, excluding childminders, 230,000 people were working at home in England and Wales. Consideration is being given to whether a more recent figure can be provided.

Restart

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews are planned for the coming year, how many restart follow-up interviews are planned and how many claimant adviser interviews are planned.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* Because the interview programme responds to the numbers and circumstances of individual unemployed people, it is not possible to predict how many interviews will be necessary.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 February 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

South Bank Polytechnic

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in view of current industrial action by polytechnic lecturers, he will take steps to ensure that students at the polytechnic of the South Bank are able to sit their final examinations during the current academic year and that such examinations will be marked in order to enable successful candidates to obtain degree qualifications.

Mr. Jackson: This is a matter for the authorities of the polytechnic. Proposals for an interim settlement of the dispute are currently subject to a ballot.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how calculations are made of special educational support grant in budgeting for special educational needs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what allowances are made to local education authorities for special educational needs; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what allowances have been made available to local education authorities for special educational needs in the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend determines each year the distribution of education support grants (ESGs) and local education authority training grants (LEATGs) in the light of current needs and priorities, including those relating to special educational needs (SEN). Over the past five years, allocations have been made under the ESGs and LEATGs programmes (and the latter's predecessor, the in-service teacher training grant scheme) for a variety of activities to promote SEN provision and training in both the schools and further education sectors. The allocations of supported expenditure totalled:

Year	*Total expenditure supported under SEN-related ESG and LEATGs activities (£ million)*
1985-86	4·3
1986-87	3·8
1987-88	6·3
1988-89	10·8
1989-90	8·6

These specific grants are additional to the general rate support grant (RSG) allocations which each local authority received in the years in question. The distribution of RSG between authorities takes account of additional education needs, including SEN. But it is for each authority to determine the deployment of its RSG allocation, and the pattern of spending between different aspects of its services, including SEN provision.

Teaching Vacancies

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest information he has on teaching post vacancies broken down by school type and subject area for *(a)* England and Wales, and *(b)* Lancashire.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The numbers of vacancies in January 1989 for full-time permanent teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales and in Lancashire are shown in the table.

	England and Wales		*Lancashire*	
	Number	*As a percentage of full-time teachers in post*	*Number*	*As a percentage of full-time teachers in post*
Nursery and primary schools	3,297	1·8	105	2·1
Of which, main age group of deployment:				
nursery	197	2·2	7	—
infant	1,122	2·2	34	—
junior	1,159	1·5	37	—
more than one age group	819	—	27	—
Secondary schools	2,529	1·2	88	1·6
Of which:				
head and deputy head teacher posts	264	1·6	12	—
main scale posts, by subject:				
mathematics	263	1·1	8	—
sciences	310	1·1	7	—
languages	261	1·7	9	—
English	253	1·1	15	—
history, geography or social studies	180	0·8	6	—
CDT, craft or art	180	0·9	9	—
music	103	2·1	2	—
physical education	165	1·2	5	—
remedial	90	1·6	6	—
other subjects	460	1·5	9	—
Total nursery, primary and secondary schools	5,826	1·5	193	1·8

Independent Schools

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the schools which receive pupils paid for in whole, or in part, under the assisted places scheme; and what was the number of assisted place pupils at each school in 1988-89.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Assisted Place Pupils in 1988-89
(Subject to final adjustment)

Name of school	*Number*
Abbey School, Reading	72
Abingdon School	89
Aldenham School, Elstree	29
Alice Ottley School, Worcester	72
Alleyns School, Dulwich	199
Arnold School, Blackpool	78
Ashford School, Kent	38
Bancrofts School, Woodford	80
Bath High School	93
Batley Grammar School	256
Bedales School, Petersfield	8
Bedford High School	89
Bedford Modern School	155
Bedford School	88
Dame Alice Harpur School	52
Belvedere School, Liverpool	159
Berkhamstead School	30
Berkhamstead School for Girls	28
Birkenhead High School	259
Birkenhead School	251
Bishop's Stortford College	36
Blackheath High School	105
Bolton School (Boys)	249
Bolton School (Girls)	246
Bradfield College, Reading	0
Bradford Girls' Grammar	59
Bradford Grammar School	209
Brentwood School	95
Brighton and Hove High School	153
Brighton College	98
Bristol Cathedral School	138
Bristol Grammar School	270
Bromley High School	108
Bruton School for Girls	117
Bury Grammar School (Boys)	188
Bury Grammar School (Girls)	246
Canford School, Wimborne	29
Carmel College, Wallingford	86
Casterton School, Cumbria	42
Caterham School	114
Central Newcastle High School	109
Charterhouse, Nr Godalming	9
Cheadle Hulme School	135
Chigwell School	70
Churchers College, Petersfield	115
City of London School	133
City of London School for Girls	104
Clifton College, Bristol	69
Clifton High School, Bristol	48
Colfes School, London SE12	186
Colston's School, Bristol	86
Colston's Girls' School	154
Coventry School, Bablake	181
Cranleigh School	38
Croydon High School	116
Culford School, Bury St Edmunds	47
Dame Allans Boys' School, Newcastle upon Tyne	133
Dame Allans Girls' School	125
Dauntseys School, Devizes	55
Denstone College, Uttoxeter	123
Dulwich College	277
Edgehill College, Bideford	133
Eltham College, London SE9	92
Emanuel School, London SW11	295
Epsom College	28
Exeter School	167
Farnborough Hill School	188
Felsted School, Dunmow	49
Forest School, London E17	142
Friends School, Saffron Walden	66
Godolphin and Latymer School, London W6	174
Greshams School, Norfolk	9
Haberdashers Askes School, Elstree	218
Haberdashers Askes Schools for Girls, Elstree	128
Hampton School	191
Harrogate College	19
Hereford Cathedral School	227
Highgate School	37
Hulme Grammar, boys, Oldham	218
Hulme Grammar, Girls, Oldham	191
Hymers College, Hull	158
Ipswich high School	133
Ipswich School	76
James Allens Girls' School, Dulwich	165
John Lyon School, Harrow	90
Kent College, Canterbury	83
King Edwards School at Bath	114
King Edwards School, Birmingham	226
King Edward IV High School, Birmingham	171
King Edward VII School, Lytham	214
King Edward VI School, Norwich	110
King Edward VI School, Southampton	228
King Edwards School, Witley	75
King Henry VIII School	76
Kings College School, Wimbledon	88
Kings High School for Girls, Warwick	170
Kings School, Chester	88
Kings School, Macclesfield	168
Kings School, Rochester	53
Kings School, Worcester	165
Kingston Grammar School	114
Kingswood School, Bath	38
Kirkham Grammar School	77
Lady Eleanor Holles School, Hampton	65
La Sagesse Convent School, Newcastle upon Tyne	144
Latymer Upper School, London W6	316
Leeds Girls' High School	123
Leeds Grammar School	194
Leys School, Cambridge	29
Liverpool College	167
Lord Wandsworth College, Basingstoke	82
Loreto Convent Grammar School, Altrincham	72
Loughborough Grammar	125
Loughborough High School	91
Magdalen College School, Oxford	124
Malvern College	56
Manchester Grammar School	237
Manchester High School	178
Maynard School, Exeter	160
Merchant Taylors, Liverpool	188
Merchant Taylors Girls', Liverpool	167
Merchant Taylors, Northwood	78
Mill Hill School	63
Monkton Combe School, Bath	40
Mount St. Mary's College, Near Sheffield	54
Newcastle Under Lyme School, Staffordshire	464
Northampton High School	167
North London Collegiate School, Edgware	77
Norwich High School	172
Nottingham Girls' High School	189
Nottingham High School	115
Notting Hill and Ealing High	110
Old Palace School, Croydon	208
Oxford High School	95
Perse School for Boys, Cambridge	59
Perse School for Girls	73
Plymouth College	183
Pocklington School, Nr. York	128
Portsmouth Grammar School	172
Portsmouth High School	149
Putney High School	100
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Blackburn	243

Name of school	Number
Queen Elizabeth Grammer, Wakefield	160
Queen Elizabeth Hospital School, Bristol	170
Queen Mary School, Lytham	234
Queens College, Taunton	62
Queens College, London W1	63
Queens School, Chester	72
Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire	57
Redland High School, Bristol	76
Red Maids School, Bristol	157
Reigate Grammar School	101
Repton School, Nr. Derby	45
Rossall School, Fleetwood	45
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	112
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	290
Royal Grammar School, Worcester	221
St. Albans School	123
St. Albans High School for Girls	57
St. Ambrose College, Altrincham	93
St. Anselms College, Birkenhead	179
St. Bede's College, Manchester	222
St. Bees School, Cumbria	79
St. Benedict's School, Ealing	75
St. Catherine's School Bramley	44
St. Dunstan's College, Catford	153
St. Edmund's College, Ware	64
St. Edward's College, Liverpool	393
St. George's College, Weybridge	25
St. Helen's School, Northwood	30
St. John's College, Southsea	179
St. John's School, Leatherhead	12
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	71
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	103
St. Mary's College, Crosby	244
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	102
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	49
St. Mauris Convent, Weybridge	61
St. Paul's School, Barnes	81
St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith	59
St. Peter's School, York	135
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	0
Salesian College, Farnborough	81
School of St. Helen and St. Katherine, Abingdon	100
Sedbergh School, Cumbria	75
Sheffield High School	95
Shrewsbury High School	76
Sir William Perkins School, Chertsey	90
South Hampstead High School	56
Stamford School	71
Stamford High School	74
Stockport Grammar School	260
Stonyhurst College, Nr. Blackburn	26
Stowe School, Nr. Buckingham	5
Streatham Hill and Clapham High	162
Sutton High School	69
Sutton Valence School, Nr. Maidstone	58
Sydenham High School	111
Talbot Heath School, Bournemouth	134
Taunton School	50
Tonbridge School	3
Trent College, Derbyshire	126
Trinity School of John Whitgift, Croydon	146
Truro School	155
Truro High School	57
University College School, London NW3	68
Upton Hall Convent School	169
Ursuline High School, Ilford	129
Wakefield High School	144
Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks	74
Warwick School	145
Wellingborough School	59
Wellington College, Berkshire	38
Wellington School, Somerset	193
Wells Cathedral School	74
West Buckland School, Barnstaple	64
Westminster School	30
Whitgift School, Croydon	106
William Hulme Grammar School, Manchester	220
Wimbledon High School	65
Winchester College	22
Wisbech Grammar School	266
Withington Girls' School, Manchester	81
Wolverhampton Grammar School	263
Woodbridge School, Suffolk	115
Woodhouse Grove School, Bradford	113
Wycliffe College, Stonehouse	40

In addition, the following schools joined the assisted places scheme in September 1989. Each one has a quota of five assisted place pupils per year at their normal age of entry.

Ackworth School
Ardingly College
Bloxham School
Bootham School
Bromsgrove School
Blue Coat School
Burgess Hill School for Girls
Cheltenham Ladies' College
Christ's Hospital School
City of London Freemans School
Crohan Hurst School
Douai School
Dover College
Downe House School
Durham School
Edgbaston Church of England College for Girls
Ellerslie School
Felixstowe College
Francis Holland School
Giggleswick School
Godolphin School
Guildford High School for Girls
Haileybury and Imperial Service College
Headington School
Hurstpierpoint College
Kimbolton School
Kings School, Bruton
Laxton School
Leicester Grammar School
Leighton Park School
Marist Convent Senior School
Mount School
Mount Carmel School
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Church High School
Oakham School
Pangbourne College
Polam Hall School
Prior Park College
Reed's School
Rendcomb College
St. Felix School, Southwold
St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate
St. Margarets School, Bushey
St. Margarets School, Exeter
Scarborough College
Solihuil School
Surbiton High School
Tormead School
Ursuline Convent School
Westholme School
Worksop College
Yarm School

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local education authorities which pay for places for pupils residing in their areas to attend independent schools, excluding special schools; and what are the numbers of pupils each supported in whole or in part during 1988-89.

Mr. Alan Howarth: On the basis of returns made to the Department by local education authorities in January 1989 the number of pupils being funded by local education

authorities to attend independent schools, excluding pupils either at special schools or receiving special educational treatment, were as follows:

Independent School Pupils
January 1989

		Number of Pupils
201	City	0
202	Camden	7
203	Greenwich	4
204	Hackney	4
205	Hammersmith and Fulham	3
206	Islington	6
207	Kensington and Chelsea	5
208	Lambeth	5
209	Lewisham	11
210	Southwark	1
211	Tower Hamlets	3
212	Wandsworth	12
213	Westminster	7
301	Barking	0
302	Barnet	0
303	Bexley	0
304	Brent	0
305	Bromley	0
306	Croydon	31
307	Ealing	0
308	Enfield	5
309	Haringey	0
310	Harrow	0
311	Havering	4
312	Hillingdon	4
313	Hounslow	3
314	Kingston-upon-Thames	0
315	Merton	0
316	Newham	7
317	Redbridge	65
318	Richmond-upon-Thames	1
319	Sutton	0
320	Waltham Forest	0
330	Birmingham	7
331	Coventry	0
332	Dudley	0
333	Sandwell	3
334	Solihull	0
335	Walsall	5
336	Wolverhampton	0
340	Knowsley	2
341	Liverpool	0
342	St. Helens	7
343	Sefton	0
344	Wirral	613
350	Bolton	8
351	Bury	1
352	Manchester	0
353	Oldham	1
354	Rochdale	5
355	Salford	5
356	Stockport	0
357	Tameside	4
358	Trafford	1,491
359	Wigan	3
370	Barnsley	0
371	Doncaster	0
372	Rotherham	0
373	Sheffield	0
380	Bradford	0
381	Calderdale	87
382	Kirklees	0
383	Leeds	3
384	Wakefield	0
390	Gateshead	2
391	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0
392	North Tyneside	0
393	South Tyneside	13
394	Sunderland	0
420	Isles of Scilly	0
901	Avon	12
902	Bedfordshire	0
903	Berkshire	0
904	Buckinghamshire	6
905	Cambridgeshire	23
906	Cheshire	916
907	Cleveland	8
908	Cornwall	0
909	Cumbria	3
910	Derbyshire	0
911	Devon	1
912	Dorset	3
913	Durham	4
914	East Sussex	32
915	Essex	6
916	Gloucestershire	33
917	Hampshire	9
918	Hereford and Worcester	139
919	Hertfordshire	10
920	Humberside	3
921	Isle of Wight	4
922	Kent	8
923	Lancashire	47
924	Leicestershire	17
925	Lincolnshire	610
926	Norfolk	5
927	North Yorkshire	12
928	Northamptonshire	16
929	Northumberland	0
930	Nottinghamshire	12
931	Oxfordshire	1
932	Shropshire	8
933	Somerset	14
934	Staffordshire	0
935	Suffolk	0
936	Surrey	35
937	Warwickshire	0
938	West Sussex	21
939	Wiltshire	93

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Western European Union

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will approach the Western European Union Council to urge it to take immediate steps to halt the arms race in the middle east and draw up a list of products and technologies which member countries would undertake not to supply to any country in the near or middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain concerned about the proliferation of armaments in the middle east but do not believe the Western European Union would be an appropriate forum to take the action proposed.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support in the WEU Council the proposal that the French Prime Minister's 7 September 1989 proposal be taken up and a WEU programme prepared for purposeful verification and disarmament co-operation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom fully supports the WEU's work on European collaboration on verification. The subject is due to be discussed at the forthcoming WEU Ministeral.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the Western European Union Assembly recommendation that the Western European Union Council

instructs a working group to conduct, in consultaton with the European Commission, a detailed study of the problems that will arise for the security of member states when the single European market is created and report to the Assembly on its conclusions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The main impact on the security of EC member states of the Single European Act will arise from the removal of frontier controls and will relate to problems of crime, drugs and terrorism. These are already being discussed within the EC and in other fora such as the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken on the WEU Assembly recommendation urging the WEU Council to request the Chinese Government to accede to the international covenant on civil and political rights and the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: The WEU Council has yet to discuss the Assembly's recommendation in detail.

Prevention of Military Risks

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the conditions and framework in which a European centre for preventing military risks might be set up, as proposed by the Belgian Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Discussions are in train at the talks in Vienna on confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) about the possible establishment of dedicated communications links among all 35 participants to deal with security-related issues; and the conventional forces in Europe (CFE) talks are likely to result in the creation of some kind of joint consultative commission among the 23 members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It remains to be seen whether any further body would be useful.

Ivory

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gordon of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, what steps he has taken to establish that any ivory obtained directly or through intermediaries did not originate from illegally poached elephants.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *405*

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds the United Kingdom has given approval to Hong Kong to reopen its markets in the ivory trade.

Mr. Waldegrave: Hong Kong banned imports of ivory in June 1989 and this is unaffected by the reservation that we have entered on behalf of Hong Kong. Also, in disposing of its stocks of ivory, Hong Kong will export only to countries which are not parties to CITES or which are parties to CITES and have entered appropriate reservations.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the computerisation of the current ivory stocks in Hong Kong is now complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: So far, data covering two thirds of the commercial stocks of ivory have been entered into the computer system.

Romania

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any information on the privatisations planned by the Romanian Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Romanian authorities have not so far made any specific proposals.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to assist the Romanian Government to achieve the privatisation of some of their industries.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Romanians have not so far asked for such help. We shall certainly consider carefully and sympathetically any such request that we receive.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries differing categories of employees in his Department are prohibited from visiting without obtaining prior permission; and for what reason.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been long-standing practice to give advice to all staff on the problems they may face in travelling to certain countries, and to require them to give notice of such visits, particularly if they have access to classified information. On security grounds we do not publish the list of countries concerned, but it is kept regularly under review.

European Community

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the need for institutional progress within the European Community beyond the single market programme, as a result of *(a)* the impetus within the Community itself and *(b)* the developments occurring in the neighbouring countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 7 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), *Official Report*, column *693*.

Nicaragua

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to resume normal trading links with Nicaragua after the elections in the current month.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our trading relations with Nicaragua are already normal.

Uganda

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Ugandan Government on the reported violations of human rights which continue to occur in the Teso region of Uganda.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have already raised these reports with the Ugandan Government, who are committed to upholding human rights standards.

German Unification

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on implications for the United Kingdom of German unification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The unification of Germany will have important consequences for the United Kingdom, for our partners in the EC and NATO, and for others. There will be discussions on all these questions in the appropriate fora, including, as has just been agreed in Ottawa, a meeting between the four powers and the two Germanies.

South Africa

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement setting out the EEC agreed sanctions against South African trade; and if Her Majesty's Government have any entitlement to cancel any of these measures unilaterally.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following measures adoped by EC partners relate to trade with South Africa:

—A rigorously controlled embargo on exports of arms and para-military equipment to South Africa.
—A rigorously controlled embargo on imports of arms and para-military equipment from South Africa.
—The cessation of oil exports to South Africa.
—The cessation of exports of sensitive equipment destined for the police and armed forces of South Africa.
—The prohibition of all new collaboration in the nuclear sector.
—A ban on imports of certain South African gold coins.
—A ban on certain new investment in South Africa.
—A ban on the import of iron and steel.

Certain of these measures were enacted by the European Communities under the Community treaties, whereas others amongst them were adoped by the member states outside the Community treaties as such. As my hon. Friend will be aware, we are in consultation with our European partners on the question whether the various measures continue to make good sense in the light of the most recent developments in South Africa which, it will be clear, respond directly to the actions for which the Twelve have called since 1986.

If we fail to reach agreement, the Government must reserve the right to act on their own if necessary.

ENERGY

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future relationship between Nuclear Electric and Nirex.

Mr. Baldry: Upon vesting, the CEGB's 42·5 per cent. shareholding in UK Nirex Ltd. will be transferred to Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning the proportion of the unit cost of nuclear electricity that is allocated to waste management and decommissioning in France and the United Kingdom, respectively.

Mr. Baldry: Direct comparisons between France and the United Kingdom cannot be made because nuclear power is generated in each country by different reactor types which have different waste management and decommissioning requirements.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to establish a special Government fund to cover the decommissioning costs of nuclear power stations, to be filled by annual payments from the operators of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Baldry: No. Financial provision for decommissioning costs is a management matter for the operators of nuclear power stations.

Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to require all electricity bills to specify that amount which is directly attributable to the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what financial arrangements are being made for the disposal costs of the low-level and intermediate-level wastes produced at Sellafield due to the reprocessing of nuclear fuel rods.

Mr. Baldry: Under the terms of contracts which BNFL has for reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel the costs of disposing of the vast majority of low and intermediate level wastes arising fall to BNFL's customers. BNFL makes provision in its accounts for those costs which do not fall to customers.

BNFL (Contracts)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply of 2 February to the hon. Member for Newport, West, *Official Report*, column *385*, he will set out details of *(a)* the disaggregated contracts making up the £80 million fuel services, *(b)* the disaggregated details of the contracts making up the 80 per cent. of additional capacity for overseas customer use of THORP and *(c)* the details of each export contract requiring the approval of the Secretary of State under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

Mr. Baldry: The export contracts awarded to British Nuclear Fuels plc within the past two years were for:

	£ million
Uranium processing services	12
Uranium enrichment services	46
Consultancy services, design and engineering work; technology	9
Spent fuel transport services	13
	80

Orders for additional reprocessing in THORP have been secured from the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Approvals under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 are given at the time of shipment rather than when contracts are awarded. The details are commercially confidential.

Nuclear Services Group

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), *(Official Report,* 5 February, columns *454-56),* he will set out the date on which the contract was issued to Nuclear Services Group to advise the Secretary of State on decommissioning costs in regard to electricity industry privatisation; when the report, or reports were received by him from Nuclear Services Group; what was the total costs of the consultancy contract; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: The contract was awarded on 10 April 1989 and the report was received on 16 May 1989. The report considers BNFL's estimates of its decommissioning costs. The cost and content of the report are commercially confidential.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will carry out consultations to establish the degree of disadvantage which higher electricity prices create for significant exporting industries.

Mr. Baldry: Privatisation will create a market in which large users can seek competing bids for supply. To give them time to do so, the Government have asked the electricity industry to offer customers taking more than 1 MW a real price freeze for one year. It would be premature to conclude that such users will face higher prices thereafter.

Wind Power

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he has given to the application submitted by AEA Technology to undertake a wind power feasibility study in the north of Scotland.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As part of its review of renewable energy technologies, my Department carries out regional resource studies. One of these will be a study to examine the potential wind energy resource in Caithness and Sutherland and this will form part of a wider review of the wind energy resource for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Cash Limits

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1989-90.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply,* 26 January 1990, *Official Report,* col. 904]: The cash limit for class VI, vote 6 relating to expenditure on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales has been reduced by £14,000,000 from £30,000,000 to £16,000,000. This change reflects reductions in expenditure on the expenses of privatising the electricity supply industry in 1989-90 resulting from the delay in the vesting which I announced in September last year, and the consequent delay in the flotation of the area boards and the generating companies.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Libel Law

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to implement the 1977 Faulks committee report's recommendations that the defence of innocent dissemination in libel law, now available to booksellers, be extended to the printer.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor intends to issue a consultation paper inviting views on proposals to deal with the problems of those who use advanced technology and innocently disseminate defamatory materials. This is one of a number of proposals relating to defamation which will be announced today.

Incitement to Murder

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the criteria used by the prosecution authorities in deciding whether action should be taken over incitement to murder; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The criteria set out in the code for crown prosecutors, issued under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, are applied in all prosecutions considered by the crown prosecution service. The criteria require that there is sufficient evidence to afford a realistic prospect of a conviction, and the public interest requires a prosecution in the circumstances.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what representations have been received by the prosecution authorities in the last year regarding incitement to murder calls against Mr. Rushdie.

The Attorney-General: In March 1989 the Director of Public Prosecutions instructed all chief crown prosecutors to refer to him all correspondence relating to any possible offence of incitement to murder Mr. Rushdie. Over the last year the crown prosecution service has received or had referred to it letters from a total of 39 correspondents in respect of alleged death threats against Mr. Salman Rushdie.

Additionally, three police reports have been received concerning instances of alleged threats.

Liverpool County Court

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being taken in response to complaints lodged with the circuit administrator at Manchester against the conduct of the chief clerk at Liverpool county court; what action is under consideration; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Complaints against the conduct of employees of the Lord Chancellor's Department always receive careful consideration from senior officers. Each complaint has been considered and the conduct of the chief clerk of Liverpool county court has been reviewed; no further action is considered necessary.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General what is the total number of complaints lodged with the circuit administrator at Manchester against the conduct of the current chief clerk at Liverpool county court; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Since 1 February 1989, some 82 complaints by the firm of E. Rex Makin & Co. have been lodged with the circuit administrator specifically referring to the conduct of the chief clerk of Liverpool county court.

Defamation

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government have completed their review of defamation.

The Attorney-General: The Government have examined current issues and complaints relating to the law of defamation and have found that there are justified criticisms principally concerning the way in which the law of defamation operates in practice. The Government now propose the following series of reforming measures.

The powers of the Court of Appeal to review the awards of civil juries, particularly in defamation cases, are not adequate. Even if the Court of Appeal considers that a jury award is excessive or inadequate it can only substitute its own award if both parties agree. Otherwise it is limited to ordering a new trial, which involves further delay and expense to the parties. It is therefore proposed to empower the Court of Appeal itself, in cases where it can now order a retrial, to substitute for the sum awarded by the jury such sum as appears to the Court of Appeal to be proper. This will be done by enlarging the existing statutory powers of the Rule Committee.

The present rules and practice for pleadings in defamation cases have been criticised as being unnecessarily complex, and adding to the difficulty and cost of preparing and conducting litigation. The Lord Chancellor is to invite the Supreme Court Procedure Committee to examine the rules and practice, and to propose reforms. The committee is a body of judges and practitioners which was established in 1982 to make recommendations in relation to Supreme Court practice and procedure.

A plaintiff who is considering whether or not to accept a payment into court needs to know whether the judge will give him an opportunity to make a statement in open court which will clear his name. As a result of a recent change in the rules, a plaintiff can now apply to the judge for approval of a proposed statement before accepting a payment in.

Once the problem of complexity has been tackled the Lord Chancellor will wish to consider providing for some categories of defamation cases to be heard in the county court, with a view to reducing delay and cost and ensuring the most appropriate use of judicial resources.

The Lord Chancellor intends to issue two consultation papers inviting views on proposals to modify specific aspects of the substantive law of defamation. These papers will deal with the problems of those who use advanced technology and innocently disseminate defamatory materials, and the problems which arise when a party to defamation proceedings has died.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Visible Trade

16. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's visible trade balance in 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimate is for a visible trade deficit of £23 billion in 1989.

Inflation

17. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current inflation rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: The inflation rate in other G7 countries, all but one of which exclude mortgage interest payments from the index, was 4·2 per cent. On a comparable basis the United Kingdom inflation rate was 6·1 per cent. in December 1989.

29. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many other European Community countries have a higher inflation rate than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: Four EC countries have higher inflation rates than the United Kingdom when estimates of home owners' costs are excluded so as to bring the published figures on to a more comparable basis.

33. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

40. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Ryder: The all-items annual rate of inflation as measured by the RPI is 7·7 per cent. The underlying rate, excluding mortgage interest payments, is 6·1 per cent.

Family Expenditure

18. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect on a married man with a wife who is not working and two children who has a £37,500 mortgage and earns £15,000 a year if *(a)* mortgage rates are cut by 2 per cent. and *(b)* if 2p is cut off the standard rate of tax.

Mr. Ryder: The estimated effects of these changes would be *(a)* a reduction in annual mortgage interest payments, net of basic rate tax relief, of £600 and *(b)* a reduction in income tax of £212·50.

Child Poverty Action Group

19. **Mr. Benn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss taxation.

Mr. Major: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

32. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss taxation.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

Bank of England

20. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Take-home Pay

21. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in real take-home pay of a married man with two children on male average earnings during the 1980s.

Mr. Lilley: A married man on average male earnings with two children enjoyed an increase in real take-home pay of over 26 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1989-90.

Interest Rates

22. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

52. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current short-term interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current short-term interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 15 February.

26. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current short-term interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Ryder: On 14 February three-month interbank rates were 15·1 per cent in the United Kingdom and 8·5 per cent. in Germany.

37. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from Scottish industry and other business interests about interest rate policy.

38. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from Scottish industry and other business interests about interest rate policy.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such reperesentations.

49. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for reducing interest rates this year.

Mr. Ryder: There will be no early relaxation of policy. Interest rates will remain high for some time to come.

Tax Office

23. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to transfer offices of the Inland Revenue and the Customs and Excise from London and the south-east to the northern region.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue plans to open new offices in Sunderland and Middlesbrough, taking in total 420 posts from London.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to merge the offices of collectors and inspectors of taxes.

Mr. Lilley: As reported in the Inland Revenue management plan for the next three years, published today, it has been decided that the time is now ripe to consider whether greater operational efficiency and improved service to taxpayers could be obtained by bringing together the work of local collectors and inspectors of taxes. With Ministers' approval, the board is studying all the implications, and planning experiments both to test the concepts involved and to establish the likely benefits to the Department and to taxpayers. Details of these experiments will be announced when this preliminary work is further advanced.

European Monetary System

24. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from business in relation to British membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations.

31. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what realignments there have been within the past 12 months of currency levels within the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: In the last 12 months, there has been one realignment of the exchange rate mechanism on 8 January 1990, involving a narrowing of the lira's margin of fluctuation from ±6 per cent. to ±2¼ per cent.

54. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average inflation rate of countries participating in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Major: Using data which exclude estimates of owner-occupier housing costs to provide figures on a more comparable basis, the average inflation rate of countries in the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS was 4·2 per cent. in November 1989.

Crown Estates

25. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the First Crown Estates Commissioner; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Major: My predecessor met the First Crown Estates Commissioner on 12 July 1989. Their discussion covered chiefly the Crown Estate Office's performance in 1988-89 and the forward programme.

Public Expenditure

27. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any allocations have been made from the contingency reserve since the publication of the public expenditure White Paper.

30. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any allocations have been made from the contingency reserve since the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Claims on the reserve have been, and will continue to be, announced after they are agreed.

Capital Flows

28. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the short-term capital flows into the United Kingdom in 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not meaningful to distinguish between short-term and long-term capital flows.

Gross National Product

34. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average growth of gross national product in the United Kingdom for the last four years for which figures are available; and what it was between 1977 and 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over the four years ending 1988, the average annual rate of growth of United Kingdom gross national product, at constant factor cost, was 4·0 per cent. compared with 3·1 per cent. from 1977 to 1979.

Group of Seven

35. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the Group of Seven finance Ministers; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 18 January, at column *345*.

Confederation of British Industry

36. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor last met the CBI at the meeting of the National Economic Development Council on 10 January. The Council discussed various papers on the outlook for the economy, the plastics processing industry, and the Government's higher education policies.

Football

39. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total income the Exchequer received from tax on football pools and value added tax on football gate receipts, transfers and other commercial activities of the Football League clubs.

Mr. Ryder: Pool betting duty receipts in 1988-89 were £279 million. Information is not available on the value added tax collected from football gate receipts, transfers and other commercial activities of the Football League clubs.

55. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue is received per year from football and football pools.

Mr. Lilley: Details of revenue received in direct taxes from football clubs, players and staff are not available separately from other income tax and corporation tax revenue. For details of indirect taxes, I refer to the answer given earlier today by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton).

Taxation

42. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute a review of the impact of the taxation system on the environment.

44. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to shifting the burden of taxation from production to consumption.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

45. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the need to reform the taxation of savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

47. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to introduce a substantial increase in investment tax allowances for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Major: I cannot anticipate my Budget statement.

Northern Region

43. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the economy in the northern region.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government's economic policies have created the conditions for greatly increased prosperity in the northern region. The fall in the unemployment rate over the last year has been one of the fastest in the United Kingdom.

Civil Service Catering

46. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed by the Civil Service catering organisation.

Mr. Ryder: As at 1 February 1990, the Civil Service catering organisation employed 1,250 staff including 1,024 industrial civil servants of whom 823 were part-time employees.

Customs and Excise

48. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state any convenient figures he has for the numbers of Customs and Excise personnel qualified to discriminate between legal and illegal imports of listed flora and fauna, rain-forest birds and reptiles.

Mr. Ryder: All staff employed on Customs control are trained to be alert to the possibility of illegal imports of endangered species of flora and fauna. Where this is suspected and the identification of particular specimens is required, qualified experts in the appropriate field are called upon to advise Customs.

Economic Growth

50. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his Department's latest estimates for economic growth for 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Franks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest estimates for economic growth in Britain in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest forecast for GDP growth in 1990 is 1¼ per cent. as published in the Autumn Statement.

Savings

51. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total interest paid on savings in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ryder: Payments to the personal sector of dividends and interest on financial assets of all kinds amounted to £35·1 billion in 1986, £38·1 billion in 1987 and £45·4 billion in 1988. These figures are gross of tax. They include income on savings in the form of equity in life assurance and pension funds, and may be found in table 3.7 of the United Kingdom National Accounts "Blue Book" or on the CSO databank which is accessible through the Library.

Child Care

53. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will outline the tax concessions which are available to working mothers receiving benefits in kind in the form of subsidies for child care from their employers.

Mr. Lilley: Employees earning less than £8,500 a year are not normally subject to tax on subsidised child care. Employers can qualify for tax relief on day-to-day expenditure on all forms of child care provision for their employees' children. Tax relief is also available for certain capital expenditure on child care facilities.

Third World Debt

57. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current policy of the Inland Revenue in relation to the tax treatment of United Kingdom banks which make provision against Third world debt.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue operates the test laid down by law. This provides tax relief to the extent that the principal is estimated to be irrecoverable.

Personal Equity Plans

58. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the impact of personal equity plans.

Mr. Lilley: Since its start in 1987, the personal equity plan scheme has proved very successful. By the end of 1989, nearly 700,000 plans had been started, with a total initial investment of more than £1·4 billion. More than 300 financial intermediaries now act as plan managers.

Labour Costs

59. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes there have been in labour costs in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany over the past five years.

Mr. Ryder: Data on unit labour costs in manufacturing in the United Kingdom and West Germany are published in the CSO's Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.

Charities

60. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was raised by the Exchequer, in each of the last three financial years, through value added tax on charities.

Mr. Ryder: There is no comprehensive information available on the subject but it is estimated that charities pay between £150 million and £200 million in value added tax each year.

Narcotics Seizures

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the trend of seizures of narcotics in ports and airports.

Mr. Ryder: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise provisional figures for 1989 show substantial increases in the numbers and quantities of seizures of the major drug types.

The overall number of seizures shows an increase of some 40 per cent. while increases by weight were of the order of 40 per cent. for heroin, 50 per cent. for cocaine, and 130 per cent. for cannabis resin in 1989 as compared with 1988.

There is a continuing underlying trend for seizures of drugs consigned from or routed through other EC countries to represent a substantial proportion of total seizures. In 1989 they amounted to approximately 40 per cent. of the total weight seized.

Civil Service Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total size of the Civil Service *(a)* in 1979, *(b)* in 1984 and *(c)* in 1989.

Mr. Ryder: Civil Service staff numbers for the years in question were as follows:

	Number
1 April 1979	732,275
1 April 1984	623,972
1 April 1989	569,215

Sewing Thread (Imports)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in releasing Mr. Ashok Gosai's consignment of sewing thread from Felixstowe dock held in container No. GSTU3182901/20ft/1854556; and when he expects it to be released.

Mr. Ryder: Customs have withheld release of the goods as they were found to have been incorrectly declared and were prohibted to be imported without a Department of Trade and Industry import licence. Release of the goods will be considered by Customs as soon as these outstanding matters have been resolved.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Ryder: The Treasury employs one private security firm, Trafalgar Security Ltd., at Jameson house only. The cost is £4,900 per annum and involves part-time employment of one person.

This function was previously undertaken by Group 4 at a cost of £2,600 per annum, also involving part-time use of one member of staff.

The Group 4 contract started in September 1987. Group 4 was replaced by Trafalgar in April 1989. Prior to September 1987 the security was provided by guards employed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Public Sector Borrowing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the levels of public sector borrowing or debt repayment in 1969 and 1978 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: There was a debt repayment of £0·6 billion in 1969-70, borrowing of £9·2 billion in 1978-79 and a debt repayment of £14·4 billion in 1988-89.

At 3 per cent.of GDP, last year's debt repayment was the largest ever recorded. A further substantial debt repayment is expected this year.

Banking Services

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Government's detailed response to the report of the review committee on banking services.

Mr. Ryder: The Government are considering the review committee's report and intend to give their detailed responses shortly.

Personal Debt

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average level of personal debt per adult in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: In 1989 the average level of personal debt in the United Kingdom was approximately £7,870 per adult.

Information Technology

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the progress with the Government's plans for the future provision and management of their voice and data administrative telecommunications traffic.

Mr. Ryder: In March 1989 my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster General announced a collaborative study to identify possible options for aggregating Government voice telecommunications and integrating voice and data traffic. That study has been completed. It has concluded that it would be beneficial to the Government to proceed towards a private integrated digital network, to be known as the Government Telecommunications Service (GTS).

The study also concluded that such a network could be developed by building on the present Government Data Network (GDN). This is managed by Racal Data Networks Limited, and the contract for its operation envisages the possibility of such expansion and enhancement into an integrated network. Negotiations are therefore being opened with RDNL to see whether it can satisfactorily supply such an integrated service. If this approach is adoped, value for money would be secured by requiring that the provision of the supporting products and services for such a network, which form the major part of the value of the contract, would be let by RDNL on a sub-contract basis through competitive tender, in line with the Government's public purchasing policies.

Once these negotiations have been concluded, their outcome will be announced.

A summary of the statement of requirements for a Government Telecommunications Service, the Requirements Overview, has been placed in the Library.

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Ryder: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 12 February. I represented the United Kingdom. The revised Financial Regulation which sets the rules for implementing the European Community Budget was agreed and will be adopted shortly. There was an initial discussion of the

procedures for multilateral surveillance of member states' economies during stage one of EMU. Further discussion will be held at a future ECOFIN.

It was agreed that a medium term loan facility for up to five years should be made available to Hungary for the ECU equivalent of $1 billion. The Community has decided to invite other industrial countries to associate themselves with this facility. The first tranche of this loan will be the ECU equivalent of $400 million and will be available once a stand-by arrangement has been agreed with the International Monetary Fund. This first tranche will be guaranteed by the Community budget and a supplementary budget will soon be adopted to provide this guarantee.

Finally, the Council took note of a statement by the Commission urging early agreement to three tax measures which have been designed to encourage cross border co-operation in tax affairs.

Public Works Loan Board

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the arrangements for lending to local authorities by the public works loan board in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Major: Every year the PWLB Commissioners, after consultation with the Treasury, determine loan quotas for each authority. Borrowing within these quotas is at very fine rates set by the Treasury. Additional loans may be made in specific circumstances at higher ("non quota A" and "non quota B") rates.

In recent years the Commissioners have, however, as a matter of course, made advances additional to the normal quotas available at quota rates. This was done with the agreement of the Treasury in order to assist in the management of the money markets. At present, however, local authorities are, in total, investing very substantial sums of money with the banking sector, whilst at the same time borrowing large sums from the PWLB. The combined effect of this is to cause difficulties in the management of the money markets. The Government therefore believe that it is now desirable to curtail the availability of funds from the PWLB at quota rates.

The PWLB Commissioners have reviewed the quota arrangements for the financial year 1990-91 and have today issued a circular (number 89) indicating that the quota entitlement for each authority will be:

75 per cent. of its net reckonable capital payments made during 1990-91; plus

4 per cent. of its net reckonable debt incurred for capital purposes, being the total amount outstanding less the total sums held in financial investments on 31 March 1990.

There will be no minimum quota entitlement. The normal arrangements by which loans may be made under the non quota A and non quota B facilities will, however, continue to operate. Local authorities' ability to borrow in the market will not be affected.

With effect from today the Commissioners will no longer be prepared, as a matter of course, to make loans available in addition to the quota and at quota rates.

In order to limit the level of borrowing in the remainder of this financial year, the Commissioners have also decided to restrict advances within quota from the date of the circular to 31 March 1990, to not more than one tenth of each authority's quota for the current financial year.

The Commissioners will be prepared to consider requests from local authorities for advances additional to normal quotas at quota rates where the changes listed above will cause an authority exceptional difficulties, for example where it faces unusually high levels of maturing debt. The decision will be for the Commissioners, but I understand that, in deciding whether to make an advance, they will take into consideration, along with other factors, the level of the authority's investments and that the Commissioners are unlikely to be prepared to agree to an advance if, and to the extent that, it appears to them that these investments could be used instead.

An authority wishing to borrow from the board in addition to quota may also apply for non quota B loans. The Commissioners will continue to be prepared to consider applications for such advances where it can be demonstrated that additional capital finance is needed in the relatively near future. The rate of interest on non quota B loans is currently 1 per cent. above non quota A loans. From 1 April 1990 I have decided that the rate of interest on non quota B loans will be 2 per cent. above the rate of interest on quota loans.

At present the interest rate on quota loans is set at the lowest possible level consistent with the constraints of the 1968 National Loans Act. I have decided that for the future this fine rate will no longer be appropriate. Quota rates will therefore be gradually increased so that they are closer to, but still below, market rates. This will be done by maintaining PWLB rates when general interest rates fall.

Premium Bonds

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average value of the purchases of premium bonds in the six months before the change in the minimum purchase to £100 and the period since then in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the total for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* In the six months prior to the change in the minimum purchase, the average value of a premium bond purchase was £142. In the six months following the change, the average was £338. Separate figures are not available for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Company Visits

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many visits were made to Northern Ireland in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 by companies seeking to invest in Northern Ireland; and what were the locations visited and number of times visited, itemised by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Needham: The number of visits made by companies considering investment in Northern Ireland during the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 was 157, 176, and 159 respectively. The locations visited within Northern Ireland and the number of visits made to each location are detailed by district council area in the table. In many instances, particularly on repeat visits to Northern Ireland for detailed discussions with the Industrial Development Board, visits have been confined to IDB house.

Information in the form requested ie by parliamentary constituency is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Number of visits to locations within Northern Ireland by companies considering investment

District council area	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Antrim	15	28	36
Ards	4	1	2
Armagh	—	3	1
Ballymena	3	3	8
Ballymoney	2	—	5
Banbridge	1	1	1
Belfast	44	47	50
Carrickfergus	16	12	9
Castlereagh	9	1	9
Coleraine	5	3	5
Cookstown	1	1	—
Craigavon	14	5	9
Down	3	1	3
Dungannon	3	3	3
Fermanagh	1	5	3
Larne	11	7	6
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	12	10	12
Londonderry	5	12	10
Magherafelt	1	1	1
Moyle	6	1	1
Newry and Mourne	5	5	4
Newtownabbey	10	18	22
North Down	19	11	10
Omagh	—	—	2
Strabane	—	1	2
Totals	190	180	214

Grants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will instruct the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, in future, to publish details of grant assistance made available to companies and in each case state the percentage of the total project cost of the grant assistance made available.

Mr. Needham: Since the termination of "British Business" which contained information on grant assistance offered to NI companies, the Industrial Development Board has been considering ways of publishing this information. However, information on particular project costs will remain commercially confidential.

"Making Belfast Work"

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the breakdown by company and amount of the £50·5 million selective financial assistance offered in 1988-89 by the Industrial Development Board to companies in and immediately adjacent to the "Making Belfast Work" areas.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
Montupet (UK) Ltd.	32·0
Ford Motor Co. Ltd.	7·06
Stewarts Supermarkets Ltd.	3·8
BS Tooling Ltd.	5·6
Wm. Ross and Co. Ltd.	1·6
Bass Packaging Ltd.	0·054
Blackstaff Textiles Ltd.	0·09
Delta Enfield Cables Ltd.	0·257

Local Initiative Areas

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for designating the parliamentary constituencies of South Down and West Belfast as Industrial Development Board areas of local initiative on the same basis as Carrickfergus and Derry district council areas.

Mr. Needham: I have recently agreed that the IDB should lead a special development initiative for the areas of South Down and South Armagh. Work is already progressing on the "Making Belfast Work" initiative and the constituency area of West Belfast is included in that initiative.

London-Stranraer Rail Service

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the withdrawing of the overnight Stranraer-London and London-Stranraer train services from May 1990.

Mr Peter Bottomley: A number from several Members of Parliament and the chairman of Northern Ireland Railways Ltd.

Fire Authority

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Northern Ireland Fire Authority lodged a valid appeal to the county court in the case of Kerr *v* Northern Ireland Fire Authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for the fire authority. The chairman has informed us that the authority decided to withdraw the appeal.

Queen's University

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by the senate of the Queen's university of Belfast to ensure that the current imbalances in employment practices will be rectified.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Queen's university of Belfast is an autonomous institution with its own charter and statutes; recruitment and employment practices are entirely a matter for the university authorities.

I am aware, however, that various initiatives are to be undertaken as a result of the recent Fair Employment Agency report. These include the appointment of an administrative officer with special responsibilities for equal opportunities, and a review of the university's job advertising, recruitment and promotion procedures.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by the senate of the Queen's university of Belfast to ensure that the current imbalances in acceptances of undergraduates will be rectified.

Dr. Mawhinney: The admissions policy of Queen's university is entirely a matter for the university authorities. I am unaware of any particular imbalance in the acceptance of undergraduates.

Supplies (Purchase)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will take steps to make the purchase of supplies for the public service from suppliers in the Irish Republic in instances where the same goods are available less expensively in Northern Ireland a matter for which chief executives in the public service may be surcharged.

Mr. Cope: The Government have continually promoted the need for good purchasing practice, fair competition and value for money in the public sector in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Member wishes to give me details of the instances where such practices as he described have occurred, I will consider passing them to the appropriate audit authorities.

Community Relations Council

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current circumstances of the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The establishment of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was formally announced on 4 January 1990. To date, a director, Dr. Mari Fitzduff, and three development officers have been appointed. Twenty-two places on the council have been filled out of a possible 24, and the remaining two places are expected to be filled by the council within the next few months. The council has met twice and is presently considering its organisational structure and its development strategy. It will probably publish a strategy paper after Easter. The council hopes to open new offices in Belfast by mid-February.

Limavady Bypass

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has yet completed his economic assessment for the Limavady bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The economic assessment of the proposed Limavady bypass is expected to take a further three months to complete. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the results at that time.

Student Unions

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he takes to determine whether the accounts of student unions are properly audited; and what legislation governs the auditing and publication of such accounts.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* None. The auditing of student union accounts is the responsibility of university authorities who employ external auditors for this purpose.

There is no specific legislation in Northern Ireland which governs the audit of student union accounts.

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the Royal Ulster Constabulary forensic report on Mr. Colin Wallace's memorandum of 8 November 1974 dealing with the Kincora boys' hostel.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* No. It is not the practice to publish police documents or reports of this kind where no prosecution is impending.

Missile Testing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals have been made to establish a missile testing establishment at the Shorts site under construction at Lough Mann, situated on the Downpatrick/Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* No proposals have been made to the Department of the Environment (NI) for such an establishment.

RUC Inquiry

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, of 6 February, why and in what circumstances it was decided it would not be productive to mount a separate inquiry in an attempt to identify the individual or individuals alleged by Sir John Hermon to be leaking information from the inquiry by the Greater Manchester police into the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The content and circumstances of discussions within Government leading up to the decison are confidential. I have nothing to add to my earlier reply.

SCOTLAND

Storm Damage

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the aid which will be available in Tayside following the damage caused by the recent storms and floods.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are still receiving reports of recent storm and flood damage. Scottish Office finance circular No. 4/1990 issued on 8 February reminded local athorities of the Bellwin scheme under which the Government may give special financial assistance if they consider that an emergency situation has arisen in which an undue financial burden has fallen on a community. Circular No. 6/1989 which contained full details of the scheme was sent to all authorities on 28 April 1989.

Authorities have been advised that if they consider that Bellwin applies in relation to the relevant flooding they should give details to the Scottish Office as soon as possible.

My hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State is visiting some of the affected area on 14-15 February.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total sums paid out from

Government funds under the Bellwin formula in Scotland for each of the last 10 years; and if he will show for each year the total sums received by each local authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 February 1990]*: The Bellwin formula came into existence in 1983-84, and since then the following amounts have been paid by way of special financial assistance in Scotland:

Year and authority	*Amount* £
1989-90	
Highland Regional Council	[1]187,178
Inverness District Council	[1]26,325
Western Isles Islands Council	[1]12,652

[1] These payments represent 90 per cent. of grants amounting in total to £251,283 in respect of the floods and storms of February 1989.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now review the Bellwin formula governing the sums paid out of public funds to defray costs of repairs following storm damage in Scotland to permit compensation to be paid by the Government where the works to be carried out include an element of betterment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 February 1990]*: I cannot support the suggested change. The Bellwin scheme is operated on a nationwide basis to ensure equal and fair treatment in emergency situations. The scheme is intended to alleviate any undue burden on authorities which have to meet exceptional expenditure in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.

Where improvements to property to combat severe weather are thought necessary, they should be tackled within existing procedures for planning and approving expenditure programmes, preferably when new facilities are developed.

Prisoners

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners in Scotland were allowed home leave at Christmas; and in which prisons they were serving their sentence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is 219, as follows:

Establishment	*Number allowed home leave*
Aberdeen	4
Castle Huntly	17
Cornton Vale	3
Edinburgh	14
Noranside	104
Penninghame	69
Perth	2
Polmont	6
	219

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has as to the relationship between the likelihood of a person convicted in Scotland receiving a custodial sentence and their social background or income.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no evidence of any such relationship.

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of those convicted in Scotland were disposed of by way of a prison sentence in each year from 1985 to 1989 inclusive; and how many were *(a)* males and *(b)* females.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is given in the table. The figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Persons with a charge proved (excluding companies) given a custodial sentence, 1984-88

Year	*Males*			*Females*			*Percentage of persons with a charge proved given a custodial sentence*
	Prison	*Other[1] custodial sentences*	*All custodial sentences*	*Prison*	*Other[1] custodial sentences*	*All custodial sentences*	
1984	8,639	4,737	13,376	326	59	385	7·3
1985	9,606	5,377	14,983	460	144	604	8·2
1986	9,312	5,293	14,605	546	194	740	8·3
1987	8,759	4,682	13,441	534	179	713	7·9
1988	9,091	4,176	13,267	660	94	754	7·9

[1] Includes detention in a young offenders' institution or a detention centre.

Mr. Donald Cruickshank

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will suspend Mr. Donald Cruickshank from the inquiry into Lothian health board pending an investigation into his record as chairman of Wandsworth health authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance his Department gives to organisations in Scotland involved in the care of adults who were victims of sexual abuse as children in terms of *(a)* trained staff and *(b)* funding.

Mr. Lang: Grants for training and other purposes are provided under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to voluntary organisations which may be involved in helping adults who have been the victims of sexual abuse as children. Those organisations include Scottish Women's Aid, the Scottish Association of Victim Support, Childline and the National Children's Home which has established a new counselling service for the victims (including adults) of child sexual abuse and their families.

Local authorities may also make grants available to local groups under the 1968 Act.

Family Law Administration Working Party

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department is represented on the family law administration working party; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Home and Health Department is represented on the inter-departmental group of officials which is looking at the issue of lone parents and dependency, in view of my responsibility for, notably, the law on aliment.

Direct Labour Organsiations

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the preparation of regulations relating to the competition requirements for direct labour organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: A consultation exercise on the terms of draft regulations has just been completed. I am grateful to all those who responded and have carefully considered all the comments received. In the light of representations made, I have decided to delay the introduction of these regulations for a further six months to 1 October 1990. This short deferment will be of particular assistance to the new town development corporations and to Scottish Homes which are actively pursuing the privatisation of their direct labour organisations.

Constituency Boundaries

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the boundary commission for Scotland intends to conduct any interim reviews of parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The boundary commission for Scotland has informed me that it intends to conduct interim reviews of 13 parliamentary constituencies under section 3 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The constituencies are as follows:

Glasgow Cathcart, Glasgow Rutherglen and Glasgow Springburn;
Cunninghame North, Eastwood, East Kilbride, and Strathkelvin and Bearsden;
Midlothian and Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale;
Moray and Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber;
Perth and Kinross and North East Fife.

I understand that the reviews have arisen from alterations to local authority boundaries which those of the parliamentary constituencies concerned no longer follow exactly.

Pine Martens

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce statutory protection for pine martens.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The pine marten (Martes martes) was added to schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 under the Variation of Schedules Order 1988. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal included in the schedule.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is given to Bangladesh to help prevent or mitigate flooding.

Mrs. Chalker: Following the serious flooding in Bangladesh in 1988, Her Majesty's Government provided some £26 million for emergency relief, including food aid, and longer-term rehabilitation. In order to help to identify means of flood control and alleviation in future, Her Majesty's Government hosted an international conference in London on 11-12 December 1989. The conference reviewed and broadly endorsed a rolling five-year flood action plan prepared for the Bangladesh Government by the World Bank. Delegates also pledged support for the 26 activities identified in the plan.

Of these activities, Her Majesty's Government have agreed to undertake a major regional study together with supporting studies on flood control and drainage/agriculture, operation and maintenance and fisheries. A British team joined others in Dhaka in late January to discuss terms of reference for the studies and to undertake preliminary field visits. We also participated in a further meeting in Dhaka to consider Bangladesh's disaster preparedness plans.

I have just had the opportunity to visit other flood protection work in the greater Dhaka area, which is partly supported by the international community. The flood protection planning is well thought through. These positive contributions will at least help to protect the Dhaka area for some years to come, until the water flow from the north can be better harnessed for agriculture and other support in the south.

Brazil

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British forestry experts are now on Overseas Development Administration-sponsored programmes in Brazil.

Mrs. Chalker: The first proposed forestry projects under our memorandum of understanding with Brazil are at present awaiting approval by the Brazilian Government. We hope to receive confirmation of their agreement to one (a climate research project involving the Institute of Hydrology) later this month. Mobilisation of the British experts involved would then follow as quickly as possible.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the American, Italian, German, Russian and other Governments in order to persuade the Somali Government to create the conditions in which development aid from Britain to Somalia can be renewed and increased.

Mrs. Chalker: We have had contacts with a number of other interested Governments, including those to which the hon. Member refers, about the situation in Somalia. We have made clear to the Somali Government our views about the measures that need to be taken before the restoration of our aid programme can be considered.

Romania

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response to requests for aid to Romania has been made since the change of Government in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: We donated a consignment of medical supplies on 24 December and several items of medical equipment since then. We are treating a number of seriously injured victims of the December fighting for major surgery, at a cost yet to be determined. In addition, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs announced on 7 February, we have agreed to donate 1 million disposable syringes worth £40,000. We are contributing about £5·8 million to the food aid and medical supplies packages sent or agreed so far by the EC. The British Council is supporting new projects in the cultural field at a cost of £100,000.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced on 22 January that the existing know-how fund for Poland and Hungary would be widened to cover other countries of eastern Europe once they are firmly committed to reform. I hope that Romania will qualify for assistance in that context.

Cambodia

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to make further aid available to Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 22 January about the recent visit of British officials to Cambodia.

We have agreed to co-finance eight projects with British NGOs under the joint funding scheme, for which a total of £257,000 has been committed from ODA resources. Of this sum £128,000 has been spent in the current financial year. We are also actively considering new proposals which have been submitted to us by the NGOs in response to our recent announcement that we wished to build up our humanitarian aid to Cambodia. In 1989-90 we are also providing a contribution of £250,000 to UNICEF for its programmes inside Cambodia.

India

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the report by the Comptroller and Auditor-General on bilateral aid to India.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government will reply to the report of the Public Accounts Committee on the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the usual way by means of a Treasury minute.

Southern Africa

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was discussed during the Minister for Overseas Development's recent visit to southern Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I attended the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference's annual consultation meeting with donors in Lusaka on 1 and 2 February. I announced a new pledge of £10 million for regional projects and took part in discussions on the past and future work of the organisation. I also briefly visited Zimbabwe, where I had talks with Zimbabwean Ministers, and South Africa, where I visited the British Council and the health centre in the Alexandra township of Johannesburg.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit South Africa to discuss aid projects.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit South Africa for this purpose. I made a brief visit to Johannesburg on my way to Lusaka last month to discuss our aid to black South Africans with our project partners.

Ethiopia

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has plans to upgrade the Government's response to the Ethiopian famine.

Mrs. Chalker: In my reply on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *189*, to a question from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), I announced a substantial new commitment of food and emergency aid of £3·6 million in addition to commitments totalling £18·5 million in 1989. We shall continue to respond positively to the renewed threat of famine in Ethiopia.

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff at all levels of the Overseas Development Administration worked full-time on matters concerning eastern Europe during January; how many Overseas Development Administration staff worked part-time on matters concerning eastern Europe; and approximately what percentage of their time, on average, this involved.

Mrs. Chalker: Bilateral assistance to eastern Europe is administered by a unit staffed jointly by the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. At the end of January 1990 the unit had six full-time posts of which three were filled by staff from the Overseas Development Administration. The future staffing of the unit is currently under consideration.

A number of other ODA staff spent part of their time on bilateral or multilateral matters concerning eastern Europe.

For each of these staff the percentage of time so involved varies greatly on a day to day basis and could be quantified only at disproportionate expense.

Nicaragua

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States Government concerning the resumption of aid to Nicaragua after the results of the election are announced.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

United Kingdom Aid

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing annual aid, broken down into its constituent categories, given by the United Kingdom to the five poorest nations by 1990 standards in Latin America, Africa and Asia since 1975.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent information on aid expenditure and the poorest countries relates to 1988. The information for the period 1975-88 is as follows:

United Kingdom bilateral aid to five poorest countries in Africa 1975-1988

£ thousand

	Total aid	*Total financial aid*	*of which ATP*	*Debt relief*	*Total TC*
Mozambique—GNP per capita $100					
1975	25	19	—	—	6
1976	19	—	—	—	19
1977	2,899	2,863	—	—	36
1978	5,831	5,794	—	—	37
1979	6,369	5,954	—	—	415
1980	4,629	3,953	—	—	676
1981	5,379	4,417	782	—	962
1982	1,924	1,575	248	—	349
1983	1,805	1,555	548	—	250
1984	4,182	3,972	318	278	210
1985	8,366	7,605	322	1,112	761
1986	7,424	6,240	118	1,251	1,184
1987	22,798	20,658	661	1,251	2,139
1988	30,512	24,279	—	1,253	6,233
Ethiopia—GNP per capita $120					
1975	2,909	1,279	—	—	1,630
1976	2,332	1,191	—	—	1,140
1977	1,726	1,002	—	—	724
1978	2,841	2,293	—	—	547
1979	2,877	2,084	—	—	793
1980	1,946	1,240	—	—	706
1981	563	24	—	—	539
1982	5,645	5,242	—	—	403
1983	3,433	3,018	—	—	415
1984	7,004	6,590	—	121	413
1985	28,058	27,434	—	212	624
1986	9,627	8,587	—	209	1,040
1987	8,554	6,141	—	209	2,412
1988	19,174	14,243	—	209	4,931
Chad—GNP per capita $160					
1975	39	—	—	—	39
1976	42	—	—	—	42
1977	696	672	—	—	25
1978	−97	−138	—	—	42
1979	45	1	—	—	45
1980	26	6	—	—	20
1981	35	—	—	—	35
1982	360	303	—	—	57
1983	156	132	—	—	24
1984	31	—	—	—	31
1985	1,448	1,405	—	—	44
1986	89	57	—	—	32

	Total aid	Total financial aid	of which ATP	of which Debt relief	Total TC
1987	179	13	—	—	166
1988	252	145	—	—	107
Malawi—GNP per capita $160					
1975	10,727	7,414	—	—	3,312
1976	16,015	11,689	—	—	4,326
1977	16,519	12,090	—	—	4,429
1978	15,979	11,940	—	—	4,039
1979	24,941	19,486	—	1,627	5,455
1980	16,543	10,270	—	1,364	6,273
1981	15,999	9,809	—	1,615	6,190
1982	16,984	10,461	—	1,777	6,523
1983	14,620	7,661	—	1,833	6,959
1984	12,959	6,022	—	1,889	6,938
1985	22,356	15,871	143	10,265	6,486
1986	15,346	8,215	87	2,244	7,131
1987	24,865	16,861	1,657	1,874	8,004
1988	46,494	36,560	1,410	11,611	9,934
Tanzania—GNP per capita $160					
1975	4,054	2,025	—	—	2,029
1976	4,440	2,562	—	1,335	1,878
1977	6,685	4,260	—	—	2,426
1978	10,363	6,660	—	—	3,703
1979	24,076	17,024	—	517	7,051
1980	32,119	23,365	915	433	8,754
1981	30,040	20,699	687	415	9,341
1982	27,328	19,895	—	362	7,434
1983	30,384	23,676	—	362	6,707
1984	33,033	26,783	—	3,165	6,251
1985	17,967	11,054	—	362	6,913
1986	12,715	5,635	—	245	7,080
1987	28,789	20,489	—	81	8,300
1988	33,502	24,675	—	81	8,827
Bhutan—GNP per capita $150					
1975	24	—	—	—	24
1976	30	—	—	—	30
1977	26	—	—	—	26
1978	42	—	—	—	42
1979	24	—	—	—	24
1980	63	—	—	—	63
1981	93	—	—	—	93
1982	74	—	—	—	74
1983	136	—	—	—	136
1984	175	—	—	—	175
1985	165	—	—	—	165
1986	187	—	—	—	187
1987	270	—	—	—	270
1988	412	—	—	—	412
Bangladesh—GNP per capita $170					
1975	14,296	13,246	—	—	1,050
1976	14,015	12,729	—	—	1,286
1977	21,991	20,238	—	—	1,753
1978	43,969	41,097	—	—	2,872
1979	33,821	29,987	—	134	3,835
1980	66,190	60,995	—	31,278	5,195
1981	33,383	28,838	4,680	434	4,545
1982	23,537	18,864	—	813	4,673
1983	24,728	19,844	—	813	4,884
1984	35,656	26,808	—	885	8,848
1985	41,173	30,395	—	885	10,778
1986	38,321	27,400	—	885	10,921
1987	34,842	24,249	—	885	10,593
1988	41,968	24,991	—	885	16,977
Nepal—GNP per capita $170					
1975	2,278	1,378	—	—	900
1976	1,749	709	—	—	1,040
1977	4,276	3,021	—	—	1,254
1978	4,401	3,160	—	—	1,241
1979	11,235	9,176	—	181	2,059
1980	6,834	4,684	—	123	2,150
1981	8,035	5,718	—	123	2,318
1982	9,596	7,100	—	123	2,496

	Total aid	Total financial aid	of which ATP	of which Debt relief	Total TC
1983	7,398	3,992	—	123	3,405
1984	8,580	4,862	—	123	3,718
1985	9,675	4,663	—	123	5,012
1986	9,946	4,726	—	123	5,220
1987	10,044	5,181	—	123	4,863
1988	10,826	3,871	—	123	6,956
Laos—GNP per capita $180					
1975	858	712	—	—	146
1976	100	—	—	—	100
1977	45	—	—	—	45
1978	912	890	—	—	22
1979	29	20	—	—	9
1980	13	—	—	—	13
1981	80	80	—	—	—
1982	—	—	—	—	—
1983	1	—	—	—	1
1984	4	—	—	—	4
1985	—	—	—	—	—
1986	6	—	—	—	6
1987	64	—	—	—	64
1988	104	40	—	—	64
Cambodia—GNP per capita less than $500					
1975	66	—	—	—	66
1976	13	—	—	—	12
1977	3	—	—	—	3
1978	—	—	—	—	—
1979	703	703	—	—	—
1980	486	486	—	—	—
1981	110	110	—	110	—
1982	18	18	—	18	—
1983	693	693	—	18	—
1984	18	18	—	18	—
1985	18	18	—	18	—
1986	18	18	—	18	—
1987	18	18	—	18	—
1988	118	118	—	18	100
Haiti—GNP per capita $360					
1975	35	—	—	—	35
1976	38	—	—	—	38
1977	20	—	—	—	20
1978	6	—	—	—	6
1979	5	—	—	—	5
1980	24	10	—	—	14
1981	4	—	—	—	4
1982	1	—	—	—	1
1983	19	10	—	—	9
1984	8	—	—	—	8
1985	3	—	—	—	3
1986	331	325	—	—	6
1987	7	—	—	—	7
1988	9	—	—	—	9
Bolivia—GNP per capita $570					
1975	376	155	—	—	221
1976	620	138	—	—	482
1977	1,471	512	—	—	959
1978	1,062	360	—	—	703
1979	888	15	—	—	873
1980	1,158	166	—	—	992
1981	1,052	141	—	—	911
1982	988	176	—	—	812
1983	1,199	163	—	—	1,036
1984	1,182	144	—	—	1,038
1985	1,421	115	—	—	1,305
1986	1,953	200	—	—	1,752
1987	1,748	11	—	11	1,737
1988	2,953	1,190	—	—	1,763
Dominican Republic—GNP per capita $680					
1975	25	—	—	—	25
1976	39	—	—	—	39
1977	53	—	—	—	53

	Total aid	Total financial aid	of which ATP	of which Debt relief	Total TC
1978	107	—	—	—	107
1979	77	—	—	—	77
1980	144	10	—	—	134
1981	139	—	—	—	139
1982	139	—	—	—	139
1983	176	—	—	—	176
1984	61	—	—	—	61
1985	24	—	—	—	24
1986	42	—	—	—	42
1987	34	—	—	—	34
1988	114	—	—	—	114
Nicaragua—GNP per capita $830					
1975	398	269	—	—	129
1976	287	130	—	—	157
1977	405	35	—	—	370
1978	186	10	—	—	176
1979	246	103	—	—	142
1980	127	66	—	—	61
1981	91	7	—	—	84
1982	49	13	—	—	36
1983	64	34	—	—	30
1984	9	—	—	—	9
1985	116	100	—	—	16
1986	86	83	—	—	3
1987	—	—	—	—	—
1988	180	180	—	—	—
Honduras—GNP per capita $850					
1975	275	67	—	—	207
1976	197	61	—	—	136
1977	598	372	—	—	226
1978	313	—	—	—	313
1979	230	—	—	—	230
1980	335	18	—	—	317
1981	5,002	4,702	—	—	300
1982	2,272	2,039	—	—	233
1983	6,670	6,335	—	—	334
1984	3,446	3,090	—	—	356
1985	3,653	3,131	—	—	522
1986	1,258	771	—	—	487
1987	811	246	—	—	565
1988	1,212	615	—	—	596

Venezuela

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each of the past five years the sum of bilateral aid for Venezuela.

Mrs. Chalker: Following are the most recent available figures:

	£
1984	—
1985	1,000
1986	10,000
1987	24,000
1988	10,000

Thailand

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Her Majesty's Government are giving Thailand, directly or indirectly, related to helping protect the Tamboon Thakadan Sanam Chai Khet forest in Chachoengsao; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received no request for assistance for this forest.

PRIME MINISTER

Kincora Boys' Home

Q44. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, *Official Report*, 27 November 1989, column 92, if she will place in the Library any representations she has had during 1989-90 relating to events at the Kincora boys' home.

The Prime Minister: No.

President Mitterrand

Q67. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the President of France; and what matters she will then discuss.

The Prime Minister: I expect to meet President Mitterrand before long. As is usual, there is likely to be a wide range of issues to discuss, including developments in eastern Europe, East-West relations and European Community matters.

German Democratic Republic

Q72. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has had any recent discussions with *(a)* Chancellor Kohl and *(b)* other European Community state leaders concerning the forthcoming general election in the German Democratic Republic; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I last met Chancellor Kohl at the European Council in Strasbourg in December. Other EC Heads of State or Government were also present. The present timing of the GDR elections had not been fixed at that point, but we had a useful discussion of the question of German unity. This was reflected in the Council's Declaration.

South Africa

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when she last spoke to President Bush about the Government's relations with South Africa.

The Prime Minister: We are in regular contact with the American Government.

Mail

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister how many items of mail she received today; and what subjects they concerned.

The Prime Minister: I receive approximately 650 letters a day from members of the public covering a wide range of issues.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she has any plans to absorb the Department of Energy's responsibilities within those of any other Department;

(2) if she has any plans to review the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister if she will outline the division of responsibilities between Government Departments in respect of *(a)* air pollution, *(b)* sea pollution and *(c)* land pollution.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the Department of the Environment publication, "Protecting Your Environment—A Guide", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Pages 2 and 3 give a succinct but complete summary of the responsibilities in these areas.

Disaster Planning

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments will be represented at the conference on disaster planning organised by the Association of Metropolitan and London Authorities, to be held in London on 15 March.

The Prime Minister: The Home Office will be represented.

Crown Servants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the reply to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 118, if she will define the difference between formal and informal job descriptions for those working in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The *Official Report* quoted by the hon. Member refers only to formal and draft job descriptions, in a context which makes the meaning clear.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on informal job descriptions for Crown servants.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government do not have a policy on informal job descriptions for Crown servants.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the reply to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 118, if she will identify the misunderstandings that she may unwittingly have communicated to right hon. and hon. Members about Colin Wallace.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my letter of 30 January to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Engagements

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

Mr. Loftbouse: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received to date from *(a)* the business sector, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* voluntary organisations concerning the document "A Strategy For The Future of the Welsh Language", published by the Welsh Language Board.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received four representations from voluntary groups concerning the Welsh Language Board's strategy document. However, organisations with an interest were invited to respond to the board direct.

Housing (Flexi-ownership)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a further statement on the progress of his housing flexi-ownership scheme.

Mr. Grist: On 30 November 1989 the Development Board for Rural Wales announced that it was ready to accept applications for flexi-ownership. Since then there have been 87 firm inquiries of which 21 have become formal applications. This represents a very encouraging start.

Health Authorities (Bonus Payments)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many senior staff in each of the district health authorities in Wales have received during the past 12 months bonuses on top of their salaries linked to cost reduction performance; and what was the total payment made last year in Wales by way of such bonuses.

Mr. Grist: None. The majority of top managers (including district and unit general managers) in district health authorities are employed on short-term contracts at fixed salaries with entitlement to performance related pay. Performance related pay is not given for cost-reduction performance but is aimed at rewarding those managers who are identified as consistently achieving a meritorious performance measured against pre-set objectives expressed in terms of standards of service provision. The aim is accordingly to encourage improvements in the delivery of health care services to the public.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the overseas countries which he has visited in his official capacity; and what were the purposes and dates of each such visit.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Dates	*Country visited*
1987	
14 to 20 November	Japan
1988	
28 to 29 June	West Germany
4 to 8 July	Soviet Union
1989	
30 January to 3 February	United States of America
11 to 12 April	West Germany
24 to 30 September	Japan and South Korea
1990	
5 to 8 February	Saudi Arabia

The prime purpose of these visits was to promote trade and investment activity between Wales and the country visited.

Bypasses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those towns in Wales which have, during the past 15 years, had trunk road bypasses for which his Department is responsible opened to relieve traffic from their town centres.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Communities relieved of traffic as a result of trunk road schemes completed since 1975 include:

Bancyfelin	Kilgetty
Bangor	Llanddarog
Bodelwyddan	Llanfairfechan
Brecon	Llanfair
Bridgend	Pwllgwyngyl
Cardiff	Merthyr Vale
Castleton	New Inn
Caernarfon	Northop
Carmarthen	Penmaenmawr
Chepstow	Pontardulais
Colwyn Bay	Pontypool
Crosshands	Porthyrhyd Pyle
Dolgellau	Quakers Yard
Drefach	Rossett
Gresford	Ruabon
Haverfordwest	St. Clears
Hawarden	Stepaside
Holywell	Troedyrhiw

Litter

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what legislative provisions place responsibility on *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils in Wales to keep their local environments tidy from litter; whether his Department has at any time undertaken a performance audit to ascertain the effectiveness of local authority performance in this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Litter Act 1983 defines the offence of littering, for which prosecutions may be initiated by county and district councils as litter authorities, and empowers such authorities to provide and maintain litter bins which they must empty regularly. In addition, the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 place various responsibilities on district councils in Wales to collect up and dispose of refuse.

It is not the Department's practice to carry out performance audits of the provision of local authority services.

Part IV of the Environmental Protection Bill, which will place a new duty on local authorities to ensure that land in their control to which the public has access is kept free of litter and refuse, will enable any local resident or group to apply to a magistrates court for an order requiring the authority concerned to clear litter which is detrimental to the amenities of the locality.

Public Bodies

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total expenditure for which he is responsible of *(a)* the Farm Animal Welfare Council, *(b)* the Forestry Commission Reference Committee Panel for Wales, *(c)* the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, *(d)* Housing for Wales, *(e)* the Land Authority for Wales, *(f)* the Library and Information Services Council (Wales), *(g)* the Local Government Boundary Commission and *(h)* the National Parks Committee, during the last year where figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to (i) administration in general, (ii) hosting of meetings and conferences, (iii) allowances for attending meetings and (iv) general allowances given to nominees on the committee;

(2) what was the total expenditure for which he is responsible of *(a)* the Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee, *(b)* the Advisory

Committee on Borderline Substances, *(c)* the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales, *(d)* the Agricultural Valuation Committee (Wales), *(e)* the Agricultural Wages Committee, *(f)* the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales, *(g)* the Audit Commission and *(h)* the British Wool Marketing Board, during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to (i) administration in general, (ii) hosting of meetings and conferences, (iii) allowances for attending meetings and (iv) general allowances given to nominees on the committee;

(3) what was the total expenditure for which he is responsible of *(a)* the National Radiological Protection Board, *(b)* the North-Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, *(c)* the Place Names Advisory Committee, *(d)* the Rent Assessment Panel, *(e)* the Saundersfoot Harbour Commission, *(f)* the Sports Council for Wales and *(g)* the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to (i) administration in general, (ii) hosting of meetings and conferences, (iii) allowances for attending meetings and (iv) general allowances given to nominees on the committee;

(4) what was the total expenditure for which he is responsible of *(a)* the Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(b)* the Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research, *(c)* the Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering, *(d)* the Council for National Academic Awards, *(e)* the courts and councils of (i) the National Library and (ii) the National Museum of Wales, *(f)* the Curriculum Council for Wales and *(g)* the Development Board for Rural Wales; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated to (i) administration in general, (ii) hosting of meetings and conferences, (iii) allowances for attending meetings and (iv) general allowances given to nominees on the committee;

(5) what was the total expenditure of *(a)* each community health council in Wales, *(b)* each district health authority in Wales, *(c)* the All-Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for People with Mental Handicaps, *(d)* each family practitioner committee in Wales, *(e)* the Health Policy Board and *(f)* the Health Promotion Board during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of expenditure was allocated in each case to (i) administration in general, (ii) hosting of meetings and conferences, (iii) allowances for attending meetings and (iv) general allowances given to nominees on the committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: The available information on the expenditure for which I have responsibility is as follows:

	Total net expenditure 1988-89 Outturn £000s	*Proportion of net expenditure allocated to:—* 1. *Administration in general per cent.*	2. *Hosting of meetings and conferences*	3. *Allowances for attending meetings per cent.*	4. *General allowances to nominees on the Committee per cent.*
Land Authority for Wales[2]	10,491	12	—	—	—
Place Names Advisory Panel	1	—	—	—	100
Rent Assessment Panel	127	100	—	—	—
Sports Council for Wales	4,199	14	—	—	—
All Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for people with mental handicap	5	—	—	100	—
Health Policy Board	1	—	—	100	—
Health Promotion Authority for Wales	1,838	40	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	18,267	13	n/a	n/a	n/a
Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research	367	7	—	n/a	—
Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering	133	14	n/a	n/a	n/a
The Courts and Councils of:					
(i) National Library of Wales	3,582	17	n/a	n/a	n/a
(ii) National Museum of Wales	11,716	11	n/a	n/a	n/a
Curriculum Council for Wales[3]	114	47	n/a	5	n/a
Development Board for Rural Wales[2]	18,300	13	This information is not separately identifiable		[4]—
Forestry Commission Reference Committee —Panel for Wales	—	No Committees have been formed from this Panel. No expenditure has therefore been incurred.			
Historic Buildings Council for Wales	10	—	—	100	—
Housing for Wales/Housing Corporation in Wales	66,891	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Library and Information Services Council (Wales)	4	25	—	75	—
Local Government Boundary Commission	70	95	—	5	—
National Parks Committee	[1]2,796	This information is not held centrally			—
Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales	4	—	—	100	—
Agricultural Wages Committee	4	75	—	25	—
Ancient Monuments Board for Wales	4	—	—	100	—
British Wool Marketing Board[4]	—	—	—	—	—

[1] n/a—This indicates that information is not held in the format requested.
[2] The expenditure is shown gross.
[3] Expenditure on the Curriculum Council for Wales only commenced in January 1989.
[4] In the period 1 April to 30 September actual salaries for part-time commitment paid to the Chairman and other members of the Board were £23,913 and £4,725 respectively. These rose to £24,234 and £4,790 in the period 1 October 1988 to 31 March 1989. In addition, Board members

were entitled to claim within an authorised scale travelling expenses incurred on the business of the Board.

[5] Expenditure for which the Secretary of State is responsible is limited to the National Parks Supplementary Grant (NPSG), which is payable as a block grant. National Parks also receive funds from the relevant County Council(s) and other miscellaneous sources of income. Primary financial control is exercised by the County Council(s) since National Parks Committees are Committees of the Council(s).

[6] The Secretary of State has responsibility only in connection with setting the wool guarantee price and making loans to the British Wool Marketing Board.

	Total net expenditure 1988-89 Outturn £000s	*Proportion of net expenditure allocated to:—* 1. *Administration in general per cent.*	2. *Hosting of meetings and conferences*	3. *Allowances for attending meetings per cent.*	4. *General allowances to nominees on the Committee per cent.*
District Health Authorities in Wales					
Clwyd	109,825	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Dyfed	66,673	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwent	128,749	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwynedd	64,722	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mid Glamorgan	149,993	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pembrokeshire	26,229	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Powys	29,880	6	n/a	n/a	n/a
South Glamorgan	172,058	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Glamorgan	114,821	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Family Practitioner Committees in Wales					
Clwyd	40,566	1	n/a	—	n/a
Dyfed	35,775	1	n/a	—	n/a
Gwent	44,752	1	n/a	—	n/a
Gwynedd	25,627	1	n/a	—	n/a
Mid Glamorgan	54,022	1	n/a	—	n/a
Powys	12,123	2	n/a	—	n/a
South Glamorgan	41,741	1	n/a	—	n/a
West Glamorgan	38,350	1	n/a	—	n/a
Community Health Councils in Wales					
Clwyd	68	91	—	9	—
East Dyfed	63	80	—	20	—
Gwent	77	92	—	8	—
Gwynedd	70	86	—	14	—
Mid Glamorgan	131	90	—	10	—
Pembrokeshire	26	94	—	6	—
Powys	30	88	—	12	—
South Glamorgan	77	96	—	4	—
West Glamorgan	77	97	—	3	—

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his remarks in the *Official Report*, columns 990-94, on 24 January, what responses he has received from South Glamorgan, Powis, Gwynedd, Newport and Cardiff councils.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received and is considering one reply from South Glamorgan county council.

Welsh Office (25th Anniversary)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the overall financial cost of the anniversary celebration concert at St. David's halls marking the 25th anniversary of the Welsh Office.

Mr. Peter Walker: The concert will be held in March; the estimated cost to the Welsh Office is £9,000.

Conductive Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for developing in Wales an availability of conductive education methods for disabled children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office is associated with the commitment announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Disabled to contribute towards the establishment of a new International Peto Institute. This will secure the continuing availability of conductive education in Budapest for children from all parts of the United Kingdom while building up a nucleus of trained conductors to provide this service in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to establish a centre for Wales. An application by Clwyd education authority, on behalf of other education and health authorities, is being considered in the Department.

Soviet Delegation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that the Soviet delegation which he will shortly welcome to Wales will be made aware of the customs and national identity of the Welsh people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am pleased to say that in a highly successful two-and-a-half-day visit to Wales the parliamentary delegation from the Supreme Soviet was made fully aware of the customs and national identity of the Welsh people.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to encourage the establishment of workplace nurseries by Welsh employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The ministerial group on women's issues, on which the Department is represented, has been active in drawing employers' attention to the availability of tax relief on capital equipment and the running costs of workplace nurseries. Whether or not employers in Wales make such provision is a matter for their judgment.

Child Care, Welsh Office

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what child care provision is currently made for Welsh Office employees in *(a)* London and *(b)* Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: The Department ran a holiday play scheme for children of staff in Cardiff last summer and plans to do so again for the Easter and summer school holidays this year. Staff in the Welsh Office London can make use of the Westminster holiday play scheme which the Cabinet Office organises.

The Welsh Office is also looking at the possibility of providing nursery facilities for its staff in Cardiff in conjunction with other Government Departments.

Literacy and Numeracy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of standards of literacy and numeracy among participants in *(a)* YTS and *(b)* the employment training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Current figures show that the number of ET trainees with a need for literacy and numeracy training is approximately 18 per cent. Equivalent figures for YTS in Wales are not available, but there is provision for young people with literacy and numeracy problems under the arrangements for those with special needs.

Basic Skills

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding is being made available in Wales for the basic skills accreditation initiative; what is the number of participants in the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Funding for the basic skills accreditation initiative is being provided on a United Kingdom basis by the BBC, DES through ALBSU, and the Training Agency. The Department supports the activities of ALBSU and is also supporting with education support grants the introduction of open learning centres for adults with literacy and numeracy problems the BSAI will be delivered through these centres. Although we expect a substantial number of people in Wales to take advantage of opportunities under the initiative, no details are yet available of participation rates.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has anything to add to his answer on 12 February, concerning the respects in which the responsibilities he expects employers in Wales to fulfil for collecting cash from poll tax defaulters differ from the expectations and responsibilities placed on employers in Scotland.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989, a Welsh charging authority which has obtained a liability order from a magistrates court may make an attachment of earnings order. This is an order instructing the debtor's employer to make deductions from the debtor's earnings and pay the amounts deducted to the charging authority. The amounts to be deducted will be specified in the attachment of earnings order. The employer may deduct £1 from the debtor's earnings to cover his administrative costs in respect of each deduction. The employer is required to notify the charging authority if the debtor leaves his employment.

The following information in relation to the position in Scotland has been given to me by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The enforcement methods to recover community charge debts are substantially the same as those for ordinary "private" debts. The local authority can choose either to proceed on the basis of a summary warrant or a court order obtained in a court action. Summary warrant procedure is an expedited procedure available since 1947 for the recovery of rates (and subsequently made available for the recovery of tax debts). Almost invariably, local authorities opt for summary warrant procedure. A single summary warrant application to the sheriff can cover a number of community charge debtors.

An important difference between Scottish and English procedures for enforcement is the absence of a court role in the enforcement of Scottish court orders to recover debts, either private or public e.g. taxes. In Scotland, creditors take the initiative in instructing sheriff officers (independent contractors under the supervision of, but not in the employment of, the court) to take enforcement action against debtors. The Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 abolished civil imprisonment for non-payment of rates and civil imprisonment is also not available if community charge is unpaid.

Methods of enforcing community charge debts:

The summary warrant authorises the use of the following diligences:

1. An earnings arrestment (similar to the English attachment of earnings procedure).
2. A poinding and sale (roughly comparable to the English "distraint of goods" procedure). ("Poinding" is pronounced "pinding".)
3. An arrestment and action of forthcoming or sale. (Abolition of Domestic Rates, etc (Scotland) Act 1987 Schedule 2, Paragraph 7 as amended)

Earnings Arrestment

This is a new diligence introduced by the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 and is a system of continuous diligence requiring the debtor's employer to deduct a statutory fixed sum, which is related to net earnings, on each pay day until the debt is cleared. (Abolition of Domestic Rates, etc (Scotland) Act 1987, schedule 2 paragraph 7(3)(b) as amended Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987, section 49 and schedule 2).

An earnings arrestment is started by service on the employer of the prescribed form of schedule of arrestment and it remains in effect broadly until the debt is paid or the debtor leaves that employment. The form was designed to provide the employer with easy-to-follow instructions on how to operate the procedure. The employer receives from the sheriff officer a copy of the statutory deduction tables to enable him to calculate the amount to be deducted. He also receives details of the person or body to whom the payment should be made as soon as reasonably

practicable". In addition, the employer is entitled to deduct from the employee debtor a nominal fee of 50p for each payment. (Act of Sederunt (Proceedings in the Sheriff Court under Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987) 1988, 1988 No. 2013, Paragraph 38 and Form 30)

Poinding and Warrant Sale

This is the method by which the debtor's moveable goods which are in his custody and control are attached, brought within the control of the court, and thereafter and, if necessary, sold with the proceeds being used to pay off the debt. (Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, schedule 2, paragraph 7(3)(a) as amended).

Arrestment followed by an action of forthcoming or sale

This is the method by which a creditor may attach money or goods belonging to the debtor which are in the hands of a third party.

Thereafter the creditor and debtor may agree to the money or goods being transferred to the creditor to settle the debt or failing such agreement a court action of forthcoming or sale is necessary to authorise the transfer of the money or goods to the creditor for sale. (Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, schedule 2, paragraph 7(3)(c) as amended).

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many councils have announced budgeted spending below their standard spending assessment.

Mr. Peter Walker: Welsh local authorities are currently in the process of setting their budgets for 1990-91. The information sought is therefore not yet available.

Project 2000

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been invested in Project 2000 in Wales; how many students there are on the courses; how the courses are funded; and in which colleges they are held.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The sum of £696,000 has been made available for implementation of Project 2000 in Wales in 1989-90. This includes £420,000 to prepare for implementation of which £365,000 has been allocated to DHAs to fund ad hoc schemes to launch Project 2000; and £276,000 allocated to the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for extra teachers and certain development and planning costs.

Information is not held as to the resources invested by individual DHAs. It is the intention that the new courses will be introduced from autumn 1991.

Community Charge

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what regulations he intends to lay before the House governing the standard community charge in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We have no plans to make further regulations on the standard community charge.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many police officers have been involved in the protection afforded to Mr. Salman Rushdie;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost of continuing the present special security measures for Mr. Salman Rushdie throughout the 1990-91 financial year;

(3) what is his latest estimate of the cost of the special security measures taken for Mr. Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It would not be proper to disclose information about police protection which would indicate its nature and scale in a particular case.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it remains the policy of his Department to ensure that Mr. Rushdie receives full police protection regardless of cost as long as there remains a threat to his life; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The need for protection is assessed by the police. It will continue for as long as is considered necessary, having regard to all of the circumstances.

Iranian Citizens (Deportation)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iranian citizens were deported from the United Kingdom on grounds of public security in the last 12 months; and what further action is to be taken against Iranian nationals in the United Kingdom suspected of acting on instructions of the Iranian regime and whose presence may present a continuing danger to public security.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the past 12 months, a total of 31 Iranian citizens have been served with notice of the intention to make deportation orders against them on the grounds that this would be conducive to the public good for reasons of national security; 29 of the 31 left the United Kingdom without an actual deportation order being made against them, one was deported and action on the other deportation order served has been deferred to await the outcome of current criminal proceedings.

I am unable to give any details of any possible further action but my right hon. and learned Friend will not hesitate to use the powers vested in him under the Immigration Act to require the departure of any overseas national whom he is satisfied poses a threat to the security of this country.

Horserace Betting Levy Board

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will outline the investment plans for the distribution of the current levy of the Horserace Betting Levy Board monies; if such plans are inclusive of the £4 million surplus which has accrued; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans exist within the Horserace Betting Levy Board for the improvement of catering and accommodation facilities for stable staff; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what proposals are under consideration to allocate funds from the Horserace Betting Levy Board for the establishment of pensions schemes for stable staff; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what proposals there are for the Horserace Betting Levy Board to make an investment in the company Satellite Information Services; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what proposals there are for the setting aside of funds of the Horserace Betting Levy Board for the provision of low-cost loans for stable staff accommodation; and if he will make a statement;

(6) who determines the distribution of the funds of the Horserace Betting Levy Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is the statutory duty of the Horserace Betting Levy Board itself to determine the distribution of its funds, for purposes conducive to one or more of the following: *(a)* the improvement of breeds of horses; *(b)* the advancement or encouragement of veterinary science or veterinary education; *(c)* the improvement of horse racing.

The following information has been provided by the board. The board has no expenditure plans as to: Satellite Information Services; the establishment of pensions schemes for stable staff; or loans to stable staff to purchase or rent accommodation.

As to capital expenditure on the improvement of catering and accommodation facilities for stable staff, the board accords a high priority to assisting race courses to improve, where necessary, their staff hostels and associated canteen facilities, and is discussing with Racing Welfare the possibility of assisting with housing projects for married staff at a number of racehorse training centres.

The board's next policy statement, which it aims to publish by the end of this month, will set out its heads of expenditure for 1990-91, including the expenditure of higher-than-forecast income from the horserace betting levy, and the relative priorities for those heads.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables on the cost *(a)* per constable hour, *(b)* at overtime rates per officer, *(c)* in numbers of police involved and *(d)* in number of police man-hours used, in order to cover the duties of ambulance staffs currently in dispute (i) nationally and (ii) in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Police constables' pay is on a scale connected with number of years of service. It is therefore not possible to give a national hourly basic or overtime rate per officer. For examples of hourly rates charged by some police authorities for assisting ambulance services, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 8 February, *Official Report*, column 722.

I understand that the Nottinghamshire force is likely to charge approximately £18 per hour, a rate which includes national insurance and pension contributions and rent allowance.

I understand that the total number of man hours which forces have provided in assisting ambulance services in England and Wales up to and including 13 February has been about 1·1 million. In Nottinghamshire, where assistance has been provided by the police for only a few days recently, I understand that the number of man hours is about 1,100. Information on the number of police officers involved either in Nottinghamshire or nationally is not readily available.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the way in which the cost incurred by the Metropolitan police arising from the current ambulance workers' dispute is *(a)* calculated and *(b)* recouped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The London ambulance service is charged for the hours worked by officers at full salary cost for normal duty hours and the appropriate rates for overtime. Other costs, including those for vehicles and catering, are charged on a full repayment basis; and there is a 5 per cent. charge to cover administrative overheads.

Costs are claimed weekly from the London ambulance service two weeks in arrears.

Fire Service

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will consider urgently the need to guarantee supplies of water for fire fighting; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek to amend the Fire Services Act in order to establish a legal obligation to provide water supplies for fire fighting purposes.

Mr. John Patten: It is clearly essential that water supplies for firefighting are guaranteed. We have received representations from the South Yorkshire county fire service expressing concern that the fire service may face additional costs arising from the provision by water undertakers of facilities to provide a flow of water for firefighting purposes above that required for domestic purposes. We have no plans for legislation in this area but will keep the situation under review.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of defendants appearing in *(a)* Nottingham magistrates court, *(b)* Tyneside magistrates court and *(c)* Tower Bridge magistrates court who have been electronically tagged; and the numbers of those in each area who subsequently breached their conditions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to questions from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *823*.

Demonstrations (Police Videos)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on *(a)* the number of occasions that the police have used video cameras to record demonstrations during the year 1989, *(b)* the dates on which this occurred, *(c)* the identities of the organisers of each demonstration, *(d)* whether the organisers agreed to the demonstrations being video taped in each case and *(e)* the use to which the video produced on each occasion has since been put.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Metropolitan police use video cameras to record demonstrations if they have reason to believe that disorder may occur. These video tapes may be used for debriefing or training officers or for evidential purposes. No record is kept of the occasions on which the Metropolitan police videotaped demonstrations in 1989.

Probation Service

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to publish a green paper on the probation service.

Mr. John Patten: We have published today a Green Paper, "Supervision and Punishment in the Community", (Cm 966). This sets out options for the first major reorganisation of the probation service since its formation in 1907, and invites comments from interested organisations and individuals.

The Government have recently published the White Paper, "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public", which gives our legislative proposals for changes in the way courts in England and Wales deal with offenders. It is essential that the probation service should be organised so that it can meet the demands that the proposals would place on it, and the Green Paper sets out several options for the future.

These include: re-organising and strengthening the management of probation services; using the present Home Office powers to bring about changes in local organisation and procedure; extending the controls exercised by the Home Office; moving to a system whereby the Home Office provides 100 per cent. of probation finance removing all financial obligations from local authorities; and moving to a national service—either under the direct control of the Home Office or as a separate agency.

The Green Paper also discusses ways of involving voluntary organisations and the private sector more in work with offenders, and considers ways of improving probation training where much needs to be done. No final decisions have been made on any of these issues, and the Government are keen to hear the views of the probation service and other interested bodies about the various proposals in the Green Paper.

Prevention of Terrorism Legislation

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report from the Viscount Colville of Culross QC on the operation in 1989 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1984 and 1989.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has received such a report from Viscount Colville and copies have been placed in the Library.

Constituency Boundaries

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the boundary commission for Wales intends to conduct any further interim reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The commission has told my right hon. and learned Friend of its intention to review the constituencies of Brecon and Radnor, Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembroke, North, Llanelli, Montgomery and Pembroke.

Fishing Limits

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what stage has been reached in his discussions with the Isle of Man Government about the creation of a 12-mile fishing limit around the Isle of Man; how the traditional rights of Northern Ireland fishing boats in these waters will be guaranteed; what provision is being made for fishing boats from Belgium, France and the Republic of Ireland in the waters around the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Territorial Sea Act 1987 made provision for the territorial sea adjacent to the Isle of Man to be extended to 12 miles. Discussions to implement this provision are nearing a conclusion. In respect of fishing, it is recognised that any arrangement to implement extension must safeguard the interests and traditional rights of all fishermen, including those from Northern Ireland, of all nationalities (British, French, Belgian, Irish) who currently have access to the area concerned.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will legislate to extend the powers of trustees in personal bankruptcies fully to cover the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. This is a matter for domestic legislation within these Dependencies and has now been met by the Insolvency Act 1986 (Guernsey) Order 1989, the Bankruptcy (Desastre) (Jersey) Law 1989 and the Isle of Man Bankruptcy Act 1988.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the figures given in his answer of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *365-66*, to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on the level of total Government support for families with children, at 1989-90 constant prices in each year since 1970 to 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The answer is set out in the table.

Government support for families with children 1974-75 to 1989-90[1]
£ million

	Cash	*Real (1989-90 prices)*
1974-75	1,855	7,838
1975-76	2,169	7,289
1976-77	2,604	7,721
1977-78	2,426	6,319
1978-79	3,092	7,276
1979-80	3,640	7,334
1980-81	3,965	6,750
1981-82	4,675	7,249
1982-83	5,400	7,809
1983-84	6,140	8,484
1984-85	6,650	8,753
1985-86	7,190	8,982
1986-87	7,620	9,209
1987-88	8,320	9,548
1988-89	8,790	9,405
[2]1989-90	9,390	9,390

[1] Includes (i) child benefit, (ii) one parent benefit, (iii) child tax allowances and additional personal tax allowances (lone parents), (iv) family credit/family income supplement, (v) maternity benefit, (vi) statutory maternity benefit, and (vii) social fund, income support/supplementary benefit, housing benefit and community

charge benefit paid to lone parent families and to people looking after elderly parents.
[2] Estimated outturn.

Local Offices (Callers)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will institute an urgent review of the causes of the chronic jamming of switchboards and other difficulties of callers at local offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All local Department of Social Security offices measure the quality of service provided over the telephone and to personal callers. Office managers are accountable for the standards achieved. Results of a national customer opinion survey conducted by local offices in October 1989 found that 80 per cent. of personal callers said the service was "very or fairly good" and more than 77 per cent. of telephone callers got through to the office in what they considered a reasonable time.

However, the Department accepts that service standards vary round the country and where there are problems special efforts are in hand to overcome them. If the hon. Member has a particular office in mind perhaps he will let me know so that I can provide further details.

Residential Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing, with regard to the payment of income support to people in independent residential care homes and nursing homes for 1988-89, and for the current financial year *(a)* the ceiling payments for care support for each residential care category, *(b)* the number of claimants in each category, *(c)* the expenditure in current and constant prices on each category, *(d)* the amount by which he estimates that the ceiling payments fall short of the average weekly costs of placements in these categories and *(e)* the amount by which he estimates that expenditure set out in *(c)* falls short of the total costs of placements in each category.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 1 February 1990]:* Statistically reliable data held centrally is limited to that shown in the table. This gives the available information for 1988-89. No information is yet available for 1989-90.

	Limit on income support payments £	*Number of claimants* (000s)	*Income support expenditure* Cash £ million	*September 1989 prices* £ million
Residential care				
Old age	130	58	—	—
Very dependent/blind elderly	155	19	—	—
Mental illness	130	5	—	—
Alcohol and drug dependence	130	2	—	—
Mental handicap	160	15	—	—
Physical handicap below pension age	190	5	—	—
Others	130	3	—	—
TOTALS	—	107	565	608
Nursing homes				
Others including elderly	185	34	—	—
Mental illness	185	5	—	—
Alcohol and drug dependence	185	[1]	—	—
Mental handicap	200	1	—	—
Physical handicap below pension age	230	2	—	—
Terminal illness	230	4	—	—
TOTALS	—	46	354	382

[1] Denotes figures under 500.

Notes:
1. Numbers rounded to nearest thousand, expenditure to nearest £ million.
2. Expenditure includes income support applicable amounts for both the appropriate limit and personal expenses.
3. These estimates are based on four quarterly, one per cent., samples of live cases. Although total income support expenditure figures are available the figures for individual groups of residents are based on too small a sample to be sufficiently reliable.
4. Centrally held data from claimant records about actual charges is not statistically reliable.

Earnings

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the number of male and female employees in 1990-91, or the most recent available estimate, earning more than the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions showing the distribution of those earnings *(a)* over the upper earnings limit but less than £18,001 per year, *(b)* £18,001 to £20,000 per year, *(c)* £20,001 to £25,000 per year, *(d)* £25,001 to £30,000 per year, *(e)* £30,001 to £50,000 per year and *(f)* over £50,000 per year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Information on those expected to earn more than the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions in 1990-91[1] is shown in the table.

Millions

Earnings band	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
£18,200 to £20,000	0·45	0·10	0·55
£20,001 to £25,000	1·05	0·20	1·25
£25,001 to £30,000	0·50	0·05	0·55
£30,001 to £50,000	0·45	0·05	0·50
Over £50,000	0·15	nil	0·15
Total	2·60	0·40	3·00

[1]£18,200 a year.

Nursing Homes (Fees)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what provision is made for patients who refuse to be transferred to nursing homes because the Department of Social Security fails to meet the fees;

(2) why the chronically sick who are transferred to nursing homes on the recommendation of the appropriate medical authority to avoid bed-blocking are required to meet the homes' charges if they do not qualify for Department of Social Security assistance.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

No patient should be discharged from an NHS bed to care in a private nursing home against his wish if he or the relative will be personally responsible for the home's charges. If a patient in an NHS bed does not agree to a transfer to a fee-charging home, if he or she is in need of continuous nursing care, the patient should remain under the care of the health authority. The Department included guidance on these points in a circular issued to health authorities last year (HC(89)5), a copy of which is available in the Library. This circular requires all health authorities to review and revise their discharge procedures and to report on the action they have taken to their regional health authority by 31 March 1990.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Excise Duty

61. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he anticipates will be the revenue from vehicle excise duty on cars in 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's estimates of revenue in 1989-90 from vehicle excise duty on cars in the United Kingdom is £2,050 million.

Motorists (Eyesight)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many learner drivers fail their driving test as a result of poor eyesight.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988-89, the latest year for which information is available, 592 out of over 2 million candidates failed their test because they did not meet the statutory eyesight requirements.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to introduce compulsory eye tests and regular tests for motorists over the age of 50 years;

(2) if he has received any representations from *(a)* motoring organisations and *(b)* chief constables regarding the eyesight standards of motorists; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what estimate he has of the number of motoring accidents caused by the defective eyesight of motorists.

Mr. Atkins: We have in the past received representations from the police and motoring organisations regarding the eyesight standards of motorists. Research studies have not identified poor eyesight as a significant cause of accidents. I therefore have no plans to change the current requirements, which fully meet the standards proposed by the European Commission in the draft second directive on driver licensing and which are supported by the College of Ophthalmologists.

City Routes

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he provides any guidelines to highway authorities responsible for major city routes such as Whitehall on hours of night working, penalties for overrun and ways of minimising disruption.

Mr. Atkins: The programming of highway works on local roads and form of contract employed are matters for the local highway authority concerned. Last autumn the local authority associations sent a report to their members, commending the use of lane rental contracts as a financial incentive to contractors to shorten the period of occupation of the road during works on busy traffic routes.

Vehicle Licences

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the rates of vehicle licences for each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Motorway Safety

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many injury accidents involving road vehicles have occurred in each of the last five years within motorway service areas; and what action he is taking to reduce such risks.

Mr. Atkins: The Department does not keep records of accidents within motorway service areas (MSAs). Police reporting of road accidents excludes accidents within MSAs, because the roads there are not roads within the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Three operators, responsible for 29 MSAs used by about 75 million vehicles a year, have confirmed that personal injury accidents within MSAs are rare; those consulted recalled two accidents in the last five years.

The Department seeks to reduce accidents on MSAs by careful design of roads and by separate parking for cars, coaches and HGVs, and good signing and lighting. It inspects MSAs annually. The Department also considers safety matters when examining requests for MSA operators to make structural alterations.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an appraisal of the implications for safety, particularly for vehicles legally prohibited or practically unable to travel at speeds exceeding 50 mph., of the present arrangement for vehicles joining the M42 from the M40 in the offside fast lanes.

Mr. Atkins: The present layout where the M40 and M42 link roads join allows traffic at different speeds to adjust and merge. It is operating satisfactorily and safely with present traffic flows. No vehicle complying with the construction and use regulations and permitted to travel on a motorway is legally prohibited from travelling in excess of 50 mph there.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority annual report for the year 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 was published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 15 January, *Official Report*, column 45.

Traffic Lights, Chiswick

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) at what time the traffic lights failed at the Hogarth roundabout on the A4 at Chiswick on 10 February; and at what date and time they were repaired and functioning normally again;

(2) what action was taken to limit danger to vehicles emerging from Church road and Chiswick lane while the traffic lights were not working at the Hogarth roundabout on and after 10 February;

(3) what emergency arrangements exist for dealing with traffic problems when the traffic lights are out of action at the Hogarth roundabout on the A4 at Chiswick; and when these were implemented in respect of the lights failure on 10 February;

(4) what emergency road signs were set up to warn drivers on the A4 of the need for extra care at the Hogarth roundabout at Chiswick while the traffic lights were not functioning on and after 10 February;

(5) what steps he is taking to improve the liaison and co-operation arrangements between the Metropolitan police and those responsible for the functioning of the traffic lights at the Hogarth roundabout on the A4 at Chiswick.

Mr. Atkins: The failure of these signals was reported to the traffic control systems unit by the local police at 0808 hours. The unit's maintenance contractor was on site within five hours but was unable to make a quick repair because the fault is in a main underground cable which must be replaced. The contractor placed signs warning of the failed signals before each signalled junction. As the Church street and Chiswick lane junctions are not signalled, no warning signs were provided there.

Work is in hand to replace the damaged cable, it is hoped without the need to excavate the carriageway, as quickly as possible.

The traffic control systems unit manages all London's traffic signals as agent for the Department. It relies on the reporting of faults by the police, the public and, increasingly, automatic reporting systems. It operates a system of priorities for dealing with faults and works in close liaison with the police, the highway authorities, and the maintenance contractor.

I regret the inconvenience to travellers, but I am satisified that there was no breakdown in liaison in this case.

Light Dues

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions he has taken about light dues in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: Continuing progress in containing costs will permit me to make a further reduction in light dues this year. The present buoyancy of the general lighthouse fund liquid reserves will also permit me to return some of the benefit of this in 1990-91 in the form of a "bargain break" to payers in the cargo sector who have contributed to the strength of the liquid reserves in past years. This will take the form of a reduction, for 1990-91 only, in the maximum number of chargeable voyages (from seven to six voyages). I am also introducing a further round of reforms to the light dues system to remove some remaining anomalies and to bring into charge certain vessels which have hitherto gained exemption. In broad terms these changes are equivalent to a reduction of about 14 per cent. in light dues and will mean that light dues have been roughly halved in real terms since 1981. I am grateful for the efforts of the general lighthouse authorities which have made this possible.

In summary the main changes are:

1. A 2 per cent. reduction in the voyage tariff.
2. Waiving of dues in 1990-91 for ships making a seventh liable voyage.
3. Increasing the half rate tariff for sailing and towed ships to the full rate, together with introduction of a new exemption for sail-training ships.
4. Ending the exemptions for dredgers, hoppers, visiting foreign racing yachts and commercial sailing ships and towed craft between 20 and 100 net registered tons.
5. Making tugs liable on the basis of registered length in place of net tonnage (which hitherto had in practice exempted most tugs from charge).
6. Re-defining the ballast exemption to exclude from it ships which are engaged in commercial revenue earning activities other than the carriage of cargo or passengers.
7. Increased minimum charges per voyage.
8. Introduction of flat rate charges for pleasure craft in place of tonnage based charge. (This change affects only those pleasure craft over 20 net registered tons liable to light dues. The British Ports Federation is conducting a separate feasibility study into extending light dues to smaller pleasure craft; its report is expected shortly.)
9. Ending the former "uplift" charge for ships registered in countries which have no reciprocal tonnage agreement with the United Kingdom.
10. Removal of the remaining distinctions between ships in the former "home" and "foreign" trades and (as already announced last year) extending to all ships which pay per voyage the option to pay dues on no more than two voyages a month.

Following representations from the shipping and port industries, I have decided to retain the present exemptions for ships genuinely in ballast or calling into port for their own purposes. I have concluded that ending these exemptions, while offering a simplification of the rules, would have had disproportionate redistributive effects.

I have also considered further the remaining major reform recommended by the 1988 light dues working party, that light dues paid per voyage should be assessed on ship's gross rather than net tonnage. There appears to be general agreement that this reform would be a fairer basis of charge, and the remaining question is one of timing. I have concluded in principle that this change should be made in 1994 in conjunction with the full implementation of the new tonnage measurement system introduced by the international tonnage convention 1969. Subject to determination of the appropriate level of charge at the time, I envisage a single change to a gross tonnage basis with effect from 1 April 1994. Announcement of this now will allow time for those concerned to prepare for the change.

After the 1989-90 adjustment of the payment period for fishing vessels, to bring it into line with the standard financial year for light dues, the 1990-91 charge for fishing vessels is being held at its 1988-89 level, representing a reduction in real terms of over 10 per cent.

These changes represent a continuing reduction of the burden of light dues combined with a further round of constructive reforms to the light dues system. The necessary order will be laid shortly. This is the third successive year in which light dues have been reduced in cash as well as real terms, and forecast movements of costs suggest that an increase in dues at least in line with inflation may be necessary in 1991. Tight control costs will none the less be maintained.

Aircraft Terminals

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek powers to limit noise and other forms of pollution from aircraft at existing and future aircraft terminals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport already has such powers under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and the Airport Act 1986.

Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been made to fund the London dial-a-ride service for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I am pleased to announce that the Government grant to London dial-a-ride services for 1990-91 will be £8·27 million, an increase of £1 million on 1989-90, or 6 per cent. in real terms. Next year's funding will be some 50 per cent. more in real terms than in 1985-86, the last year in which it was funded by the GLC. In the same period membership has grown by over 80 per cent. The number of journeys made in 1989-90 is expected to be about 625,000, more than double those made in 1985-86. The additional £1 million for 1990-91, with a forecast improvement in the level of efficiency, should result in a 10 per cent. increase in the number of journeys to about 690,000.

Roads, London

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what form and degree of study and analysis his Department is undertaking of the responses of the London road assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 February 1990]:* They are not road assessment studies. The consultants suggest improvements to both roads and public transport. All responses received by 28 February will be examined and comment on the various aspects will be considered carefully before decisions are taken.

EMPLOYMENT

London Borough of Newham

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reason the employment service classifies the London borough of Newham as an inner London borough.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service classifies the London borough of Newham as an inner London borough in order that it may benefit from its range of inner city initiatives.

Employment Training

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently undertaking employment training in the north-east of England.

Mr. Nicholls: On 26 January 1990, the latest date for which information is available, there were 23,700 people on employment training in the Training Agency's Northern region.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the planned level of employment training places and the anticipated level of filled places for each quarter of 1990 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Plans for the number of employment training places are for internal management information purposes only.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on training bonus paid as part of employment training broken down by £50 to £100 and £101 to £200 between December 1988 and December 1989 for each of the standard regions, Wales, Scotland and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the latest figures of the risk of unemployment by social class.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to publish a table as the information is not available. The monthly unemployment count provides information on age, sex, and length of time unemployed only.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the dates when representatives of the Health and Safety Executive visited the Channel tunnel construction site to assess safety levels and the outcome of the visits.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the total number of visits made by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to assess health and safety levels at the Channel tunnel construction sites and the outcome is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Information which is available shows that between July and December 1989 inspectors based in HSE's South East area local office at Ashford, Kent made 86 visits to the Channel tunnel construction sites. Frequent visits have also been made by specialist inspectors from the technology division.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the industrial accidents notified to the Health and Safety Executive that have occurred

during work on the Channel tunnel, giving dates, details of accidents and the outcome of any action taken by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information as requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, between March 1987 and December 1989, the latest date for which information is available, a provisional total of 327 accidents which occurred during work on the Channel tunnel were reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Action taken by the executive following accidents is appropriate to the particular circumstances of the incident.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive of the British consortium, contractors and sub-contractors building the Channel tunnel giving dates, details of the cause of accidents and where appropriate the nature of the serious injury or cause of death.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has prosecuted the five constituent companies of Translink JV on two occasions. The prosecutions followed investigations by HSE into two incidents which were notified under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, neither of which resulted in injuries.

The first incident occurred on 2 December 1987 when four 8-ton railway wagons ran 300 metres down an adit into the tunnel workings. The second incident occurred underground on 5 April 1988 when a cylinder of LPG was hit and punctured by a train.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria the Health and Safety Executive uses in deciding whether a project is under the supervision of Her Majesty's inspectors of mines and within the mines and quarries regulations or regulated by the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Nicholls: Decisions about which inspectors supervise a particular project falling within the scope of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act are internal management matters for the Health and Safety Executive. If such a project is or concerns a mine as defined in the Mines and Quarries Act, it will be the exclusive concern of the mines inspectorate.

Radiation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the new code of practice introduced on 5 February covering radiation exposure limits on the workforce.

Mr. Nicholls: No new code of practice was introduced on 5 February 1990 to cover radiation exposure limits of the workforce. The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) published on that date a consultative document inviting comment on proposals for additional guidance on radiation protection. The proposals represent interim action recommended by the HSC to take account of revised estimates of risk from radiation. A copy of the consultative document has been placed in the Library of the House.

Community Programme and Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of community programme participants and employment training trainees in each of the months July 1986 to December 1989, for each of the standard regions, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountancy Firms (Inspectors' Reports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, if he will make it his policy that whenever he appoints an inspector from the accountancy firms criticised by an inspector's report he will make a statement to this effect to Parliament.

Mr. Redwood: No. My right hon. Friend does not propose to change the practice on announcement of appointment of inspectors as explained by my noble Friend Lord Young of Graffham, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in an answer to a written question from Lord Bruce-Gardyne in the other place on 11 May 1988, *Official Report*, House of Lords, columns *1209-12*.

Disabled People (Employment)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of companies which have failed to comply with schedule 7, paragraph 9 of the Companies Act 1985 to provide information relating to the employment of disabled persons; and what steps he is taking to secure the future compliance with the Act.

Mr. Redwood: The statistical information requested is not available. Companies House staff carry out certain basic checks on reports and accounts, but the contents are not scrutinised in detail except in response to specific complaints. There have been no such complaints in recent years about non-compliance with the statutory requirement to which the hon. Member's question refers.

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of qualified accountants in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United Kingdom's major counterparts in the European Community.

Mr. Redwood: There is no generally agreed definition of a qualified accountant. The information requested is therefore not available.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to hand over the power to investigate insider dealings to the Securities and Investments Board and the Stock Exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None, as I explained in my letter of 26 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee, a copy of which is in the Library.

EC Directives

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many Commission directives under the 1992 programme are now in force throughout the Community.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), which appeared in the *Official Report* on Thursday 18 January 1990.

Companies Acts Investigations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases of section 447 of the Companies Act or equivalent investigations further investigations were carried out under other sections of the Companies Acts since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Between 1979 and 1989 three section 447 inquiries led to further investigations under other sections of the Companies Act. In addition one investigation under section 105 of the Financial Services Act 1986 led to further investigation under the Companies Act.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases of section 447 of the Companies Act, or equivalent, investigations external advice or assistance was sought by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Investigations under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985, and under its predecessor, section 109 of the Companies Act 1967, can be carried out only by officers of my Department. Those carrying out such inquiries are advised by departmental lawyers as appropriate and it is rarely necessary to seek external advice or assistance. No separate record is kept of the number of cases in which such advice is sought.

From 21 February, when section 63 of the Companies Act 1989 comes into force, the Secretary of State will be able to authorise competent persons who are not officers of the Department under section 447.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases of section 447 of the Companies Act or equivalent investigations cases were referred to either legal, professional or regulatory bodies for further action since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1979 information obtained under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 and its predecessor, section 109 of the Companies Act 1967, has been made available when appropriate to the police and prosecuting authorities. The power to disclose restricted information under section 447 of the 1985 Act to professional or regulatory bodies has been available only since November 1986.

Records before 1987 are not readily available. Between 1 April 1987 and 31 December 1989, information obtained under section 447 was referred to either prosecution, professional or regulatory bodies outside my Department in 68 cases.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total number of investigations carried out under section 447 of the Companies Act and the equivalent sections in preceding Acts since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The total number of investigations under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 started and completed between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1989 was 1,158.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total number of investigations carried out under the Companies Acts since January 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The total number of investigations under the Companies Act started and completed since 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1989 was 1,194.

Financial Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases reports arising from section 177 of the Financial Services Act have been passed to professional bodies since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 (which confers power to appoint inspectors to investigate possible insider dealing offences) came into force in November of that year. All reports made by inspectors appointed under that section have been considered with a view to disclosing information in them as permitted by the Act. However, no such information has so far been disclosed to a professional body.

Prosecutions

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the 113 successful prosecutions completed since 1 January 1979 were commenced by his Department as opposed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Serious Fraud Squad or the police before that date.

Mr. Redwood: For the period preceding January 1986, the information requested cannot be produced without exceeding the limit imposed on costs. However from January 1986, 23 prosecutions were carried out by my Department.

1992

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has completed his consideration of the European Economic Community-university of Louvain study of the impact of 1992 on regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: We have studied the report. Many of its conclusions are in line with our own priorities of encouraging business development and enterprise throughout the country and ensuring effective targeting of training, infrastructure and R and D facilities in the run-up to 1992.

Shipbuilding

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals for changes in the European Commission's sixth directive on aid to the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In line with the decision of the European Commission, which was notified to member states on 18 January, I have decided to reduce the maximum level of support for merchant ships from 26 per cent. to 20 per cent. with effect from 1 January 1990.

I have also decided that, from the same date, the sliding scale for ships costing less than £10 million will be reduced from a maximum of 20 per cent. to a maximum of 15 per cent. This will fall by half of one percentage point for every £1 million reduction in the cost of build below £10 million. This when combined with shipbuilder's relief, will bring support for ships costing less than 6 million ecu below the upper level of 14 per cent. set by the Commission.

C. J. How

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to set up a compensation fund to assist investors who have lost funds through C. J. How.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* None.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the responsibilities of FIMBRA in respect of the investment company C. J. How.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* From 1 January 1984 until the introduction of the Financial Services Act on 29 April 1988, FIMBRA was recognised under section 15 of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act. C. J. How was a member of FIMBRA between July 1982 and January 1988 and FIMBRA was therefore responsible for the regulation of the firm's business of dealing in securities from January 1984 until January 1988 when its membership was terminated.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when his Department was first aware that the investment company C. J. How had lost its membership of FIMBRA and what action was taken to alert existing and potential investors.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* My Department was notified on 21 January 1988 that FIMBRA had terminated the membership of C. J. How. My Department was not notified whether FIMBRA had publicised that fact.

Self-regulatory Organisations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that private investors are made aware when investment companies cease to be authorised by a self-regulatory organisation under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* This is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Tied Agents

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will amend the Financial Services Act to make principals responsible for all products sold by their tied agents.

Mr. Redwood: Under the Financial Services Act, a principal is responsible for its appointed representatives' actions in carrying on investment business for which the principal has accepted responsibility in writing. It is for the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulating bodies to consider what requirements should be imposed on principals in relation to the activities of their appointed representatives. I have no plans to amend the Financial Services Act in this regard.

Garston Amhurst

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute an inquiry into the affairs of Garston Amhurst companies during the period they should have been regulated by his Department prior to the commencement of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: If my Department receives information about companies in the Garston Amhurst group which suggests there is good reason to mount an investigation, I will of course consider doing so.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to discuss accountancy matters arising out of the role of Sieff Davidson as auditors to Garston Amhurst companies.

Mr. Redwood: I meet senior members of the professional accountancy bodies from time to time, but I cannot yet say whether it would be appropriate to raise the issues arising from the Garston Amhurst case when I next meet the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to monitor progress being made by the Securities and Investments Board in protecting the interests of investors in funds managed by Garston Amhurst-controlled companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board to ensure that the regulatory framework established by its own rules and those of the self-regulating bodies provides the appropriate level of protection for investors. The Secretary of State has responsibilities for general oversight of the regulatory system under the Financial Services Act, but not for its day-to-day operation.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his inspectors currently investigating Barlow Clowes will examine and report on the extent, number and nature of transactions between Barlow Clowes companies-investment funds and Garston Amhurst companies-investment funds.

Mr. Redwood: The inspectors appointed to investigate the affairs of Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited may inquire into any such matters to the extent that they consider necessary for the purpose of their investigation.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dover of 2 February, *Official Report*, columns *413-14*, when Garston Amhurst companies started offering financial and investment advice to the public.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what authorisation the Garston Amhurst companies held to market and advise on investments prior to the Financial Services Act becoming operational.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information his Department has on connections between the auditors Sieff Davidson, the company Sieff Davidson Financial Services Limited and Garston Amhurst companies, their partners, directors and shareholders and as to whether any of those persons had authorisations to give financial and investment advice *(a)* prior to and *(b)* subsequent on the commencement of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: Sieff Davidson, chartered accountants, is certified by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to carry on investment business. Sieff Davidson Financial Services Ltd., which was set up jointly by Sieff Davidson and the principal directors of Garston Amhurst Associates, is a member of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association. None of these persons held a principal's or a representative's licence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he is next due to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and if he will raise the matter of Garston Amhurst with him and the nature of the protection given to investors by the Lautro rule book.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss issues of mutual interest as often as is necessary. No date has yet been set for the next such meeting.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Dover of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 413-14, what information he has on changes in the name of Garston Amhurst Associates (General) Ltd. and Garston Amhurst Associates Group Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Redwood: The company currently registered in the name Garston Amhurst Associates (General) Limited changed its name on 21 October 1986 from Garston Amhurst General Limited. There is no company currently registered by the name Garston Amhurst Associates Group Holdings Limited.

Securities Dealers

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has at any time since 1 January 1980 had discussions with or corresponded with James D. Krekis, Gordon M. Davies, C. Diccon Wright or Andrew S. Woodhouse with a view to any of them becoming licensed dealers in securities or registered representatives of a licensed dealer in securities, or any company of which any of them are or were directors becoming a licensed dealer in securities.

Mr. Redwood: None of the four people mentioned in the hon. Gentleman's question ever applied for a licence to deal in securities under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 either in their own name or through the companies in the Garston Amhurst Group. In late 1983 an official in my Department obtained documents suggesting that Garston Amhurst Associates might have been carrying on the business of dealing in securities without authorisation. My Department wrote to the company on 22 May 1984 advising that such activities might constitute an offence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958. Following telephone calls from Mr. Wright and from his solicitors which attempted to clarify the scope of the Act, written assurances were received from the company's legal advisers that all such activities had ceased, and would not be resumed without the necessary authorisation being first obtained.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what authorisations exist at the present time for the purposes of dealing in securities or the giving of financial advice to the public in the names of James D. Krekis, Gordon M. Davies, C. Diccon Wright and Andrew S. Woodhouse.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Target Group and National Financial Management Corporation

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what authorisations the Target Group and National Financial Management Corporation plc held from his Department prior to the commencement of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: The main provisions of the Financial Services Act 1986 came into effect on 29 April 1988. Immediately prior to this date, Target Investment Management Ltd. held a principal's licence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958. Target Life Assurance Company Ltd. and National Financial Management Corporation plc (formerly known as Target Annuities Ltd.) were authorised to write insurance business in classes I-IV, VI and VII. Consumer credit licences covering categories A-F and Z were also held by Target Home Loans Ltd. and National Financial Management Corporation plc.

Seiff Davidson Financial Services Limited

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which self-regulatory body is responsible for the authorisation of Sieff Davidson Financial Services Limited and its directors and staff under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: Seiff Davidson Financial Services Ltd. is a member of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association.

HEALTH

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether adverse reaction data submitted to the Committee of Medicines on yellow cards is the property of the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National Health Service personal health information, from which adverse drug

reactions (ADR) data are usually derived, will be the subject of a forthcoming circular. Yellow cards are issued by the statutory committees on safety of medicines and on dental and surgical materials for use by doctors, dentists and coroners in a voluntary scheme for reporting suspected ADRs. The information received is treated in strict confidence by those committees and the licensing authority.

Health Service Inflation

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the indices of health service inflation for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

AIDS

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on his Department's campaign on AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The objectives of the United Kingdom AIDS public education campaign and the Government's continuing commitment to them were reaffirmed at the symposium on HIV and AIDS jointly convened by the Health Departments and the Health Education Authority (HEA) on 24 November 1989.

The symposium provided an expert assessment of the potential for the spread of HIV in the United Kingdom. The consensus which emerged was that the three major routes of HIV transmission are now all-well established, and that we must continue to work to increase and maintain public awareness of this. On 14 February the HEA launched the latest phase of the AIDS campaign. This builds on the outcome of the symposium and consists of statements from experts in the HIV and AIDS field about the transmission routes for HIV infection and the action people should take to protect themselves and those they love.

The Government are also encouraging health and local authorities and the voluntary sector to develop co-ordinated local AIDS educational work.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average life expectancy for people diagnosed with AIDS, defined as the length of time from their diagnosis with AIDS to their deaths, in *(a)* London, *(b)* Cardiff, *(c)* Edinburgh, *(d)* Manchester and *(e)* Birmingham.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 14 February 1990]*: The current average survival time from diagnosis of AIDS to death is approximately 18 months. Numbers of cases outside London are still too small to permit significant comparisons of life expectancy to be made.

Thurrock Health Authority

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients and out-patients were treated *(a)* in England and *(b)* by Basildon and Thurrock health authority in each of the last two years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Patients treated, NHS hospitals, England and Basildon and Thurrock district health authority, 1987-88 and 1988-89

	England		*Basildon and Thurrock*	
	1987-88	1988-89	1987-88	1988-89
In-patient cases	6,619,354	6,585,982	34,669	33,706
Day cases	880,852	1,016,327	4,[illegible]0	5,966
New out-patients	8,529,759	8,406,254	42,[illegible]	43,891
Total out-patient attendances	36,874,293	36,145,910	195,[illegible]7	193,323

Source: SH3a KH09 and KH18 returns

North-East (Expenditure)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far in the north-east by his Department by district health authorities and family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no central information about any such local expenditure.

Social Workers

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from Northumberland social service regarding the implications of shortages of local authority social workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no such representations from Northumberland social services department.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently admitted to mental illness hospitals and units under compulsory powers with a diagnosis of schizophrenia; how many of those admitted informally were subsequently detained as formal patients; and what percentage they constituted of all patients admitted or subsequently detained under compulsory power.

Mr. Freeman: Figures relating diagnosis to legal status, either on admission or before discharge, are not available.

However in 1986, the latest year for which reliable diagnostic figures are available, there were 24,741 admissions, with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units in England. This represents 12·5 per cent. of all admissions into these hospitals and units. The figures may exceed the number of patients since the same individual may be admitted and discharged more than once during the year.

Overtime

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the amount of overtime worked in the ambulance service in each of the last four years for which figures are available; if he will publish such information, in summary form, in the *Official Report*; and if he will make a statement on his proposals to reduce the amounts of overtime worked.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figures of overtime worked in the ambulance service are not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Severn-Trent Water

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has given the Severn-Trent water authority a full indemnity against any civil liability, including negligence, arising from the fluoridation of drinking water supplies by the company.

Mr. Freeman: A full indemnity was provided to Severn-Trent Water by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, on 21 November 1989.

North Western RHA

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial resources the North Western regional health authority has received over the last three years to run breast cancer screening programmes; and how many mobile screening units are currently in operation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: North Western regional health authority has received a total of £4,129,000 over the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 to introduce and run breast cancer screening by mammography.

There are two mobile breast cancer screening units currently in operation in the North Western region. The centres are based in the following areas:

(a) South Manchester—serving Manchester and
(b) West Lancashire and Chorley and South Ribble—serving both those districts.

Further mobile units are planned for introduction in March 1990 and July 1990.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had regarding the ambulance workers' pay claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 17 January at column *278*.

National Health Service Reorganisation

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has any plans to reduce the number of district health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Any proposal to reduce the number of district health authorities within a region has to be considered by the regional health authority concerned and submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Each case is subject to full public consultation and my right hon. and learned Friend needs to be convinced that there is a compelling case for change before approving it. The Health Service reforms are about concentrating management where it matters, not about widespread restructuring.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy towards promotion by the South West regional health authority regional general manager of the amalgamation of North Devon district health authority, Exeter district health authority or Torbay district health authority with each other, or with any other district health authority or district health authorities in the context of the National Health Service structure after reorganisation; and what information he has as to the policy of the South West regional health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Any proposals to merge health authorities would need to be subject to full consultation by the regional health authority. We would expect there to be broad agreement that any proposed merger would be in the interests of the population served. Any recommendations arising out of the consultation would be considered by my right hon. and learned Friend, who would need to be convinced that there were compelling reasons for the change before approving it. The South Western regional health authority has not formulated a policy on this matter.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the minimum notice that a district health authority will be required to give to terminate a block contract for health care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The duration of any contract will be a matter for negotiation and agreement between the contracting parties. However, the Department has advised that for block contracts the norm should be for three year initial contracts with a further 12 months extension negotiated annually. This would ensure that both parties received at least two years notice of any proposal for significant change.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures the Government intend to take to monitor the effects of the proposed changes in the National Health Service on *(a)* the quality of care provided, *(b)* the quantity of care provided, *(c)* the degree to which provision meets needs for care and *(d)* the travelling time of patients to obtain care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The proposed system of contract placement will allow district health authorities to specify the nature and quality of services and ensure that patient services are of a satisfactory standard. It will be for the National Health Service management executive to satisfy itself, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, that high and improved standards of care are provided as our proposals are implemented. We have asked it to devise suitable methods of monitoring Health Service provision to achieve this.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 12 February sent to the hon. Member for Walsall, North, *Official Report*, columns *22-25*, what form of consultation has so far occurred over hospitals opting out of the existing National Health Service management structures; and if he will give the result of such consultation area by area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Formal consultation on proposals to establish NHS trusts cannot take place until after the necessary legislation has received Royal Assent. Information is not available centrally on any informal consultation by units which have expressed an interest in trust status.

Registration of Marriages

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to bring forward legislation to reform the law affecting the registration of marriages.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 1 February 1990 at columns *354-55* announcing publication of a White Paper "Registration Proposals for Change" (Cm 939.) The White Paper contains proposals for reform of the registration system in England and Wales, including changes to the conduct and registration of civil marriages.

The Government hope to introduce the legislation necessary to effect those returns at an early opportunity during the present Parliament.

General Practitioners

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ask the chairman of North Yorkshire family practitioners committee to investigate and report on the circumstances in which 120 patients have been removed from the list of patients and the practice in Filey, Yorkshire, of Dr. P. Garnett and partners; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 12 February at column *28*. The address of the North Yorkshire family practitioners committee is Ryedale house, 60 Piccadilly, York YO1 1PE.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much extra funding will be available to each of the three general practitioner practices in Calderdale who have applied to become budget holders.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To date, practices have been invited only to register their interest in fund holding, since the legislative provision for the operation of the scheme is not yet in place. It is not possible, therefore, to give any estimate of the level of funds which might be available to individual practices.

Practices which volunteer to join the scheme will be able to claim an annual management allowance of up to £32,000 to meet expenses legitimately incurred in running a fund. In 1990-91 an allowance of half that level will be available in recognition of the preparatory work which practices will have to undertake before entering the scheme.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much time he considers that each doctor should spend on medical audit in addition to that currently spent; and what steps he is planning to take to provide additional resources to ensure that that time is not at the expense of patient care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Medical audit is essentially a professional matter. Doctors will be advised by their professional bodies, including the royal colleges, on how much time should be spent on it. The Government are making available additional resources—£31 million in 1990-91—to ensure that medical audit is adequately supported and that doctors are able to participate in it without detriment to their other duties.

Leukaemia and Lymphoma (West Cumbria)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received the results of the case control study of leukaemia and lymphoma in young people resident in West Cumbria recommended in the report of the independent advisory group chaired by Sir Douglas Black in 1984.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. The results of the case control study, which was commissioned and funded by the Department of Health, have been published today. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

The study was undertaken by the Medical Research Council epidemiology unit at Southampton, in response to the first recommendation of the Black advisory group's report on cancer incidence in West Cumbria.[1]

The study documents an association between the excess of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in children living in the vicinity of Sellafield, and employment of the fathers of the affected children at Sellafield over the period 1950 to 1985.

In particular, the study documents an association between the raised incidence in children of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and the recorded level of external radiation dose received by the father before conception of the affected child.

The Government note with concern the results of the study, and recognise the anxieties that it must cause to those who might be at risk. In view of its importance, the results have been referred to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) for its urgent consideration and preliminary advice, following its next meeting in March.

COMARE will also be considering the study in conjunction with the results of other studies, completed, under way or planned, recommended in the Black report or by COMARE in its second[2] and third[3] reports, and accepted by Government.

The following studies, which have been funded by Government, have already been completed:

'Birth and School Cohort Studies in the area around Sellafield'.

'A reanalysis of the data from the Northern Children's Cancer Registry'.

Other relevant studies already under way include:

'A case control study of young people registered as cases of leukaemia or lymphoma in the Dounreay area'.

'Birth and School Cohort Studies in Thurso and around Dounreay'.

'A case-control study of childhood leukaemia and other cancers in West Berkshire and North Hampshire, in which the Ministry of Defence establishements at Aldermaston and Burghfield are situated'.

Finally, planned work includes detailed epidemiological studies to obtain more information on the possible health effects in the offspring of parents occupationally exposed to radiation. These studies should start in the near future.

In addition, subject to the agreement of the individuals concerned, the Health and Safety Executive will set up an

investigation which will be conducted by the Nuclear Inspectorate in co-operation with British Nuclear Fuels plc and the workforce.

This investigation will examine in detail both the internal and external radiation doses, and chemical occupational exposure histories, of the parents of the affected children. This may help in identifying any common factors which may be relevant.

In the meantime, the nuclear industry will wish to consider this report and the possible implications for its workforce, including the need for counselling.

I am advised that the average annual external radiation doses for workers at Sellafield during the late 1960s and the early 1970s were in the range about 12-13 millisieverts (mSv).

Improvements in plant design and radiation protection standards in the 1970s and 1980s have led to a substantial reduction in average external radiation doses, with four-fold reduction between 1974 and 1989. For 1989 the average annual external dose was about three mSv.

The current statutory annual dose limit for people occupationally exposed to radiation is 50 mSv. The National Radiological Protection Board advised, following new data on cancer induction in exposed individuals, that doses should be kept below 15 mSv per year on average, over a number of years.

The Health and Safety Commission has recently issued a consultative document containing proposals to carry this recommendation forward, by the institution of an investigation into the individual circumstances whenever the average is exceeded. The consultative document also stresses for the same reason the increased need to keep doses as low as reasonably practicable.

Interpretation of this study is not straightforward. Until the results have been confirmed or not, and possible mechanisms elucidated, no definitive statement can be made on the possible risk to individuals.

If the effects are demonstrated to be related to external radiation, then on the basis of the evidence from annual doses, only workers receiving relatively high doses might be at risk. There would be a limited number of such workers in the nuclear industry and industries using industrial radiography. COMARE has been asked to advise on this and will report in due course.

(1) 'Investigation of the possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria'—Report of the Independent Advisory Group, Chairman: Sir Douglas Black. HMSO 1984.

(2) 'Investigation of the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people, near the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment, Caithness, Scotland'—COMARE 2nd Report. HMSO 1988.

(3) 'Report on the incidence of childhood cancer in the West Berkshire and North Hampshire area, in which are situated the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston, and the Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield'—COMARE 3rd Report. HMSO 1989.

Food Safety

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the report of the Richmond committee on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sir Mark Richmond submitted to Ministers on 18 January part 1 of his committee's report. It is being published today.

In this part, the committee has examined the incidence of food poisoning and its main causes (salmonella, campylobacter and listeria), outbreak management, surveillance arrangements, food manufacture, the poultry meat industry and the general legislative framework. My colleagues and I welcome it as a constructive and thorough document. We shall follow up positively its many useful recommendations. We trust that others to whom recommendations are addressed, in particular the food industry and environmental health authorities, will examine it to see how the level of food safety in this country can be further raised. We shall certainly draw it to their attention.

The committee's proposals for licensing in due course go further than the Government feel to be necessary. We do, however, see the value of the committee's views on prior notification and we intend to introduce a simple system of prior registration which would not impose unnecessary administrative burdens, but would help business and enforcement authorities alike.

The report indicates support for the Government's Food Safety Bill which the committee felt accommodates many of its views. Because we believe that many of the recommendations in the report call for early action and some are relevant to the Food Safety Bill now before Parliament, the Government have decided to publish their immediate response to the recommendations. This is set out in a paper which is being put into the Library.

My right hon. Friends and I are most grateful to the committee for its hard work so far. It has stated that in part 2 of its report it will examine the arrangements for Scotland and Northern Ireland; catering, retailing and the home; and other important foods. We are therefore extending the committee's life and asking it to finish its work by 31 July 1990.

Halifax General Hospital

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the new Halifax general hospital will be built within the current timetable.

Mr. Freeman: Subject to the determination of its capital programme by the regional health authority, the project for the new Halifax general hospital, now known as Calderdale district general hospital, is programmed to start on site in December 1992 and is due for completion in December 1995.

Nursing Students

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to uprate the bursaries paid to nursing students pursuing Project 2000 courses of nursing education in the light of the report of the review body on nurses' pay.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I cannot add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 4 December 1989 at column 69.

Wakefield Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will call for a report from the chairman of Wakefield health authority on how many functions have been held by the authority to give time out to senior

managers in order to consider management structure within a possible self-governing trust; where these functions were held; and what was the full public cost;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chairman of Wakefield health authority as to when the district finance officer of the authority was informed in writing of his suspension from duty;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chairman of Wakefield health authority on why the locks on the door of the office of the district finance officer of the authority were changed shortly after his recent suspension from duty;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chairman of Wakefield health authority on the reasons for the suspension from duty of the district finance officer of the authority; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chairman of Wakefield health authority as to why senior managers of the authority spent the night of 12 February at the Crown hotel, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire; what was the purpose of their stay and the full cost to be met from public funds; and whether he will make a statement;

(6) if he will set up an independent inquiry into the circumstances leading up to the suspension from duty of the district finance officer of Wakefield health authority.

Mrs Virginia Bottomley: These are matters for local management who are currently dealing with them.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to instruct his Department's director of audit to carry out a full audit of Wakefield health authority's hospitality account and to make the report public.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State does not intend to instruct the Department's director of audit to carry out an audit of the Wakefield health authority's hospitality account.

Wandsworth Health Authority

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the increase or decrease in the numbers of *(a)* bed spaces, *(b)* wards and *(c)* hospitals in the Wandsworth health authority area since 1986.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1986 and 1989 the average daily number of beds available fell from 2,234 to 2,095 and the number of hospitals in the district fell from 5 to 4. Similar information on wards is not held centrally and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Wandsworth health authority.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the underspend or overspend figures for Wandsworth health authority's budget on a monthly basis between January 1985 and October 1989;

(2) if he will place in the Library the accounts of Wandsworth health authority covering *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The detailed financial budget information requested is not collected centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the chairman of the Wandsworth health authority, who may be able to assist with the information sought and supply copies of the authority's annual accounts.

NHS Funding

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence from his Department to the National Health Service units on the issues of the National Health Service trust and general practitioner fund holding.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the relevant figures in table 13.3 of Cm 1013 adjusted by the hospital and community health service current, hospital and community health service capital and the FPS current pay and price deflators to the year 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is contained in the reply which I gave the hon. Member on 13 February at columns *157-59*.

ENVIRONMENT

Devon County Council

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is willing to give to Devon county councillors before they decide on their projected budget for 1990-91; and what is his assessment of the opportunity for them to make a change in their budget.

Mr. Chris Patten: In setting their budget the councillors should take a hard look at the services the county council provides, and make sure that they are satisfied that charge payers will be getting full value for money. They should consider whether they can justify the proposed expenditure on each of these services to their charge payers, and look into the scope for contracting services out where this would be more efficient. The key point that they should bear in mind is that £1 saved is £1 off the community charge.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr dated 23 November 1989, which asked for a response to the statement by the leader of Birmingham city council on the revenue support grant settlement and its implications for poll tax in Birmingham.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, wrote to the hon. Member on 12 February.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his November estimate of the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult compared to rates took account of any transitional reliefs.

Mr. Chope: The provisional assumed charges published on 6 November, and the assumed charges published on 11 January, include safety net contributions or receipts and any transitional special grant but take no account of community charge benefit or transitional relief, which are paid to individuals, not to areas. The effect of community

charge benefit and transitional relief is that charge payers in receipt of either or both will pay less than the personal community charge for the area.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he will adopt when giving consideration to the capping of the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) on 24 January at column *739*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and weighting of all indices of need in the grant-related expenditure and standard spending assessment and the effect of the changes made in both on the financial allocations.

Mr. Chope: The formula used to calculate grant-related expenditure assessments for 1989-90 was set out in the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1989-90, approved by the House on 19 December 1988. The formulae for assessing standard spending assessments are set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), debated in the House on 18 January 1990. The new standard spending assessments are the result of extensive research and discussion with local authority representatives. They are composed of fewer elements than grant-related expenditure assessments and each element is based on understandable factors of direct relevance to the services provided by local authorities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the grant-related expenditure allocations 1989-90 and the standard spending assessments allocations for 1990-91 for each district in Humberside and the percentage increase or decrease; and if he will explain the reasons for the divergence.

Mr. Chope: The table provides the information requested. Standard spending assessments follow from extensive research and discussion with local authority representatives. They are composed of fewer individual service elements than grant-related expenditure assessments, with each element based on simple understandable factors of direct relevance to the services provided by local authorities.

1990-91 SSAs—Cash changes from adjusted 1989-90 GREs

	1989-90 GRE	*Adjusted 1989-90 GRE*	*1990-91 SSA*	*Cash change (column 3 minus column 2)*
	£ million (1)	*£ million (2)*	*£ million (3)*	*Per cent. (4)*
Beverley	5,161	5,063	5,624	11·1
Boothferry	3,533	3,487	4,743	36·0
Cleethorpes	4,760	4,653	4,617	−0·8
Glanford	4,117	4,036	4,932	22·2
Great Grimsby	7,622	7,347	7,019	−4·5
Holderness	2,483	2,425	2,994	23·5
Kingston upon Hull	27,416	26,223	25,149	−4·1
East Yorkshire	4,448	4,307	5,071	17·7
Scunthorpe	4,750	4,468	4,365	−2·3

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the scaling factors used to calculate stages 2 and 3 of the standard spending assessment, specifying how they were arrived at; and if he will show how they were used in arriving at the standard spending assessment for Grimsby borough council.

Mr. Chope: The method used to calculate the scaling factors for standard spending assessments is set out in paragraph 3.3 of section 3 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), approved by the House on 18 January. The factors used in deriving the SSA for Great Grimsby are:

Other Services
- Other Services—District level: 0·9999
- Other Services—County level: 1·1047
- Flood Defence: 1·0124
- Coast Protection: 1·0193
- Interest Receipts: −0·0287

Capital Financing
- Debt Charges: 0·9569
- Capital Expenditure Charged to Revenue Account: 0·3014
- Interest on Capital Receipts to shire districts: −0·3926

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the factors and indicators taken into account in assessing *(a)* grant-related expenditure allocations and *(b)* standard spending assessments and his reasons for differences between the two.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him today.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the grant-related expenditure allocations for Grimsby for 1986-87 to 1989-90, together with his proposed standard spending assessment figures of November 1989 and his final standard spending assessment figures in January; and if he will outline the reasons for the differences between the last two.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested for Great Grimsby are as follows:

Grant Related Expenditure Assessment

	£000's
1986-87	7,288
1987-88	6,855
1988-89	6,969
1989-90	7,622

The figures for 1986-87 to 1988-89 are those determined in the latest supplementary report for the relevant year. The 1989-90 GRE is a settlement figure.

The standard spending assessment (SSA) for Great Grimsby issued as part of the November consultation was £7·053 million. The final SSA is £7·019 million. The main

reason for the difference is the replacement of an estimated credit approval used in calculating the capital financing element with a figure based on actual credit approvals.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government's spending assumption for the area safety net and the community charge transitional relief scheme and the figures for assumed spending by local authorities in England in 1990-91, issued by his Department on 11 January, represent the amount he considers it appropriate for each authority to spend in 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: No. It is an authority's standard spending assessment (SSA) for the year which is intended to represent the amount of revenue expenditure which it would be appropriate for the authority to incur in that year to provide a standard level of service consistent with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's view of the amount of revenue expenditure which it would be appropriate for all authorities to incur. This latter amount is net total standard spending, as defined in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), which the House approved on 18 January 1990.

The Government's spending assumption and the assured charge based on it does not represent the Government's view of what an authority could or should spend or charge. Nor does it represent a Government target or guideline for, or a prediction of, spending and charges by individual local authorities next year. The spending assumption, based on 1989-90 rate income and grant, adjusted for changes in function and increased to be consistent with total standard spending of £32·8 billion for 1990-91, is a reference point for the calculation of the area safety net and of the assumed charge for the purposes of the transitional relief scheme. Both of these measures are designed to give an appropriate degree of protection from changes arising from the move from the old system to the new. They are not designed to protect people from changes arising from individual authorities' spending decisions for which they are accountable to their electorate.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the distribution of changes in the percentage of net income paid in *(a)* domestic rates in 1989-90 and *(b)* community charge in 1990-91, if community charges are set at the level assumed for the calculation of 1990-91 revenue support grant entitlements.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed in the Library a note updating figures on the impact on household finances of the community charge system. The figures are based on the assumed community charges published in January. They show that three out of five households would pay less with the community charge than they would have paid had rates continued. The actual gains for households will depend on spending decisions by their local authorities. Higher spending than we have assumed will result in higher community charges, just as it would also have resulted in higher rate bills.

The analysis compares 1989-90 rate levels with 1990-91 community charges. Since these are at different price levels, the results are presented in terms of changes in percentage of net income paid in rates and community charge. The figures show that 60 per cent. of households (11·4 million) gain from the new system—88 per cent. of single pensioner households and 82 per cent. of other single adult households gain from the new system; community charge is particularly good news for households in the lowest income band. On average, they will see a 26 per cent. reduction in the percentage of their income paid to local governments as a result of the new system. This is because community charge benefits will be more generous than rate rebates and because many of the single adult households benefiting from the change are on low incomes.

The message is clear. The community charge with its benefit system is fair. Contrary to claims made by opponents of the community charge, many of the lowest income households should gain from the changes being made. But for the full benefits of the community charge to be felt, local authorities must control their expenditure. High spending will lead to high community charges just as it would lead to high rate bills. Those high bills would be the responsibility of local authorities, not the Government.

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a report under the Personal Community Charge (Relief) (England) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 2).

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the next three years the community charge transitional relief scheme will reduce personal community charges for about 6 million people by £710 million during the changeover from domestic rates to the new system. Most charge payers would pay no more than £3 per week more than they did in rates, where councils spend in line with the Government's assumptions.

I have today laid the Community Charge Transitional Relief Report (England), as required by these regulations, which sets out the assumed community charges for the purposes of the scheme: these are as announced on 11 January in connection with the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91. Copies of the report are being sent to local authorities and to the local authority associations.

Local authorities will be reimbursed in full for the income forgone as a result of the abatement of community charges. In addition they will receive grant in respect of administrative costs.

When the community charge transitional relief scheme was announced I met the local authority associations and made it clear that authorities' reasonable costs incurred in preparing for and administering the scheme would be reimbursed in full. KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, management consultants, were commissioned to undertake an independent study of these costs. They have had discussions with 31 local authorities, software suppliers, and have met the local authority associations to discuss their views on the operation of the scheme and on methods for cost reimbursement. They have now submitted their report and copies of the recommendations and cost summary have been placed in the Libraries of the Houses of Commons and Lords: copies of the complete report will be available shortly.

In the light of the report, I am today announcing detailed proposals for consultation with the local authority associations for the reimbursement of these costs. I propose that authorities' preparation costs for the scheme, largely for computer software and related expenditure, should be reimbursed in full on the basis of the actual expenditure incurred, as confirmed by the authority's auditor. The consultants' report estimates preparation costs to be about £7 million in total.

I propose that the general administrative costs which authorities will incur as a consequence of the scheme, in particular dealing with inquiries, should be reimbursed at a flat rate of 27p per charge payer, with an allowance for higher costs in London. On this basis, the administrative costs grant would be about £9·5 million in total.

The report recommends that the cost of dealing with applications from elderly and disabled persons and the cost of issuing any second bills to charge payers should be reimbursed on the basis of an amount per application and an amount per bill. I propose that applications should be reimbursed at a rate of £3 per charge payer for each application made, including the cost of dealing with unsuccessful applications.

I continue to expect that wherever possible authorities should send out bills in good time reflecting entitlement to community charge benefit and transitional relief where appropriate. However, where bills are sent out without taking into account transitional relief, and second bills have to be issued, I propose that the cost of printing and postage for such bills should be reimbursed at a rate of 50p each. This would not apply where the second bill relates to a substitute charge.

The total cost of this package of grant aid to meet authorities' costs would be about £21 million. These proposals and a copy of the recommendations and cost summary have been sent to the local authority associations for their comments before final decisions are made.

Electric-Powered Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research or other assistance his Department is funding for the development of electrically powered road vehicles.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 13 February 1990 by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport at column *168*.

Recycling

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's target for recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's target is that 50 per cent. of recyclable household waste should be recycled by the end of the century, and that all forms of recycling should be maximised. This is part of our policy of conserving resources through preventing and reducing waste and promoting the effective and efficient re-use and recovery of materials. To this end we are bringing forward measures in the Environmental Protection Bill to empower and encourage local authorities to undertake recycling. In addition we are working with manufacturers and retailers, voluntary groups and local authorities to identify and remove the barriers to further recycling.

Homelessness

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to address the problems of homelessness following mortgage repossession.

Mr. Chope: The statement last November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment (copies of which are in the Library) contained the wide range of proposals from the Government to relieve or prevent homelessness, from whatever cause.

Disabled People (Public Toilets)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a scheme to allow free access to specially adapted public toilets for those who are disabled and over retirement age.

Mr. Chope: The national key scheme administered by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation enables disabled people who have a key to obtain free access to specially adapted public toilets.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make additional resources available to local authorities to enable them to construct and convert public toilet provision adapted to the needs of the disabled.

Mr. Chope: The Government make resources available to local authorities through the revenue support grant settlement in support of their expenditure on revenue services generally. These services include the provision of public conveniences, including those adapted to the needs of the disabled. Details of the settlement for 1990-91 were announced on 11 January and full information about the grant entitlement of each area was sent to authorities on 25 January.

The settlement is based on total standard spending by authorities of £32·8 billion; this is the amount which it is appropriate for authorities in aggregate to incur to provide a standard level of service. I have no plans to make additional resources available.

Revenue support grant is unhypothecated. Now that authorities have details of their entitlements, it is for them to decide how much to spend on the construction or conversion of public toilet provision adapted to the needs of the disabled.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he collected on the location of specially adapted public conveniences for the disabled.

Mr. Chope: This information is not collected by my Department. Information of the kind to which the hon. Member refers is collected by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, and is made available to disabled people by the association.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider making a key available free of charge to those disabled people in receipt of mobility or attendance allowance who request it to enable them to gain 24-hour access to the existing public toilets specially adapted for the disabled by local authorities; and what is his estimate of the cost of providing such a key.

Mr. Chope: No. Keys giving access to public toilets specially adapted for the disabled included in the national key scheme are available from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation at a cost of £2·90 each.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures in the north-east for the number of people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Chope: At the end of September 1989 there were an estimated 80 households temporarily living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation who had been accepted as homeless by local authorities in Tyne and Wear, Cleveland, Durham and Northumberland.

Sewage Discharges (Severn)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to end the discharge of untreated sewage into the Severn estuary; and within what timescale.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: On 20 October 1989 my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) announced details of a £1·1 billion programme (November 1987 prices) designed to bring United Kingdom bathing waters identified under the EEC bathing water directive up to the directive's standards within the next 10 years. Major schemes at Barry (£26·3 million) and Weston-Super-Mare (£13 million) will help to improve the bathing waters in the Severn estuary.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to widen the powers of waste disposal authorities to allow them *(a)* to ensure that environmental and amenity constraints are fully considered in the implementation of their policies and *(b)* to minimise the movement of domestic, industrial and special wastes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The existing waste disposal authorities will be reformed under the powers of the Environmental Protection Bill. Their functions will be divided between waste regulation authorities, whose function will be to license waste management facilities and to enforce standards, and the waste disposal authorities, whose functions will be to seek tenders for the disposal of waste.

The waste regulation authorities will have wider powers under the provisions of the Bill to prevent the pollution of the environment or harm to human health. The Secretary of State will issue guidance on the way in which the authorities should carry out their duties and the authorities will be under statutory duty to have regard to this guidance.

The waste disposal authorities will arrange, through competitive tendering, for the disposal of household waste collected by the collection authorities. They will take into account the costs of transporting the waste to the facility in deciding on the tenders they have received. While the authorities are not generally involved in the disposal of industrial waste or special waste, the producers of such waste can also be expected to take into account the costs of transport to the disposal facility. However, some wastes require specialised treatment and it may sometimes be necessary for such waste to move ouside its area of origin to a suitable facility.

Wild Birds

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available to him to meet Her Majesty's Government's obligations under article 4 of the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds, 79/409 EC, in relation to tidal areas outside the jurisdiction of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are issued to local authorities to take account in the contracting-out service of the training and apprenticeship policies of the tendering companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988, the training of a contractor's workforce is a non-commercial matter which local authorities must not take into account when awarding contracts for the supply of goods or materials, the supply of services or the execution of works. The Department's circular 8/88 advises local authorities that consideration of the number or proportion of apprentices to be employed by a contractor is not allowed during the contractual process.

Overtime

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the amount of overtime worked in local government manual services in each of the last four years for which figures are available; if he will publish such information, in summary form, in the *Official Report;* and if he will make a statement on his proposals to reduce the amounts of overtime worked.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not available centrally. The amount of overtime worked by manual workers in local government is a matter for each local authority.

Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he calculates grants due to Lambeth council in the absence of audited accounts.

Mr. Chope: Following the enactment of the Rate Support Grant Act 1988, which closed down the rate support grant system, information from audited accounts is not relevant to the calculation of an authority's rate support grant entitlement. Nor will such information be relevant to the calculation of revenue support grant entitlements under the new system of local government finance.

Where entitlements to other grants depend on information from audited accounts, and where that information is not available, final entitlements cannot be determined, although on-account payments may be made.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Lambeth council will now receive in 1990-91 from *(a)* its share of the uniform business rate, *(b)* revenue support grant and *(c)* housing subsidies.

Mr. Chope: In 1990-91 Lambeth borough council will receive £50·5 million in redistributed business rates from the central pool, and £174·3 million of revenue support grant (after allowing for the safety net).

Lambeth's claim for housing subsidy and grants for slum clearance, home insulation and improvement grant for 1990-91 will not be known until April. In 1989-90 it claimed a total of £63·3 million.

Waste Management 90 Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the information received in response to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West, *Official Report*, 5 February, column *436*, he now expects his Department to be represented at the Waste Management 90 conference in Tucson.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Globe '90 Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will participate in the Globe '90 conference on economic developments and environmental protection in Vancouver in March; and whether any request has been received from the organisers to his Department.

Mr. Trippier: Mr. David Pounder, my Department's environmental protection technology adviser, has accepted an invitation from the organisers of Globe '90 to participate in the conference, and will be speaking on the subject of cleaner production.

Fire Brigade

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take immediate action to persuade the private water companies of the need to ensure that the fire-fighting services have an adequate water supply.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Private water companies have statutory duties under the Water Act 1989 both for the provision of water supplies for fire-fighting and in respect of constancy of supply and water pressure. These duties are enforceable by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment under section 20 of the Act.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had about the current anxieties of the South Yorkshire fire service in regard to the provision of water supplies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None, but representations have been made to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and are currently being considered.

Sulphur Emissions

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment over what timescale his pollution inspectorate will require existing large combustion plant from *(a)* the general industrial sector, *(b)* the refinery sector and *(c)* the electricity supply industry to meet BATNEEC —best available techniques not entailing excessive cost —requirements for new plant.

Mr. Trippier: Subject to the enactment of the Environmental Protection Bill, integrated pollution control of existing plants will be introduced progressively. There will be a rational timetable, which will be subject to consultation, for bringing categories of process within the IPC system.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the United Kingdom will meet its obligations to cut sulphur emissions under the large combustion plants directive; and how he expects this to be achieved in *(a)* the general industrial sector, *(b)* the refinery sector and *(c)* the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Trippier: The Government set out their general plans for implementing the directive in a consultation paper published in August 1989. A copy is held in the Library of the House. Further consultation will take place before a statutory plan is issued for emissions reductions from existing plants.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent to which the use of low-sulphur coal in power stations represents the best available techniques not entailing excessive costs of reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide.

Mr. Trippier: The use of low-sulphur coal is one of a number of means of reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide and is expected to contribute to meeting the United Kingdom's obligations under the large combustion plants directive. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is preparing detailed notes on the operation of large combustion plants which will specify the SO2 emission standards to be achieved in plants of different sizes and according to the sulphur content of fuel. The notes are expected to be published in the summer.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of plans to burn high-sulphur Orimulsion Venezuelan bitumen emulsion in power stations; and what the overall impact will be on the sulphur and nitrogen budget for the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Trippier: No assessment has been made of plans to burn Orimulsion, but Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is aware of the results of a related test. The sulphur and nitrogen budgets would be subject to the arrangements the Government put in place for implementing the large combustion plants directive.

Large Combustion Plants

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it remains the Government's intention to move increasingly to stated timetables for upgrading existing registered large combustion plants.

Mr. Trippier: Yes, in accordance with the proposals contained in our consultation paper.

Local Government Employees (Pensions)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make the regulations allowing part-time local government employees to buy additional service for pension purposes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is the intention to make these regulations as soon as possible.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the limit set on the radioactivity of wastes disposed of at Drigg in *(a)* 1985 to 1990 and *(b)* 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Trippier: Disposal limits are specified in the certificate of authorisation issued to BNFL by the authorising Departments. I will send the hon. Member copies of the certificates covering the relevant period. It is Government policy to keep all such certificates under regular review.

Radiochemical Inspectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the sites at *(a)* Aldermaston, *(b)* Burghfield, *(c)* Springfield, *(d)* Capenhurst, *(e)* Sellafield, *(f)* Calder Hall, and *(g)* Chapel Cross, were last inspected by the radiochemical inspectors.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The latest date on which each of the following sites was inspected by HMIP is as follows:
(a) Aldermaston—30 January 1990, *(b)* Burghfield—30 July 1986, *(c)* Springfield—18 December 1989, *(d)* Capenhurst—30 January 1990, *(e)* Sellafield—2 February 1990, *(f)* Calder Hall—9 January 1990.
Inspection of the BNFL site at Chapel Cross is a matter for the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many Property Services Agency staff responded to the Property Services Agency trawl for posts in the Ministry of Defence;
(2) if he will detail the programme, by date, function, and staff numbers, for transferring work out of the Property Services Agency, Hastings.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* A total of 418 Property Services Agency staff responded to the trawl published by PSA on 5 October 1989 for approximately 120 posts in the Ministry of Defence.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of the secondment agreement with the National Union of Civil and Public Servants and Civil and Public Servants Association on the morale of staff concerned and on the retention of staff by the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* None, but secondment has been welcomed by those staff to whom we have been able to offer it.

DEFENCE

Fuel Pipelines

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the costs to the Exchequer of capital investment in the Government pipeline project from Calne, Wiltshire, to RAF Fairford in each of the past five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There has been no United Kingdom capital investment on the Calne to Fairford line over the past five years, and therefore no cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the names of all contractors constructing and operating fuel pipeline systems on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The major contractors responsible for operating existing MOD pipelines are British Pipeline Agency (BPA), Esso UK Limited and Texaco.
Construction work is subcontracted by these contractors, or via the Property Services Agency, to a great many different companies, depending on the nature of the work to be done, and the outcome of competition. No contract has yet been awarded for the construction of the new Calne to Fairford pipeline.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the cost of the proposed extension of the Government pipeline project from Calne, Wiltshire, to RAF Fairford will be paid in full by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The cost of the extension will be met in full from NATO funds.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list payments to contractors for the operation of any part of the Government pipeline project from Calne, Wiltshire, to RAF Fairford in each of the past five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The information requested is commercial-in-confidence.

Expenditure

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expenditure on defence for each of the years from 1979 at constant prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to Cm. 1021, "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93", where the information requested is shown in table 21.2.11.

HILEX 1990

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the date of exercise HILEX 1990; if he will list the United Kingdom participants in the exercise; and what was the purpose of the exercise.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The NATO crisis management exercise HILEX 14 was to have taken place from 4 to 9 March 1990. The Alliance recently decided that in view of international developments it would be inappropriate to hold the exercise at the present time.

"Codename Badger"

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his agreement was sought prior to the publication in America of "Codename Badger" by John Cottell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been unable to find any record that the Ministry of Defence was consulted prior to publication of the book.

Lines of Communication Arrangement

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the exercises in which procedures for the provision of host nation labour under the terms of the United States—United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement have been tested.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The procedures for the provision of civil labour in support of the United States—United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement are tested from time to time, in conjunction with the Department of Employment. It would not be appropriate to list the occasions upon which these procedures have been exercised.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the publication dates and titles of the various joint logistic plans drawn up to meet the objectives of the United States—United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The titles of the joint plans refer to classified information and therefore cannot be released.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United Kingdom representatives on the United States-United Kingdom telecommunications working group, established under the terms of the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom representation on the telecommunications working group consists of staff at major level with responsibility for communication matters from the central staffs and single-service departments of the MOD.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British private firms have contracted to provide supplies or services to the United States armed forces in crisis, tension and war, under the terms of the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are some hundreds of contractors with which the United States forces contract for supplies and services in peace time. The majority of these contracts would continue in time of crisis and war.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he made, pursuant to the answer to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 115, of the implications for his policy of his reading of "Who Framed Colin Wallace" by Paul Foot.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the five Army officers whose names appear on the memorandum written by Colin Wallace in August 1973.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the undated and unsigned briefing notes which were reproduced in Paul Foot's book "Who Framed Colin Wallace", page 292. No Army officers' names appear on that document.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disciplinary action is to be taken against those officials who failed in their duty to provide accurate information to Ministers in relation to parliamentary questions about Operation Clockwork Orange and related matters on 10 January 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is the subject of the current internal inquiry. It would be premature to speculate whether any form of disciplinary action will be appropriate.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 118, by whom, and on whose authority, an additional job description was drafted to cover additional duties for Mr. Colin Wallace; and why they were not recorded in any subsequent approved and issued job description.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the statement which I made on 30 January in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), *Official Report*, 30 January 1990 c. *110-13*. Such matters are within the purview of Mr. Calcutt's inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 118, (1) by what process documents have recently come to light making reference to a project called Clockwork Orange; and if he will specify the day on which they first came to light;

(2) what factors led to the re-examination of files on the Colin Wallace affair, indicating that Mr. Wallace had undertaken unattributable covert briefings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the information given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his statement to the House on 1 February and the subsequent exchanges, *Official Report*, 1 February 1990, columns 446-68, and in his letter of 2 February to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). A copy of that letter is in the Library of the House.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department is funding or assisting projects designed to develop electrically powered road vehicles.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *117*, what inquiries were conducted into the rumours referred to about MI5 and MI6 blocking of an inquiry into Kincora, to establish that they were unsubstantiated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to what I said to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in the debate on 12 February, (*Official Report*, 12 February 1990, c. 117).

Temperatures

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information has been received by the Meteorological Office in respect of the number of days between 1 November 1989 and 31 January 1990 when the average daily temperature allowing for wind chill factor fell below 0 deg. C. at each recording station in Scotland;

(2) what information the Meteorological Office has received from recording stations in the United Kingdom regarding any period of seven consecutive days between 1 November 1989 and 31 January 1990, when the average daily temperature, allowing for a wind chill factor, fell below 0 deg. C.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, on 15 December 1989, Vol. 163, c. *882*.

The Meteorological Office does not record wind chill factors, and does not provide such calculations without a specific request stating the criteria to be applied. The work involved would have to be undertaken on repayment terms.

The incidence of temperatures sought by the hon. Member, even without any chill factor applied, could be provided here only at disproportionate cost. However, temperatures covering the same period, recorded for the purposes of regulation 2 of the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Regulations 1988, are placed weekly in the Library of the House on the instructions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

THE ARTS

English National Ballet and Opera

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what representations he has received from *(a)* the chairman of the Arts Council, *(b)* the chairman of the English National Ballet and the English National Opera and *(c)* Westminster city council about the future funding of the English National Ballet and English National Opera;

(2) whether he will list the dates in the last six months on which he has met *(a)* the chairman of the Arts Council, *(b)* the chairman of the English National Ballet and the English National Opera and *(c)* the leader of Westminster city council to discuss the impact of the community charge and the uniform business rate on the future funding of English National Ballet and English National Opera.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* I received a number of representations on behalf of English National Opera and English National Ballet. The Government took these and other factors into account in increasing the Arts Council's grant by 12·5 per cent. in the coming year. As a result, the Arts Council has been able to announce a further increase in its grants to these two companies of £1·1 million each in recognition of their special local circumstances created by the termination of the London rate equalisation scheme.

Arts Council

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will dismiss Mr. Peter Palumbo as chairman of the Arts Council as a result of the failure of the Arts Council to provide additional funding for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* No, Sir.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) if he will increase the Government's grant to the Arts Council, earmarking the increase as extra funding for the English National Opera;

(2) if he will increase the Government's grant to the Arts Council, earmarking the increase as extra funding for the English National Ballet.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* I have already announced that the Arts Council's grant will increase by 22 per cent. over the next three years, including a 12·5 per cent. increase in 1990-91. It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies. The council's grants to English National Opera and English National Ballet for 1990-91 represent increases of 11 per cent. and 12 per cent. respectively. The council announced yesterday an additional £1·161 million to English National Opera and £1·120 million to English National Ballet from its reserves, in recognition of their special local circumstances.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will increase the Government's grant to the Arts Council, earmarking the increase as extra funding for the Royal Shakespeare Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* I have already announced that the Arts Council's grant will increase by 22 per cent. over the next three years, including a 12·5 per cent. increase in 1990-91. This is an extremely generous settlement and underlines the Government's commitment to the arts. It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of this additional money to individual companies. I am advised that the council's grant to the Royal Shakespeare Company will increase next year by 11 per cent., bringing it to over £6 million.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Community Free Food

Mr. Barron: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when is the deadline for applications from organisations wishing to operate the European Community free food scheme in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I and my colleagues are currently considering the arrangements for a scheme in 1990 and will make an announcement as soon as a decision has been reached.

Scrapie

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has as to whether the infective agent in scrapie can be passed to mink.

Mr. Maclean: Reports of outbreaks of natural transmissible mink encephalopathy in north America indicate that some may have resulted from the feeding to mink of scrapie-infected sheep material. In addition, research conducted in the United States has in certain circumstances transmitted scrapie-infected material from sheep and goats into mink experimentally.

Rodents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment he has made of whether the requirements of the European Commission's common rules regarding the producing of rodents on the European Community market will require changes in the practices of British producers;

(2) what changes in the rules governing rodent producers in Britain will be imposed as a result of the European Commission's proposed regulation to remove disparities between member states' rodent health restrictions;

(3) what arrangements he is making to assist European Commission veterinary experts who will be making on-the-spot inspections to ensure British rodents are bred and kept within the requirements of European animal health restrictions.

Mr. Maclean: The proposed animal health conditions governing the placing of rodents on the market in the Community should not require changes in the practices of British producers. Tularaemia, myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease would become notifiable, in addition to rabies, and exports to other member states would not be subject to official veterinary certification. We will provide whatever assistance is required by the Commission's veterinary experts in carrying out their inspections, if the proposal is adopted.

Veterinary Surgeons

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number of veterinary surgeons employed by county councils in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: I have no information on the number of veterinary surgeons employed by county councils.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision he is making for the training of veterinary surgeons in enforcement of welfare and public health standards prior to 1992.

Mr. Maclean: My Department provides training for veterinary surgeons who are to undertake meat work. Arrangements have already been made to enable increased numbers to receive this training.

Members of the state veterinary service (SVS) receive regular training on welfare matters; a course is held annually to cater for veterinary surgeons joining the service. Individual training is also given to local veterinary inspectors (LVIs) employed to carry out welfare functions. The impact of 1992 on welfare is not yet clear but once any new needs have been assessed appropriate training will, if necessary, be given.

Animal Movement Records

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new procedures he has introduced during the last three years concerning the maintenance by producers and auctioneers of animal movement records in respect of bovines.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives concerning the level of compensation to be paid in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed cattle identified at abattoirs; what certification is involved; which officials are authorised to certify payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The levels of compensation payable for cattle compulsorily slaughtered between 8 August 1988 and 13 February 1990 (inclusive) because of BSE were laid down in the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Compensation Order 1988. The levels payable for cattle slaughtered on or after 14 February 1990 are laid down in the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Order 1990.

A suspected animal's market value is determined by agreement between the owner of the animal and an officer of the state veterinary service, or by one valuer appointed jointly by the owner and the officer or, failing such agreement or appointment, by a valuer nominated by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the outbreak of disease among mink in Wisconsin in 1947, where the animals displayed symptoms similar to those of cows affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy, will be considered as part of his Department's research into the causes and properties of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Curry: The disease referred to in the question is called transmissible mink encephalopathy and outbreaks have occurred in continental Europe and north America. Part of the Department's research programme on BSE is to determine whether BSE is transmissible to mink.

EC Fraud

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of fraud upon the European Community agricultural funds were referred to the Commission by each of the 12 member states in the first nine months of 1989.

Mr. Curry: Regulation 283/72 requires member states to notify the Commission each quarter of all instances of irregularity affecting the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. Irregularity is defined as contravention of a legal provision, whether deliberate or not, exceeding 1000 units of account (about £800) in value. The number of irregularities notified is not, therefore, a measure of detected fraud, nor does it necessarily relate to the volume of actual fraud committed. The numbers notified in the first three quarters of 1989 are as follows:

	Guarantee Section	Guidance Section
Belgium	2	0
Denmark	11	0
Germany	24	0
Greece	0	0
Spain	10	0
France	85	1
Ireland	8	5
Italy	33	0
Luxembourg	1	0
Netherlands	58	27
Portugal	0	0
United Kingdom	129	34

Source: Commission of the European Communities.

Salmonella

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many outbreaks of salmonella enteritidis have been identified or reported in free range flocks of poultry and in intensively reared flocks for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Between 1 January and 29 December 1989 there were 24 reports of salmonella enteritidis in free-range laying flocks and 77 in intensively reared laying flocks.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 16 February 1990

NATIONAL FINANCE

Computer Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Treasury has taken and is taking to improve the security of its computer systems.

Mr. Ryder: The Treasury regularly reviews the security of its computer systems. The Department follows the guidance of the appropriate authorities on security matters. In the case of unclassified but sensitive information, the Treasury uses the CCTA recommended structural risk analysis and management methodology (CRAMM). CCTA guidance is itself kept under continuous review.

Interest Rates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what correspondence he has received from the Forum for Private Business on the implications of high interest rates on the small business sector.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have received a number of such representations.

Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of central Government revenue was raised by indirect taxation in the latest year for which figures are available; if he will give a breakdown from each tax; and what information he has on the corresponding figures for the other member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Central Government taxes are classified in Government accounts as income and expenditure taxes and not as direct and indirect taxes. Expenditure taxes are broadly similar to indirect taxes. The latest information on central Government revenue from expenditure taxes is published in table 7.2 of the 1989 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the CSO Blue Book). Latest comparable information as is available for member states of the European Community can be obtained from the 1989 OECD annual publication, "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member countries". Figures are given for individual countries with taxes defined in table G.

Figures of total indirect taxes for OECD countries were also published in table F of the article, "International Comparisons of Taxes and Social Security Contributions in 20 OECD Countries 1976-86", in the January 1989 issue of "Economic Trends" (No. 423).

London Weighting

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the London weighting in Civil Service pay is calculated; and what weighting is given to the cost of housing.

Mr. Ryder: Since 1982, Civil Service London weighting has been set at levels which are deemed adequate to recruit, retain and motivate staff in sufficient numbers to carry out the work of the Civil Service efficiently. As London weighting is not a cost compensation allowance it is not calculated on the basis of specific costs such as housing.

Alcohol (Duty)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate by how much duty is underpaid each year by its being paid on potential brewery production rather than the amount of alcohol actually leaving the brewery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The beer duty is currently charged by reference to the original gravity of the beer prior to fermentation and not to the alcoholic content of the finished product. Underpayment of duty on the lines suggested in the hon. Gentleman's question does not therefore occur.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax discount has been given to brewers to offset wastage incurred under traditional brewing methods for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Since 1880 United Kingdom brewers have been legally entitled to deduct 6 per cent. from the quantity brewed when calculating the duty charge. This deduction is intended to cover normal spoilage and losses incurred in processing and packaging beer subsequent to the duty point; for the financial years since 1979 it reduced the duty liability by the following amounts:

	£ million
1979-80	56·1
1980-81	64·2
1981-82	83·0
1982-83	93·5
1983-84	101·7
1984-85	110·3
1985-86	117·9
1986-87	118·2
1987-88	119·8
1988-89	125·2

European Community Budget

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide whatever information is available pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Northampton, North on 5 February, *Official Report*, column *476*.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* Annual payments to member states under the principal sectors of the Community budget are given in table 18 of the recent Court of Auditors' report (*Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 312, 12 December 1989). The information in this table, which is for the period 1984-88, covers 87·8 per cent. of total budgetary expenditure. It does not cover

all payments to member states and it excludes expenditure on aid to third countries and administration. Information about total expenditure under each of the headings of the Community budget, including the administrative costs of the central Community institutions, is given in table 16 of the Court of Auditors' report and in table 1 of the statement on the 1989 Community budget (Cm. 680). The latter also includes estimates for 1989 which will be updated in the statement on the 1990 Community budget to be published later this year.

Actual amounts of own resources collected by each member state between 1984 and 1988 are shown in table 19 of the Court of Auditors' report. Table 2 of Cm. 680 gives similar information for the period 1986 to 1989.

Table 0201 of the January 1990 edition of "Eurostat" gives information about member states' population sizes in 1988.

VAT

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many companies were forced into receivership because of Customs and Excise action to recover outstanding value added tax payments in each of the last three years, and in the current financial year;

(2) how much money was owed to Customs and Excise by those companies forced into receivership because of Customs and Excise action to recover outstanding value added tax payments in each of the last three years, and in the current financial year; and what percentage of the outstanding debt was collected;

(3) how much value added tax revenue in each of the last three years, and in the current financial year, has been lost to the Exchequer because of the failure of businesses owed money by companies forced into receivership by Customs and Excise action to recover outstanding payment.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* None.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many concerns registered to pay value added tax on (i) a monthly basis, (ii) a quarterly basis have not paid *(a)* their most recent value added tax demand, *(b)* their last two value added tax demands, *(c)* their last three value added tax demands and *(d)* their last four or more value added tax demands; and in each case what is the total amount of money involved.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested and the cost of producing it would be disproportionate.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish any guidelines issued for those Customs and Excise officials with the responsibility of recovering the debts of those concerns registered for value added tax purposes.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The guidelines are as follows:

"AIM OF ENFORCEMENT ACTION. All enforcement action is aimed at recovering tax which a trader has failed to pay voluntarily and encouraging non-compliant traders to become compliant. There are a number of steps leading up to this and, of course, the trader may at any time exercise his option to pay. Whatever action is contemplated, however, there is a simple guiding principle which is always to be borne to mind—DELAY COSTS MONEY.

If a trader delays payment until contacted and tax demanded—whether by assessment or distress visit or by civil recovery action—the sooner that demand is made the sooner some or all of the outstanding tax is likely to be paid. Therefore it is vital that contact at each stage of the enforcement process is made as soon as possible and that a priority system is operated to pursue the largest debts first. Remember, all quarterly traders have an average of 75 days to collect the tax before the due date of payment."

SOCIAL SECURITY

Nursing Homes and Hospitals (Residents' Allowance)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will take steps to ensure that the term "pocket money" is not used by statutory bodies to describe the personal allowance paid to people in residential and nursing homes and hospitals.

Mr. Newton: The term "pocket money" is not used in any of the relevant regulations governing amounts for personal expenses or the downrating of benefit for those in hospital for a long time. I share my hon. Friend's dislike of the phrase and have asked for it to be eliminated from DSS publications when next revised. So far as references by other Departments or bodies is concerned, he may wish to make similar representations to those responsible.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Government's record in maintaining the income of pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 2 February 1990 at columns *382-83*.

Widows (Personal Allowance)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis the personal allowance of £34·90 for an elderly widow in receipt of housing benefit is calculated.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The housing benefit personal allowances follow those set for income support, and approved by Parliament. From April the personal allowance for a single person aged not less than 25 will increase to £36·70.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies (Prevention of Fraud)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what trading relationships between the Target Group, the National Financial Management Corporation plc and Garston Amhurst companies existed under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 prior to the commencement of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: There was no obligation under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 for information of this nature to be notified to my Department.

Barclays Bank

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the chairman of Barclays bank to discuss banks' responsibilities in monitoring client accounts under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: No. Responsibility for rules on clients' accounts under the Financial Services Act has been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board.

Accountancy Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, further to his reply of 8 January, *Official Report*, column *518*, he will provide details of the appointee to the accounting standards task force who has come from the accountancy firm criticised by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Biographical notes on the individuals appointed by Sir Ronald Dearing as members of the accounting standards task group were given in the press notice issued by the task group on 6 November.

Packaging

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department will be represented at the conference on packaging and the environment to be held in Manchester on 28 to 29 March.

Mr. Forth: The DTI, in conjunction with the Institute of Metals, is holding a design for the environment conference in Birmingham on 28 March. The conference will cover environmental design problems relating to a variety of sectors including packaging. Therefore, this Department will not be participating in the packaging and the environment conference which is taking place at the same time.

WALES

Councils (Contingency Fund)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give the average contingency fund for *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils in Wales for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91;

(2) if he will give the percentage increase of the contingency funds for *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils in Wales in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91;

(3) if he will give the percentage increase of the contingency fund provisions of *(a)* Cardiff council and *(b)* South Glamorgan council for 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91;

(4) if he will list the contingency fund provision of *(a)* Cardiff council and *(b)* South Glamorgan council for 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91;

(5) what action he intends to take in respect of the use of contingency funds as financial devices by councils in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the overall cost of the valleys initiative to date.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will be giving details shortly of progress in the first 18 months or so on my programme for the valleys. This will include details of estimated expenditure to date, as well as future targets and activity following my decision to extend the programme for a further two years.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many perinatal and neo-natal deaths were recorded for each health authority in Wales during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of perinatal and neonatal deaths in 1987 and 1988 of babies whose mothers usually resided in Wales are given in the table. Deaths are not necessarily registered in the area of usual residence.

District Health Authority of Residence

	Perinatal Deaths[1]		*Neonatal Deaths*[2]	
	1987	*1988*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	46	40	23	20
East Dyfed	28	25	17	13
Pembrokeshire	12	19	8	14
Gwent	65	56	36	31
Gwynedd	29	23	17	17
Mid Glamorgan	56	71	27	28
Powys	20	17	7	8
South Glamorgan	50	43	29	27
West Glamorgan	45	40	26	25
Wales	351	334	190	183

[1] Registered stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life.
[2] Deaths within 4 weeks of birth.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Water Industry

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent by his Department on publicity materials and advertising relating to the flotation of the water industry.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will supply the costs of water privatisation to Parliament in the normal way.

PRIME MINISTER

Arms Control

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received in relation to arms control negotiation.

The Prime Minister: The subject of arms control negotiations is often raised during discussions with other Heads of Government. I make it clear that NATO's and the United Kingdom's arms control priorities are:

a 50 per cent. cut in strategic offensive weapons of the US and USSR

the verifiable global elimination of chemical weapons

the establishment of stable and secure conventional balance in Europe through elimination of disparities.

EC Immigration Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the implications of the right of residence proposals agreed at the Internal Market Council for Immigration Policy.

The Prime Minister: No. The implications of the right of residence proposals were discussed in this House on 8 February at columns 1100-24 and they are likely to be adopted shortly.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what contribution her office will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

The Prime Minister: There are no NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March. A Norwegian national exercise, designated "Cold Winter", is planned to take place in March, and forces from several members of the Alliance, including the United Kingdom, will participate.

Public Records

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will review the records held in the public record office but which are not open to inspection because they are either retained under section 3(4), or closed under section 5(1) of the Public Records Act; and if she will consider whether there is any further need for records which are over 40 years old to be restricted in this manner.

The Prime Minister: No. The retention of records under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958 or closure under section 5(1) is subject to the approval of the Lord Chancellor. There are several categories of records which retain their sensitivity under established criteria for more than 40 years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Alanbrooke Road, Belfast

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many terrorist attacks there have been on the Shorts Bros complex at Alanbrooke road, Belfast since 1969; and what was their nature.

Mr. Cope: The Shorts factory complex on the Alanbrooke industrial estate has not been subject to physical attack by terrorists since 1969. However, the hon. Member will be aware of all the circumstances surrounding the recent bomb attacks against Shorts' property elsewhere in Belfast, and of the armed theft of equipment from its Alanbrooke road factory in 1988.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will bring the area for assembly of the Star Streak missile into the security area at Alanbrooke road, Belfast.

Mr. Cope: Decisions on the location of work within the Shorts factory complex on the Alanbrooke road are the responsibility of Shorts' management and not Government.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under what legislative powers Alanbrooke road in Belfast has been closed; what categories of persons are allowed access under those powers; and what consultation took place with local residents in advance of closure.

Mr. Cope: Shorts plc was authorised to close Alanbrooke road, under powers granted to the Secretary of State by section 19(2)(d) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. In authorising the closure, the Secretary of State stipulated that pedestrian access from Montgomery road to the college of further education annex should continue to be provided during opening hours for those persons with legitimate business on the college premises. This has been done by the construction of a closed walkway which gives controlled access to the college annex. Because of the sensitive nature of the security measures then being considered and the urgent need to safeguard the Shorts factory complex from terrorist attack, it was not possible in this instance to consult local residents about the intended closure before it was implemented.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what security precautions have been introduced to protect local inhabitants living adjacent to the Shorts Bros complex in Alanbrooke road, Belfast; and what processes require the protection of high security.

Mr. Cope: There are no local residents living immediately adjoining the Shorts factory complex on Alanbrooke road. The nearest house is about 70 yards away from the outer fence. The hon. Member will already be generally aware of the equipment which is produced at this factory and, in line with longstanding Government policy on such matters, I know he would not expect me to elaborate further on this sensitive issue.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what security vetting has taken place on students of Castlereagh college who have access to Alanbrooke road, Belfast.

Mr. Cope: It is not Government policy to comment on the detailed application of security measures.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to extend the security precautions installed in Alanbrooke road, Belfast to Montgomery road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The security of Short Bros plc property on the Alanbrooke road is kept under review. There is no plan to close off Montgomery road for security reasons.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which branch of the security forces mans the gate in Alanbrooke road, Belfast.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Member will know that it is the longstanding policy of Ministers not to discuss in any detail the make-up or efficacy of any physical security measures which may have been implemented at a particular location.

University Students

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many undergraduates are receiving grants from education boards in Northern Ireland to attend universities in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested, but the overall number is estimated at 4,200 for the current academic year.

Community Charge

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for paying the community charge of students from Northern Ireland who are studying in Great Britain; and whether he has any plans to change the parental contribution or student grants to take into account the payment of rates on a student's home in Northern Ireland and liability for the community charge in England, Wales or Scotland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Arrangements made by local authorities to collect the community charge are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Northern Ireland students studying in Great Britain will, if they are full-time, as defined by the relevant legislation, be liable for only 20 per cent. of the community charge in their area, and the net impact of this discounted liability is among the factors considered when mandatory student grant rates are decided.

Archaeological Site, Ballycarry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make available additional funds to the historic buildings and ancient monuments branch of DOE, NI, for the purpose of encouraging early exploration of the archaeological site identified at Bridgend road, Ballycarry, Co. Antrim.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Although archaeological excavation could improve understanding of the site it could also result in destruction of evidence in the area excavated. Such work is therefore carried out only as a last resort, for example, where approved development proposals might damage buried archaeological deposits. There are at present no approved development proposals for the Ballycarry site.

The archaeological site at Bridgend road, Ballycarry, Co. Antrim, has been identified as an ecclesiastical enclosure of early Christian period and medieval date. This identification is based on historical records and the evidence of aerial photography.

Fishing Industry

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect the weather in 1990 has had on *(a)* the state of the fishing industry in Portavogie, *(b)* employment in the Portavogie fishing industry and *(c)* the tonnage of fish landed at Portavogie harbour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The weather so far experienced in 1990 has restricted the fishing effort and earnings of vessels based at Portavogie. For the period 1 January to 7 February landings of fish at Portavogie are estimated at 257 tonnes compared with 448 tonnes in the equivalent period last year. The impact on employment has been felt mainly within the catching sector but local self-employed small-scale processors and salesmen have also been affected.

TRANSPORT

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southport of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *368*, he will give an estimate of the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions he anticipates as a result of his Department's road building programme.

Mr. Atkins: The emphasis of the expanded road programme is on schemes to relieve congestion. In congested conditions, with slow-moving or stop-start traffic, vehicle engines are significantly less fuel efficient than in free-flowing conditions. The trunk road programme will therefore lead to lower emissions than would be the case if additional road capacity was not provided. However, the actual level of future emissions will depend on a number of factors such as the growth and distribution of traffic, the progress of individual road schemes and the progress of the many other initiatives being undertaken to reduce vehicle emissions. The net effect of these factors cannot be predicted at this stage.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Atkins: The private security firms listed in the table currently have contracts with the Department of Transport and the total annual value of such contracts since 1984-85 is:

	£
1984-85	190,521
1985-86	244,394
1986-87	296,191
1987-88	334,180
1988-89	456,242
1989-90	565,668

Name of firm	*Number of employees*	*Annual value of contract* £
Centuryan Security Limited	1	11,661
Centuryan Security Limited	1	9,836
Compass Security Limitedmited	1	8,736
Frontline Security Services	4	26,500
Reliance Security Services Limited	3	107,736
Royal British Legion Attentants Limited	1	12,214
Royal British Legion Attendants Limited	2	46,177
Securicor Security Services	As required	31,000
Securicor Security Services	As required	160,000
Securicor Services (Safelink)	As required	30,000
Securiguard Services (Southern) Limited	3	90,000
Shorrock Guards	1	1,950
Yeoman Security Guards Limited	3	29,858

Motorways

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the consultants appointed to advise his Department on a preferred route for the proposed link between the M1 and M62 motorways in West Yorkshire will include within their remit any consideration of a possible upgrading of the route to motorway standard.

Mr. Atkins: Early indications are that an all-purpose dual two-lane road would be the appropriate standard for this proposed new link. The consultants will, however, be carrying out a further assessment of scheme standards, including the possibility of a motorway, as route options are developed.

Road Accidents

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list monthly figures for deaths from road accidents for each month from January 1987 till the latest available date.

Mr. Atkins: The requested information is as follows:

Deaths from road accidents; by month from January 1987

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
January	333	386	[1]n/a
February	352	358	[1]n/a
March	365	360	[1]n/a
1st quarter total	1,050	1,104	[2]1,178
April	412	385	[1]n/a
May	410	403	[1]n/a
June	421	389	[1]n/a
2nd quarter total	1,243	1,177	[2]1,133
July	466	445	[1]n/a
August	465	412	[1]n/a
September	478	439	[1]n/a
3rd quarter total	1,409	1,296	[2]1,450
October	499	527	—
November	441	461	—
December	483	487	—
4th quarter total	1,423	1,475	—
ANNUAL TOTAL	5,125	5,052	[1]n/a

[1] n/a denotes figures not available.
[2] Provisional results.

These figures show the progress made towards our target of reducing road casualties by one third by the year 2000. Fatalities in 1988 were 10 per cent. down on the 1981 to 1985 average of 5,598, which has been adopted as a base figure for the target reduction. There is, however, no room for complacency. The recent move against the trend is, we hope, a temporary setback and we shall redouble our efforts to build on the earlier good progress.

Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the members of the standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment, their occupations and the period for which they have been appointed to serve.

Mr. Atkins: The composition of the Committee at present is:

Mr. Derek Wood QC, Barrister, Chairman, reappointed for two years from January 1989.
Mr. R. H. Stewart, Managing Director of the Planning and Environment Division in the Travers Morgan Group, Vice Chairman, reappointed for two years from January 1989.
Mr. J. Wooton, Chairman of Wooton Jeffreys Consultants Ltd., reappointed for two years from January 1989.
Dr. P. B. Goodwin, Director of the Transport Studies Unit, Oxford University, reappointed for two years from January 1989.
Professor P. J. Hills, Professor of Civil Engineering, Newcastle University, appointed for two years from July 1989.
Mr. P. Mackie, Senior Lecturer in Economics, Leeds University, appointed for two years from September 1989.
Miss A. M. Lees, retired, formerly Controller of Transport and Development for the old Greater London Council, appointed for two years from July 1989.

Correspondence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many items of mail he received from the general public on 14 February; and how many of them opposed road building in London.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend, and officials on his behalf, receive a vast amount of correspondence every day; 14 February was no exception and included some opposing road building in London.

Foreign Airports

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which foreign airports he has visited on a fact-finding basis since his appointment as Secretary of State.

Mr. McLoughlin: None on a specifically fact-finding basis. However, my right hon. Friend has passed through, and observed, a number of foreign airports when travelling on Government business.

Liverpool Street Line (Signalling)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), *Official Report*, 12 February, column 9, how much of the proposed £19 million expenditure on resignalling on the Liverpool street line is being paid by Her Majesty's Government and how much by the resources of British Rail; and if all phases of existing schemes are to completed.

Mr. Portillo: The resignalling schemes at Liverpool street and on the lines to Southend and Colchester will cost some £60 to £70 million and are planned for completion at the end of 1994. Costs of Network SouthEast's investment are taken into account in the calculation of PSO grant, which funds the difference between costs and revenues. Grant cannot be attributed to individual schemes.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representation his Department will have at the conference on road transport and the greenhouse effect organised by the Worldwide Fund for Nature to be held in London on 30 April and 1 May; and whether any paper from his Department will be (i) presented or (ii) circulated at the conference.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be giving the opening address to the conference.

ENVIRONMENT

Green Field Sites

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres currently designated as green field sites or used for agriculture are estimated as needed for housing and industrial development in the south, south-east and south-west of England by the year 2000.

Mr. Moynihan: Structure and local plans include provision for future housing, industrial and other development needs, but not in a form that allows estimates to be made of the types or areas of land likely to be needed for each purpose. My Department has estimated that in the south-east of England (excluding London) the proportion of land in urban use will increase from approximately 12·6 per cent. in 1981 to 13·7 per cent. by 2001 (compared with 42 per cent. that is designated green belt or AONB). Comparable estimates of the rates of urbanisation in other areas are not available.

In recent years over half all new housing development in the south-east (including London) has taken place on vacant or previously developed land in urban areas.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement setting out the criteria which he applies in capping the levels of community charge levied by local councils.

Mr. Chope: We have made it clear that if local authorities insist on budgeting excessively we shall not hesitate to cap them, but I cannot speculate on the detailed operation of any capping scheme that might be needed.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether community charge payers have the right of appeal to the valuation and community charge tribunal over the level of the poll tax; what other matters may be appealed about to the tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: There is no right of appeal to a valuation and community charge tribunal about the level of an authority's community charge. Local authorities decide the level of their charges and are accountable directly to their residents for their decisions at the ballot box. The community charge matters on which an appeal may be made to a tribunal are set out in section 23 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. We shall shortly be laying regulations prescribing the circumstances under which appeals on matters relating to non-domestic rating may be made to a tribunal.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have indicated to him that they will not be able to accept his estimate of the poll tax figures in their area.

Mr. Chope: No estimates of community charges have been published by the Department. We have, however, published exemplifications showing what the charge would be in each area if authorities continue with the current pattern of raising revenue and spend in aggregate £32·8 billion. A number of authorities have indicated that they will raise more income than is consistent with that figure, and that charges will therefore be higher than our exemplifications.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest have been designated since the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981.

Mr. Trippier: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that, by 31 December 1989, it had notified under the 1981 Act 1,853 new SSSIs and 3,251 SSSIs previously notified to local authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Private Landlords

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to prevent landlords making windfall profits when the rates are replaced by the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 8 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, column 756.

Street Numbers

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to require homes, business premises and shops to display their street or road number upon the front fascia of their premises.

Mr. Moynihan: No; I do not believe this warrants statutory control.

Planning Applications

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is issuing to local councils to encourage more planning applications to be decided locally with fewer appeals to him.

Mr. Moynihan: We advised in planning policy guidance note 12 on local plans (issued in November 1988) that where decisions are supported by clear, up-to-date local plans, consistent with national and regional policies and with the relevant provisions of the structure plan, together with specific and relevant reasons for particular decisions, local planning authorities should find those decisions far less susceptible to successful appeal. The guidance note urges them to extend their coverage of local plans and confirms that the Secretary of State and his inspectors will be guided by relevant local plan policies when making their decisions on appeals. This advice has been welcomed as building greater confidence in the planning system and helping to reduce the volume of appeals.

This message was repeated in the draft planning policy guidance note on structure plans and regional guidance which was issued for consultation in November. We are currently considering responses and will be issuing final guidance shortly.

Warrington

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to pay an official visit to Warrington to discuss the community charge.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no plans to visit Warrington.

Nature Conservancy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from hon. Members concerning his proposals to reorganise the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission.

Mr. Tripper: I have received a range of representations from hon. Members, reflecting many shades of opinion about these proposals. These representations include more than 450 letters from hon. Members enclosing correspondence which they have received from their constituents.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the likely budgetary requirements of the Nature Conservancy Council's proposed joint committee in its first year of operation.

Mr. Trippier: The cost of undertaking these functions of the new conservation bodies which are to be discharged through the proposed joint committee will be taken into account when the Government allocate grants for the new bodies in the forthcoming public expenditure round. Discussions about the structure of the joint committee are currently taking place with the NCC and other interested parties and it is too early to estimate the precise costs which will be incurred in the committee's full first year of operation (1991-92).

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken to introduce custodial sentences for summary offences under part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: None. When the Act was originally debated all parties agreed that custodial sentences would be inappropriate for offences under its provisions.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action his Department has taken in response to each of the legislative changes to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 recommended to him by the Nature Conservancy Council since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what assessment he has made of the Nature Conservancy Council report concerning changes and improvements to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, submitted to him on 30 July 1987.

Mr. Trippier: My officials have had several discussions with officials of the Nature Conservancy Council and it has been agreed that a number of suggested improvements in the operation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 could be achieved by administrative means, which are being introduced as and when necessary. A Nature Conservancy Council statement reflecting these discussions was published in its "Topical Issues—March 1988".

The Nature Conservancy Council has agreed with the Government's view that the Act has been a significant advance and does not require fundamental change. It would like to see some reinforcement. The Government are not convinced that further legislation is necessary to achieve the Nature Conservancy Council's stated aims.

The question of the conservation of the marine environment raises complex legal and scientific issues which are being examined.

Homelessness

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requirements are placed on local authorities to provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless unemployed; if he has any plans to introduce specific grants for the provision of night shelter hostels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local authorities' duties to secure accommodation for homeless people (whether employed, or unemployed) are set out in part III of the Housing Act 1985 and described in my right hon. Friend's statement last November (copies of which are in the Library) of the conclusions of our review of the legislation. We have no powers to give councils specific grants for the provision of night shelters.

Dean Street Hostel

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to respond to the applications of Centrepoint (Soho) for revenue funding for the Dean Street hostel, Soho.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have received a large number of applications from voluntary bodies for grant aid under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 and will make decisions as quickly as possible.

Construction Industry

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what materials used in the construction industry the United Kingdom currently exports more than are imported.

Mr. Chope: Exports of the following materials used in construction currently exceed imports in value terms:

iron and steel tubes, pipes, angles and sections;
ceramic sanitaryware;
bitumen and bituminous products;
paint, varnish, etc; and
wallpaper, etc.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current value of materials used in the construction industry which are now imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope: The current value of materials used in construction which were imported into the United Kingdom was approximately £4·6 billion in the 12-month period ending 30 September 1989.

Berryhill (Opencast Site)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will visit the Berryhill area of Stoke-on-Trent to see the area of land which British Coal wishes to turn into an opencast site.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I cannot give such an undertaking. To do so could prejudice the Secretary of State's position were a planning application to come before him on appeal.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

River Pollution

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the definitions used in classifying river pollution and the name and classification of each river in the area covered by the North West river authority.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The definitions used in the current general river classification system in England and Wales are set out in detail in the report of the 1985 river quality survey, a copy of which is in the Library. The most recent information centrally available concerning the quality of individual rivers in the area until recently covered by the North West water authority (for which the north-west region of the NRA is now responsible) is also contained in that report.

Climate

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will institute a departmental study as to the causes of recent weather changes and, in particular, if they are related to damage to the ozone layer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to say whether the particular weather conditions the United Kingdom has recently experienced are due to permanent changes in the world's climate. Current research into climatic change in the United Kingdom and elsewhere will be drawn together in the report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change later this year. This will provide an improved understanding of the science of climate change. We have announced the establishment of a new centre for the prediction of climate change at a cost of £5·5 million, which will continue research to improve our understanding of the climate.

Development Control

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the establishment of the development control policy division; and what is its annual budget.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The authorised staff complement of the development control policy division in my Department is nine posts. The division's budget for the financial year 1989-90, excluding accommodation costs, is some £315,000 of which about £205,000 is allocated to pay costs. A small number of staff in other headquarters divisions are also engaged in work related to development control policy.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been submitted by local authorities to designate caravan sites under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 in each of the past 10 years; how many have *(a)* been approved, *(b)* been refused and *(c)* are pending decision; and what is the Government's policy in respect of responsibilities upon local authorities to provide sites under the Act.

Mr. Chope: Government policy is for local authorities to make adequate site provision for gipsies residing in, or resorting to, their areas. Once the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority has made adequate provision or that, in all the circumstances, it is not necessary or expedient to make such provision, the Secretary of State may designate that area. The following authorities have been designated in each of the past 10 years:

1981
Camden
Islington
Aylesbury Vale
Chiltern
South Bucks
Wandsworth

1982
West Sussex CC
High Peak[1]
Kennet
North Wiltshire
Thamesdown
West Wiltshire
Milton Keynes
Dartford
South Bedfordshire

1983
Oswestry
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Oldham
Hyndburn
Luton
Trafford
Ashford
Salisbury

1984
Gravesham
Kingston upon Thames
Rochdale
South Derbyshire
Hillingdon
Boston
West Lindsey
Selby

1985
Huntingdonshire
Wealden
Rother
Eastbourne
Hastings
Chester
Middlesbrough[1]
Northampton
Wellingborough
South Northamptonshire
Epsom and Ewell
Tonbridge and Malling[1]
Babergh
Ipswich
Mid-Suffolk
Suffolk Coastal
Peterborough[1]
Windsor and Maidenhead

1986
Hartlepool
Stockton-on-Tees[1]
Chesterfield
Bolsover
North East Derbyshire
Broxbourne
Canterbury
Ryedale
Darlington
Chester-le-Street
Derwentside
Easington
Sedgefield
Teesdale
Wear Valley
East Northamptonshire

1987
Watford[1]
Maidstone
Lancaster
Cherwell
Kettering
Northumberland
Great Yarmouth

1988
Mid Bedfordshire
North Bedfordshire
Shepway
Gateshead
Lewes
Durham City

1989
Dacorum[1]
Welwyn Hatfield
Blaby
Oadby and Wigston[1]
Runnymede[1]
Doncaster[1]

[1] Designated on the grounds that it is not necessary or expedient to make adequate provision.

The following designation applications are pending decision:

Dover
Vale of White Horse
Sefton
East Cambridgeshire
Thanet
Harrow
Worcester City
Epping Forest
Hertsmere
Bradford

My Department does not maintain records of unsuccessful designation applications.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many directions he has issued under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 in each of the last three years; and if he will indicate the area concerned in each case by local authority and the number of sites stated in each case.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State has issued two directions under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. In November 1988 he directed Hertfordshire county council to make provision for sites for 110 caravans; and in June 1989 he directed Surrey county council to make provision for sites for 190 caravans.

Toxic Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation along the lines of the United States Superfund Amendments and Re-authorisation 'Act and the Comprehensive Environmental Response and Liability Act in regard to the requirements for the annual corporate public disclosure of toxic materials and wastes used or produced each year in the companies' activities.

Mr. Trippier: Applications for authorisations to operate industrial processes under part I of the Environmental Protection Bill will contain a wide range of detailed information. This information and monitoring data on releases of substances will be made available to the public by the authorities which enforce that legislation.

Environment Action

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received from his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland a copy of the brochure, "An Environment Action Programme", published by the Irish Department of the Environment this year.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of the environment action programme, which we have read with interest.

Conferences

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department was represented at the conference Recycle Pack 90 held in London on 13 to 15 February.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside spoke at the conference dinner on 14 February.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will be represented at the consultative conference on technological responses to the greenhouse effect, to be held at the Royal Geographical Society in London on 24-25 April.

Mr. Trippier: Officials from the Department would accept an invitation to attend this conference.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in extending the use of recycled stationery throughout his Department.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 13 February 1990]*: All letterheaded paper now ordered for used within my Department is recycled. The buff envelopes we use contain at least 50 per cent. recycled paper. We are also conducting trials of the use of recycled photocopying paper in medium-speed photocopying machines, and considering a trial of recycled computer listing paper.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid (Education Projects)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of British aid is directed to projects designed to assist primary education and adult literacy.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1988, expenditure on technical co-operation in education, including £47 million provided to the British Council, amounted to some £95 million (23 per cent. of total technical co-operation). A total of £2·6 million (0·6 per cent. of total technical co-operation) was specifically for primary education or adult literacy. A total of £1·1 million or 0·6 per cent. of financial project aid was specifically for primary education. Other projects are of general benefit to education including primary education and adult literacy.

In addition to the money spent under the bilateral aid programme, an unquantifiable proportion of the aid funds provided for multilateral donor organisations such as the World bank is committed to primary education and literacy work. In determining how much the ODA spends on the various levels of education in each recipient country, it takes into account existing or proposed projects by those organisations.

Sri Lanka

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to tie the aid which they currently give to Sri Lanka to improvements in the human rights situation in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 29 January.

Morocco

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each of the past five years the sum of bilateral aid to the kingdom of Morocco.

Mrs. Chalker: Gross British bilateral aid to Morocco over the past five years 1984 to 1988 has been:

	£000
1984	208
1985	91
1986	157
1987	180
1988	657

EMPLOYMENT

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement of two days' paid paternity leave.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had taken advantage of the enterprise allowance scheme up to 31 December 1989.

Mr. Eggar: Up to 31 December 1989 over 485,000 people had started up in business through the enterprise allowance scheme.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many state sector teachers, still teaching in the classroom, in the United Kingdom earn *(a)* over £12,000 a year, *(b)* over £15,000 a year and *(c)* over £20,000 a year, expressed as a percentage of the total.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 February that he proposed to implement in full by 1 January 1991 the recommendations contained in the third report of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions. At that point an estimated 87 per cent. of classroom teachers will be on or above point 7 of the new standard national scale and so receiving more than £12,000; some 68 per cent. will be on or above point 10 of the scale and so receiving £15,000 or more. In addition, some 189,000 incentive allowances with values ranging from £925 to £5,500 will be available for classroom teachers in ordinary schools. Some 60 per cent. of heads and deputies, most of whom undertake some teaching duties, will be receiving salaries of more than £20,000.

Language Teaching

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate *(a)* the percentage and *(b)* the number of primary schools in England where children are taught one or more foreign languages.

Mrs. Rumbold: Precise figures are not available, but it is estimated that in 1987 about 15 to 20 per cent. of primary schools in England (excluding nursery and infant schools) provide tuition in French for at least some of their pupils. This represents a number of schools in the range 2,500 to 3,300.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement of two days' paternity leave.

GCSE

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many courses in *(a)* environmental studies, *(b)* media/communication studies and *(c)* road safety were available (i) when the General Certificate of Secondary Education was first introduced and (ii) at the current moment.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand from the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC), the body with responsibility under section 5 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for the approval of syllabuses, that the number of syllabuses now offered by the five GCSE examining groups in England and Wales in these subjects is:

(a) environmental studies: 23
(b) media studies/communication studies: 29
(c) road safety: 1

SEAC does not have information on the number of syllabuses that were available in addition to these when GCSE was first introduced.

Student Loans

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many copies of the leaflet "Top-Up Loans For Students" have been printed; at what cost; and what will be the avenues for its distribution.

Mr. Jackson: One hundred thousand copies of the leaflet "Top-Up Loans For Students" were printed, at a cost of £3,800. Sample copies have been sent to the heads of relevant establishments—higher education institutions and schools and colleges providing for students of sixth-form age—and to chief education officers, principal careers officers, and other interested bodies. As the proposals are subject to parliamentary approval, it has been made clear that copies should be made available to students only in response to demand. A copy of the leaflet has been sent to each hon. Member.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the purpose of producing the leaflet "Top-Up Loans For Students" prior to the report stage of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

Mr. Jackson: The leaflet is intended to indicate to students, potential students and others how the top-up loans scheme should operate and the terms on which the loan will be offered. The leaflet states that the introduction of the top-up loan scheme depends upon Parliament's approval of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

NATO Exchange Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he possesses in regard to the NATO international scientific exchange programme for 1990; and what benefits have accrued to scientific and technological education in the United Kingdom from participation in this exchange programme in earlier years.

Mr. Jackson: The NATO international scientific exchange programme comprises science fellowships, collaborative research grants, advanced study institutes, advanced research workshops and special programmes in selected areas of science. The science fellowships programme is administered in the United Kingdom by the science and engineering research council. About 70 NATO fellows are supported at any one time from the United Kingdom allocation of the NATO fellowships budget. The advanced study institutes and advanced research workshops programmes also have strong educational elements. The United Kingdom has obtained clear benefits to advanced science education from its participation in the programme.

Local Education Authority Award Holders

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total number of local education authority award holders for each of the years (a) 1988-89, (b) 1989-90 and (c) 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: The actual or projected numbers of mandatory award holders in England and Wales underlying the Government's most recent public expenditure plans in each of these years are given in table 11.15 of Cm. 1011, a copy of which is in the Library.

Student Grants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what students on local education authority awards on a full grant (a) at an institution in the London area and (b) elsewhere need to borrow in 1990-91 to bring their grants in real terms up to the level of the 1962-63 full grants assuming an annual inflation rate in this year of (a) 5 per cent., (b) 7 per cent. and (c) 7·5 per cent.

Mr. Jackson: On those assumptions about inflation, the real value of the 1962-63 grant[1] at 1990-91 prices would be:

	(a) 5 per cent. inflation £	(b) 7 per cent. inflation £	(c) 7·5 per cent. inflation £
(a) London	3,160	3,220	3,235
(b) Elsewhere	3,023	3,080	3,095

[1] Grant rate applicable to students living in college or university-owned accommodation.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will make it his policy to make the payment of 100 per cent. compensation in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy cattle retrospective to 8 August 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 13 February, what factors led him to change his policy in respect of the level of compensation payable in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy cattle.

Mr. Maclean: The effect of the disease on the farming industy is becoming greater. It was clearly appropriate to ask whether the compensation arrangements continued to be right when the number of cases will continue to rise and cannot be expected to decline until after 1993.

Meat Products (Blood Enzymes)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department takes to ensure that mechanically recovered meat contains no spinal tissue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department brought into force the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989 which prohibit, as an ultra-precautionary measure, the use of specified bovine offal in food for sale for human consumption.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has discussed, or will discuss, the development of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes with his Dutch counterpart; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has made an assessment of the benefits to the consumers from the introduction of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has made an assessment of the effects on profit levels within the meat trade, both wholesale and retail, from the introduction of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he has received any representations from the meat trade in respect of the description to be used on any labelling of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes require specific clearance before being allowed to go on sale; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what form of words he deems acceptable to describe meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what information he has as to whether meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes have been tested by British meat companies; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what representations he has had from *(a)* the meat trade, *(b)* consumers' organisations and *(c)* other sources in connection with meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what research he is conducting into the safety of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(10) when his Department first learnt of the development of meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes;

(11) whether any meat products incorporating a gel containing blood enzymes are on sale in this country; and if he will make a statement;

(12) whether any research funded by his Department is taking place in respect of meat products incorporating a gel containining blood enzymes; and if he will make a statement;

(13) whether meat products incorporating a gel containg blood enzymes have been imported into Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Should a company decide to use this technique for the preparation of meat products it would need to ensure that the product was safe and labelled in accordance with the Food Labelling Regulations 1984. This would apply equally to home-produced and imported products. In particular, those regulations require that food labels carry details of any process which the product has undergone where the omission of such detail would mislead the consumer, details of any ingredients used in the product which would include blood enzymes, and a name for the food which would distinguish it from any other foodstuff with which it might be confused.

Misleading labelling of food is an offence under the Food Act 1984. It is not for me to suggest particular forms of words for labels. A company would need to decide what description of this or any similar process would adequately explain to its intended customers the exact nature of the foodstuff. Trading standards officers are responsible for enforcing the law: I expect that they are already aware of the development of this process but I am drawing the matter to their attention.

The labelling rules apply equally to catering supplies as they do to retail sales. As part of its current labelling review I have already asked the Food Advisory Committee to look at the difficult matter of information provided to customers in restaurants, cafes or other catering outlets.

I was made aware only recently of the process that has been developed in the Netherlands but I have no indications that it produces a foodstuff which is unsafe. The process has been developed by a very reputable Dutch institute and the data available so far to my Department do not indicate any need for us to engage in our own research. There is no reason, therefore, for me to seek discussions with my Dutch counterpart. Furthermore, I have received no inquiries on the matter apart from those of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. and noble Friends.

It would be a commercial decision for a British company to choose to use this technique in the production of its meat products. I am not aware of any company that has so decided, nor is it my understanding that any such products are currently being marketed in the United Kingdom, or in the Netherlands.

However, my Department is monitoring developments closely and I will take any further action that seems appropriate in the interests of either food safety or consumer protection.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals (Reports)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being taken to increase the numbers of immigration appeal reports published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office; how many such reports were sold in each of the last three years; and what representations he has received about the supply of such reports not meeting the demand.

The Attorney-General: Immigration appeal reports are published quarterly by HMSO. This year HMSO will increase the number of reports printed each quarter from 500 to 550. The number of reports sold in each quarter of each of the last three years is shown in the table:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
First Quarter	525	522	494
Second Quarter	504	508	518
Third Quarter	498	521	476
Fourth Quarter	513	508	452
Total	2,040	2,059	1,940

HMSO printed 600 reports each quarter in 1987 and 1988 and 500 each quarter in 1989 (except the second quarter when an additional 100 were reprinted after stocks had sold out).

The Lord Chancellor received representations about the supply of these reports from the hon. Member on 15 February.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Violent Crime

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what, in each of the past three years, has been the clear-up rate for reported offences involving violent crime.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published in table 2.17 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1988", Cm 847, a copy of which is available in the Library.

New Prisons

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the building of the new prison at Fazakerly, Liverpool; and if he will list them.

Mr. Mellor: In addition to those from the hon. Member representations opposing the proposal have been received from Liverpool city council, South Sefton (Merseyside) health authority, Aintree parish council, a delegation of local residents and six individual local residents. No representations of support have been received.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy that all victims of violence, rape and child abuse should be made aware of the financial assistance provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is already our policy that all victims of violence, rape and child abuse (and of other offences which might result in an award) should be aware of the possibility of compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. We have made available through the police service a leaflet entitled "Victims of Crime", which describes how compensation may be available from the offender by order of a criminal or civil court, or from the criminal injuries compensation scheme. Victim support schemes (which with Government encouragement and public money, have expanded to cover 94 per cent. of the population of England and Wales) also play a part in informing victims of their rights. The board itself has given detailed guidance to all social services departments and local victim support schemes about the availability of awards in child abuse cases, and this guidance has been made available to all citizens advice bureaux.

Homosexual Acts

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each of the years 1988 and 1989 how many men aged between 16 and 21 years were prosecuted for consenting homosexual acts with other males in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on the number of males of 16 or over but under 21 who are prosecuted for the offences of buggery and attempted buggery with another male with his consent. In England and Wales in 1988, 71 males of 16 or over but under 21 were prosecuted for an act of gross indecency with another male.

Information for 1989 will not be available until autumn 1990.

Similar information is not readily available for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Jan Begum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *543*, concerning the application of Mrs. Jan Begum, ref. H 197247/4, for British citizenship, when and where Mrs. Jan Begum was invited to take the oath of allegiance; and when he expects to issue her certificate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An invitation to Mrs. Jan Begum, ref. H 197247, to take an oath of allegiance was sent on 12 September 1989 to her son Mr. Khalil Hussain of 13 Tile street, Bradford 8, who has acted as her agent in connection with her application. As no reply had by then been received, a second invitation to take the oath was sent on 6 February 1990 to Hussain at the same address. As soon as Mrs. Jan Begum has taken the oath, a certificate of registration as a British citizen will be issued to her.

Police Precept (Newham)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the amounts of the precepts made by the Metropolitan police on the London borough of Newham for each of the financial years 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, together with the related percentage in cash and real terms, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to enable the police to take stronger measures to stop under-age drinking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to his question on 25 January at column *882*.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the question of under-age drinking; what further action he intends to take to stop the sale of alcohol to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1989 we received some 40 letters specifically on the subject of under-age drinking. The Licensing Act 1988 strengthened the offence of selling alcohol to young people under 18 by placing a greater responsibility on licensees and their staff. The Act also increased the maximum penalty for this offence and made wholesalers' premises subject to this provision of licensing law. We have no present plans for any further changes to the law but we take a serious view of the problem of under-age drinking and it is kept under constant review.

Prison Population

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for reducing the prison population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 9 February 1990]*: Our proposals were set out in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm. 965), published on 6 February. They have been widely welcomed.

Information Storage

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate an interdepartmental review of all present legislation regarding information storage and retrieval to identify any amendment required to enable financial institutions, including building societies, legally to take actions required under other legislation to check on and to stop criminal money laundering and other criminal financial activities.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

No. Section 24 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 is drafted so as to allow financial institutions to disclose to the authorities transactions which they suspect of being linked to drugs trafficking without breaching legislation regarding data storage and retrieval. I am not aware that financial institutions have experienced difficulties in this respect, but the Government have made it clear that the 1986 Act is subject to review, and if particular problems arise the necessary action will be taken.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office currently employs:

(a) Group 4 Total Security Ltd. (on a call-out basis only), and

(b) Security Express Guards Ltd. (cash in transit service only).

The value of the contracts is commercially confidential.

Until 1987 we also employed Reliance Security. Detailed information on this, and earlier records for *(a)* and *(b)*, are not kept in a centralised form and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

A number of Her Majesty's overseas missions also employ private security firms. Again, detailed records are not kept centrally.

NATO

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom has made any special allocation of funds to the NATO advanced study institutes and advanced research workshops for 1990; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards support of these NATO initiatives in coming years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom has contributed to the funding of the NATO advanced study institutes and advanced research workshops through its share of the 1990 NATO science budget. We fully support the continuation of these programmes which are of benefit to scientists from both the United Kingdom and other NATO countries.

Madrid Talks

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent talks in Madrid.

Mr. Sainsbury: At the conclusion of talks between the British and Argentine delegations in Madrid, it was agreed that diplomatic relations between our two countries, which were broken off at the time of the Falklands conflict in 1982, should be restored. The exchange of ambassadors will follow in due course. A copy of the joint statement issued on 15 February with its annexes will be placed in the Library of the House.

We look forward to a new chapter in Anglo-Argentine relations: to the re-establishment of cultural relations, co-operation in fighting drugs and on environmental issues and an agreement to promote and protect investment. We have also undertaken to facilitate a visit by Argentine next-of-kin to their military cemetery on the Falklands under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We agreed to abolish the present visa regime in the near future and shall discuss the practical details involved. It will still be necessary for Argentine citizens to obtain visas before entering the Falkland Islands.

Both Governments have agreed on a series of measures to increase confidence in the region. These include: the establishment of a direct military communications link between the British forces in the Falkland Islands and Argentina; the introduction of rules of reciprocal behaviour for naval and air units operating in proximity; measures to facilitate air and maritime safety and navigation; notification of military manoeuvres and exercises in a large area of the south Atlantic; and mutual notification for military aircraft and naval vessels approaching the coasts of the Falklands or Argentina. Each Government retain the right, if they believe it necessary, to withhold agreement to movements which have been notified and which would come within 70 nautical miles (for aircraft) or 50 nautical miles (for ships) of their coasts.

As of 31 March these new arrangements will come into force and the Falkland Islands protection zone will be lifted.

The Governor has briefed Falkland Islands councillors on the results of these talks. We believe that the reduction in tension, the removal of obstacles to air and sea links between the islands and South America and the opportunity for talks on fish conservation will be welcome in the islands.

The normalisation of relations with Argentina has been achieved without discussion of sovereignty over the Falklands. The Government's determination to defend the islanders' right to determine their own future remains firm.

DEFENCE

Air-Sea Rescue (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the extent of involvement of Ministry of Defence personnel and equipment in air-sea rescue missions around the coast of the Republic of Ireland during the weekend 2 to 5 February; what was the estimated cost of these operations; what contribution to the cost is being made by the Republic of Ireland; and

what is the net cost to United Kingdom taxpayers to provide this air-sea rescue service in and around the Republic of Ireland that weekend.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two RAF Nimrods from RAF St. Mawgan and three RAF Sea Kings from RAF Brawdy and associated aircrews were involved in operations on 5 February to assist the bulk carrier Tribulus when she got into difficulties some 270 miles south-west of Bantry bay in the Republic of Ireland, within the United Kingdom search and rescue region. The estimated cost of these military deployments was £275,000. The Government of the Republic of Ireland were not requested to make a contribution to the cost of these operations since they were carried out in an area for which the United Kingdom is responsible. In general, the question of charging foreign Governments for civil search and rescue incidents is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Polish Refugees

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is to be made available to Polish refugees who settled in the United Kingdom under the Polish Resettlement Act 1947 and who now wish to return to Poland to assist the democratic process.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Job Losses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what projections of job losses in the defence industries have been made over each of the next five years; and what measures he is proposing to compensate for potential job losses in the defence industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 6 February, *Official Report*, c. *594-95*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many defence industry jobs have been lost in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989, volume 2, table 6.8.

Trident Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the expected savings on the cancellation at this stage of the fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is difficult to quantify accurately the savings that would result because a contract has yet to be placed. It is estimated that savings in the order of £500 million would result if it were decided at this stage not to proceed with the planned order for the fourth Vanguard class submarine.

Forces (Homosexuality)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in each of the years 1987, 1988 and 1989, how many service men and women were dismissed from the Army, Navy and Air Force as a result of their homosexuality or homosexual behaviour; prior to their dismissal, how many of these served custodial sentences as a result of their involvement in homosexual acts; and what were the longest and average sentences served by them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information on those dismissed following conviction by court martial or summary trial is as follows:

	Number dismissed	*Number who served custodial sentences*	*Longest sentence*	*Average sentence*
Royal Navy				
1987	5	5	75 days	51 days
1988	2	2	90 days	75 days
1989	2	0	—	—
Army				
1987	4	4	9 months	5 months
1988	7	7	2 years	1 year
1989	4	4	9 months	5 months
Royal Air Force				
1987	6	3	98 days	70 days
1988	1	0	—	—
1989	1	1	18 months	18 months

It should be noted that figures for custodial sentences do not always relate purely to homosexual behaviour. Cases relating to homosexuality can also involve other offences against service discipline or criminal law and therefore the accused could be answering more than one charge. If found guilty, the sentence passed will take all relevant factors into account, hence the diversity of custodial sentences shown in the table.

Captain Fred Holroyd

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *340*, on the book "War Without Honour", what steps he has taken to ascertain on what authority Captain Fred Holroyd was assigned to *(a)* the military wing of Musgrave Park hospital and *(b)* Netley hospital; and if he will cause an investigation to be undertaken as to whether the proper procedures under the Mental Health Act 1959 were followed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The procedures followed in the case of Captain Holroyd were consistent with the Army Act 1955, as amended by the Mental Health Act 1959, and the regulations for the Army medical services.

No other investigations are considered necessary.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he made, pursuant to his answer to the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 115, of the implications for his policy of his reading of "War Without Honour" about the exploits of Captain Holroyd.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

MOD Establishments

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Ministry of Defence establishments there are in Wales; how many service men are stationed in them; and how many civilians are employed;

(2) if he will list the Army establishments in Wales with their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them;

(3) if he will list the munitions bases and factories in Wales and their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them;

(4) if he will list the royal aircraft establishments in Wales with their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them;

(5) if he will list the Royal Air Force establishments in Wales with their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them;

(6) if he will list the Royal Navy establishments in Wales with their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them;

(7) if he will list the United States bases in Wales with their functions and the number of *(a)* service men and *(b)* civilians employed in each of them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* It would not be in the public interest to make available information on the numbers of personnel in United Kingdom military bases and facilities at the level of detail requested. However, I can give the following information.

There are 14 major Ministry of Defence establishments in Wales. These are shown with their functions in the table. As at 31 December 1989 the total number of service personnel and civilians employed in these establishments and at other locations in the Principality was 5,809 and 5,470 respectively. Of the former, 44 were Royal Navy, 417 Army, 4,942 Royal Air Force and 406 United States forces.

Establishment	*Main function*
Brecon	HQ Wales and NCO Tactical Wing
Castlemartin	Armoured Corps Training Area
Sennybridge	Principal Army Training Area
Bridgend	Army Vehicle Workshop
RNAD Milford Haven	Royal Naval Armament Depot
RNAD Trecwn	Royal Naval Armament Depot
AWE Llanishen	Atomic Weapons Establishment
RAF Brawdy	RAF Tactical Weapons Training and United States Oceanographic Research Unit
RAF St. Athan	Maintenance and repair of aircraft and technical training
RAF Sealand	Specialist repair service for avionic equipment
RAF Valley	Advanced Flying Training
RAF Caerwent	United States Army Ammunition Storage Facility
RAE Aberporth	Royal Aerospace Establishment
MSD Pembroke Dock	Marine and Salvage Depot

HEALTH

Health Authority Deficits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the deficit of each health authority for *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* the latest available month.

Mr. Freeman: I have placed the information derived from the 1988-89 annual accounts of each regional and district health authority in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals in the Library.

Health authorities' spending is monitored and controlled on a regional basis by means of a cash limit applied to their receipts and payments. Within the limits of financial prudence they may incur either a deficit or a surplus on the accrued income and expenditure recorded in their accounts. For 1988-89 health authorities collectively remained within cash limits and as shown in the table their accounts in aggregate record a small overall surplus.

Information about the in-year financial position of individual health authorities is not collected centrally.

Consultants

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* by district and *(b)* by region all medical consultants employed, whole and part time, together with their specialty.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not held centrally in the form required. Contracts for consultants in non-teaching district health authorities are held by the regional health authorities. Information at district level is therefore available only for consultants employed by teaching districts. This is given in the table which has been placed in the Library. The regional totals in the table include staff in all districts, teaching and non-teaching.

Additives (Medicines)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what controls exist over the use of additives in medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All ingredients of medicines are controlled under the Medicines Act 1968 and

appropriate directives of the European Community (EC). In particular, colouring matters which may be added to medicinal products are listed in Council directive 78/25/EEC, amended by directive 81/464/EEC. Copies of the directives are in the Library. Current proposals by the EC Commission for an amending directive on medicines labels and leaflets provide for fuller information about excipients (ingredients included for formulation reasons and not intended to be active).

Store Losses

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many items of store losses occurred in Norwich health authority in 1981-82 and in each subsequent year for which figures are available; and what was *(a)* the overall value in each year, *(b)* the number of cases reported to the police and *(c)* the number of prosecutions that followed.

Mr. Freeman: Norwich health authority was established on 1 April 1982 following the abolition of area health authorities, therefore 1982-83 is the first year for which information is available.

The information given in the table has been extracted from the authority's statement of losses which is incorporated in its annual accounts. The table records losses of equipment and property in stores and in use from all causes including incidents of the service (as a result of fire, flood etc.) theft, fraud or arson and discrepancies and unexplained issues.

Information on the number of cases reported to the police or on the number of prosecutions is not collected centrally.

	Incidents of the service		*Other stores losses*	
	Number of cases	*Total value £*	*Number of cases*	*Total value £*
1982-83	183	31,226	89	32,322
1983-84	165	26,101	112	51,215
1984-85	256	58,235	70	6,504
1985-86	329	55,473	95	22,392
1986-87	423	36,550	55	9,982
1987-88	159	35,716	36	8,092
1988-89	134	40,688	38	130,351

Note: Authorities are advised to aggregate and treat as one case the total net losses revealed at any one store or institution within each year. A loss relating to an incident of the service is treated as a separate case.

Ambulance Workers

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of the ambulance service have been killed and injured in emergency situations in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Arthritis Treatment, Yorkshire

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what alternative centres for the treatment of arthritis will be available in Yorkshire if the Royal Bath hospital, Harrogate, is closed.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Bath hospital provides rheumatology services for a number of district health authorities, including some for Huddersfield. Arrangements for future provision of rheumatology services for Huddersfield's population is a matter for the local health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Huddersfield health authority for further information.

Dentures

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will next meet the Association for Denture Prosthesis to discuss changes in the Dentists Act 1984.

Mr. Freeman: There are no current plans to meet the Association for Denture Prosthesis.

Milk Token Scheme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received in support of the changes in the milk token scheme laid before Parliament on 5 January.

Mr. Freeman: As yet no representations in favour of the revised pricing structure, which will save the taxpayer some £8 million per annum, have been received.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Registered Voters

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for each parliamentary constituency the number of registered voters on the register for *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Table 1.4 of the OPCS reference volume "Electoral Statistics 1989" (Series EL No.16) contains the information requested. A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Operations (Costs)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to variations in the cost of identical operations in different health districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *805*, if he will arrange for the Medical Research

Council to undertake research concerning the relationship between the development of chronic bronchitis or emphysema and exposure to substances associated with the processing , smelting, working or production of steel.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health has no plans to ask the Medical Research Council to undertake such research at present.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total of sums paid or liabilities entered into by the London ambulance service in respect of support and services supplied by the Metropolitan police, the Army and other organisations, respectively, from the start of the ambulance dispute until 31 December 1989 and 31 January 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The sums paid or liabilities entered into by the London ambulance service in respect of support and services supplied by the organisations listed is as follows:

	Period up to	
	December 1989	*January 1990*
	£	£
Private ambulances/car hire	125,084	260,338
Metropolitan Police	4,206,356	6,514,872
St. John Ambulance	115,669	176,551
Red Cross	125,155	191,950
Emergency supplies	932	39,462
TOTAL	4,573,196	7,183,173

The share of the cost of military support which falls to the London ambulance service is not yet known.

Figures for the St. John Ambulance (December 1989/January 1990) and the Red Cross (January 1990) are estimates but are not considered to vary considerably.

General Practitioners

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial assistance will be available from his Department for general practitioner budget holders; and what is the estimated total cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary legislation, practices which volunteer to join the practice funding scheme will be able to claim an annual management allowance of up to £32,000 to meet expenses legitimately incurred in running a fund. In 1990-91 an allowance of half that level will be available in recognition of the preparatory work which practices will need to undertake before entering the scheme. The total cost will depend on the number of fund holders.

Broadgreen Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken by his Department to encourage the recruitment of staff to the Alexandra wing of Broadgreen hospital, Liverpool, in speech therapy discipline; how many applications have been submitted for this post; how many patients, listed by age and medical condition, are awaiting treatment in this unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Management of speech therapy services at Broadgreen hospital and the recruitment of staff are matters for Liverpool health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority for details.

NHS Spending

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the expenditure allocation per head in each NHS region in each year since 1983, including those allocations for 1990-91, and express this expenditure in both current and standard prices.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 30 January 1990]:* Figures of total revenue expenditure per head of population by region for the years 1983-84 to 1988-89 (the latest available) are shown in the table.

I should point out that in meeting their expenditure health authorities have the use of some resources (local income and working balances) in addition to their allocations and consequently figures based on expenditure or solely on allocations are not directly comparable.

Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) Revenue Expenditure Per Head of Population

Region	*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*
	£ *(cash)*	£ *(at 1988-89 prices)*	£ *(cash)*	£ *(at 1988-89 prices)*	£ *(cash)*	£ *(at 1988-89 prices)*	£ *(cash)*	£ *(at 1988-89 prices)*	£ *(cash)*	£ *(at 1988-89 prices)*	£ *(cash)*
Northern	179	231	190	234	201	235	215	243	236	253	261
Yorkshire	172	222	183	225	194	226	207	234	226	242	248
Trent	161	208	172	212	182	212	197	222	217	233	240
East Anglian	163	209	173	213	182	212	195	220	214	230	239
N W Thames	193	249	202	248	209	244	222	251	238	255	272
N E Thames	225	291	236	290	244	285	259	292	278	298	312
S E Thames	206	266	215	264	224	261	236	267	255	273	284
S W Thames	190	245	198	244	205	239	219	247	251	269	280
Wessex	160	207	171	210	178	208	190	215	206	221	229
Oxford	148	191	159	196	165	193	175	198	191	205	212
South Western	174	225	183	225	191	223	204	230	221	237	243
West Midlands	166	214	178	219	187	218	202	228	221	237	243
Mersey	188	243	199	245	209	244	224	253	244	262	269
North Western	192	248	204	251	215	251	231	261	251	269	276
All Regions	181	234	191	235	200	233	214	242	238	255	264

Sources:

(a) 1983-84 to 1988-89 annual accounts of regional and district health authorities;

(b) Mid-year estimates of resident populations—1983 to 1988 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:

1. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1988-89 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.
2. HCHS includes hospital, community health, patient transport (i.e. ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
3. Capital expenditure and expenditure on family practitioner services (FPS) is excluded. The latter expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions. However, prior to 1 April 1985 some 90 district health authorities in England each had an associated FPC and their expenditure figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 included small elements relating to FPCs' administrative expenses which are not separately identifiable.
4. Expenditure incurred by the special health authorities (SHAs) for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and other SHAs providing central services to the National Health Service and expenditure met centrally by the Department is excluded.
5. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one region who receive treatment in another for the difference in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.
6. The figures for the Thames regions are influenced by additional costs such as London weighting allowances and also by the fact that from 1987-88 the South West Thames regional health authority (RHA) accounted for the total cost of the London ambulance service which in earlier years was shared by all four London RHAs.

Births

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his replies of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *84*, to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), whether he expects to be able to give information about induction, instrumental delivery and caesarean section rates among women delivering in England in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 7 February 1990]*: Yes. The special additional information collected about deliveries and births as part of the new hospital episode statistics system includes this information. It is hoped that collated information for the whole of England for 1989-90 will be available around the end of 1990.

SCOTLAND

Illegal Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, *Official Report*, 29 January, column *50*, on what dates illegally poisoned birds or baits were found in the Tayside region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The additional information is as set out in the table. The precise dates of finding are not always reported to the Scottish Office. Baits are sometimes found but cannot be positively linked in all cases to the death of a particular bird.

Bird	*Location*	*Date found*
Crow	Eradynate Estate	May 1987
Rook	Monzie Estate	May 1987
Gulls	Monzie Estate	May 1987
Buzzard	Ballyorkan, near Pitlochry	28 August 1987
Buzzard	Poloskie Scraloch, near Blairgowrie	January 1988
Rooks	Dron Wood, Longforgan Parish, near Dundee	24 March 1988
Eagle	Caenlochan National Nature Reserve	April 1988
Gulls	Strathallian Castle Estate	April 1988
Buzzard	Monzie Estate	21 May 1988
Buzzard	Monzie Estate	2 March 1989
Crow	Scone Estate	April 1989
Crow	Glen Isla Estate	21 April 1989
Crow	Strathmore Estate	8 June 1989

Employment Training

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of action plans for employment training completed for each month since September 1988 in the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: The number of action plans for employment training completed for each month since September 1988 in the areas requested is set out in the table:

Number of Action Plans completed—September 1988 to January 1990

September 1988

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	339
Lothian and Borders	604
Lanarkshire	301
Highlands and Islands	158
Grampian and Tayside	937
Glasgow City	828
Central and Fife	429
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	550
Scotland	4,146

October 1988

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	397
Lothian and Borders	766
Lanarkshire	649
Highlands and Islands	207
Grampian and Tayside	817
Glasgow City	958
Central and Fife	459
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	706
Scotland	4,959

November 1988

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	607
Lothian and Borders	1,269
Lanarkshire	710
Highlands and Islands	301
Grampian and Tayside	825
Glasgow City	1,263
Central and Fife	710
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	895
Scotland	6,580

December 1988

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	725
Lothian and Borders	806
Lanarkshire	575
Highlands and Islands	351
Grampian and Tayside	794
Glasgow City	1,242
Central and Fife	642
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	994
Scotland	6,129

January 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	851
Lothian and Borders	862
Lanarkshire	763
Highlands and Islands	398
Grampian and Tayside	967
Glasgow City	1,348
Central and Fife	741
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	958
Scotland	6,888

February 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	1,176
Lothian and Borders	939
Lanarkshire	986
Highlands and Islands	400
Grampian and Tayside	1,096
Glasgow City	1,719
Central and Fife	977
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	1,229
Scotland	8,522

March 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	1,351
Lothian and Borders	1,049
Lanarkshire	1,023
Highlands and Islands	308
Grampian and Tayside	1,371
Glasgow City	2,279
Central and Fife	730
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	1,018
Scotland	9,129

April 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	1,010
Lothian and Borders	626
Lanarkshire	766
Highlands and Islands	237
Grampian and Tayside	830
Glasgow City	1,649
Central and Fife	536
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	801
Scotland	6,455

May 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	886
Lothian and Borders	713
Lanarkshire	677
Highlands and Islands	212
Grampian and Tayside	856
Glasgow City	1,387
Central and Fife	568
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	817
Scotland	6,116

June 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	987
Lothians and Borders	804
Lanarkshire	840
Highlands and Islands	238
Grampian and Tayside	1,055
Glasgow City	1,601
Central and Fife	693
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	889
Scotland	7,107

July 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	779
Lothians and Borders	574
Lanarkshire	727
Highlands and Islands	240
Grampian and Tayside	685
Glasgow City	1,158
Central and Fife	388
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	627
Scotland	5,178

August 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	1,066
Lothians and Borders	589
Lanarkshire	821
Highlands and Islands	230
Grampian and Tayside	799
Glasgow City	1,492
Central and Fife	644
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	801
Scotland	6,442

September 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	997
Lothian and Borders	792
Lanarkshire	781
Highlands and Islands	262
Grampian and Tayside	1,091
Glasgow City	1,697
Central and Fife	887

	Number
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	1,122
Scotland	7,629

October 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	984
Lothian and Borders	731
Lanarkshire	780
Highlands and Islands	184
Grampian and Tayside	847
Glasgow City	1,707
Central and Fife	647
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	986
Scotland	6,866

November 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	1,170
Lothian and Borders	848
Lanarkshire	651
Highlands and Islands	259
Grampian and Tayside	896
Glasgow City	1,650
Central and Fife	681
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	925
Scotland	7,080

December 1989

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	633
Lothians and Borders	708
Lanarkshire	486
Highlands and Islands	322
Grampian and Tayside	673
Glasgow City	1,031
Central and Fife	559
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	714
Scotland	5,126

January 1990

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	767
Lothians and Borders	572
Lanarkshire	513
Highlands and Islands	226
Grampian and Tayside	684
Glasgow City	1,382
Central and Fife	585
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	809
Scotland	5,538

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of employment trainees on project placements for each month since September 1988 in the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: Information about the numbers of trainees on project placements is collected quarterly but returns are incomplete so accurate numerical estimates and assessments at an area office level are not possible. For Scotland as a whole it has been estimated that the proportion of project placements in each quarter was as follows:

Project placements as a proportion of total placements

Quarter to	Per cent.
December 1988	69·1
March 1989	62·3
June 1989	60·5
September 1989	65·0
December 1989	64·0

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of employment trainees on work placements for each month since September 1988 in the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: Information about the numbers of trainees on work placements is collected quarterly but returns are incomplete so accurate numerical estimates and assessments at an area office level are not possible. For Scotland as a whole it has been estimated that the proportion of work placements in each quarter was as follows:

Work placements as a proportion of total placements

Quarter to	Per cent.
December 1988	18·2
March 1989	20·7
June 1989	24·0
September 1989	21·0
December 1989	22·0

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training agents in employment training who have achieved stage 1 approved training manager status within the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: There are 23 training agents for employment training in Scotland. Of these, the 18 listed below by area have already achieved stage 1 of approved training organisation status.

Area and training agent

(a) Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll—Strathkelvin Enterprise Trust

(b) Lothian and Borders—Greater Edinburgh Training Association; Borders Regional Council

(c) Lanarkshire—Lanarkshire Training Agent Ltd.

(d) Highlands and Islands—Caithness District Council; Support Training, Highland Training and Development; Community Industry, Orkney Islands Council

(e) Grampian and Tayside—Grampian Regional Council; Workstart Ltd.

(f) Glasgow City—Employment Training Scotland Ltd.; Queen's College Glasgow Enterprise Ltd.

(g) Central and Fife—Central Training, Fife Regional Council

(h) Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway—Workstart Ltd.; Wigtown District Council; Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council Education Department

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the training agents in employment training

who have achieved approved training manager status within the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

(2) if he will list the training agents in employment training who have achieved approved training agent status within the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: To date, none.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of empioyment training advertising in the Scottish press in the period 21 February to 28 February.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* It is estimated that the cost of employment training advertising in the Scottish press during the period 21 to 28 February 1990 will be £18,760. This sum does not include the cost of employment training advertising in national newspapers which have a Scottish circulation or that placed by the Training Agency on behalf of training agents or training managers.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the voluntary sector training managers for Scotland; and the number of training, places currently contracted with the Training Agency within the *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Training Agency areas.

Mr. Lang: Following is a list of voluntary sector training managers for employment training in each local area:

Area and voluntary section training manager

(a) Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll—Strathclyde Training Agency

(b) Lothian and Borders—Wester Hailes Management Agency; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Community and Business Training Limited; Scottish Association for Mental Health; Craigmillar Festival Society; Scottish Council for Spastics; APEX Scotland

(c) Lanarkshire—Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare Training Limited; Scottish National Council for YMCAs

(d) Highlands and Islands—Nil

(e) Grampian and Tayside—Dundee Cyrenians Wishart Centre Heat Development (Dundee) Limited; Voluntary Service Aberdeen Adult Community Training (Dundee) Limited; Dundee Survival Group George Inn Lane Centre

(f) Glasgow City—Epilepsy Association of Scotland; Glasgow Zoo; Poldrait Community Development; Centre for Training and Employment; Workwise; Scottish Society for Mentally Handicapped

(g) Central and Fife—Training Craft Limited

(h) Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway—Nil

Information about the number of employment training places contracted in each local area on 29 September 1989 is set out in the table:

Area	*Total number of training places contracted*
(a) Renfrew Dumbarton and Argyll	4,695
(b) Lothian and Borders	3,619
(c) Lanarkshire	3,585
(d) Highlands and Islands	1,249
(e) Grampian and Tayside	3,754
(f) Glasgow City	7,010
(g) Central and Fife	3,124
(h) Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	4,200

Deaths on Arrival

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of deaths on arrival in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee hospitals, by month, for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: These figures are not held centrally.

Children (Employment)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what survey he has recently conducted of the extent to which children are missing their education, either through working in paid employment during school hours or through tiredness due to hours worked outwith school hours.

Mr. Lang: No such survey has been undertaken.

Registration

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce legislation to reform the system for registering births, marriages and deaths in Scotland, along the lines proposed for England and Wales in the White Paper "Registration: Proposals for Change".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scotland's registration law is mainly contained in the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 and the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977, and is thus rather more recent than the comparable legislation in force in England and Wales. A number of the improvements now proposed south of the border have similarities with what is already Scottish practice. While we have therefore no immediate plans for fresh Scottish legislation in this field, my right hon. and learned Friend will be keeping the position under review in the light of experience.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce legislation to allow crofter access to the farm woodland scheme through planting on common grazings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has indicated that he shares the views of all the crofting interests that it is desirable for necessary enabling powers to be available to allow crofters to participate in the planting of commercial woodlands on common grazings. It is not, however, possible to say when there might be an opportunity to make the necessary legislative change.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by region, the take-up to date in the

less favoured areas of the £30 grant available under the farm woodland scheme to those planting on permanent pasture and rough grazings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 February 1990]*: The uptake to date of approved planting under the farm woodland scheme, on permanent pasture and rough grazing in the LFAs, which qualifies for payments of £30 per hectare per annum, is as follows:

DAFS area office

Areas	*Hectares*
Highland	113·4
Borders	12·6
Grampian and North East	51·1
Perth and Kinross	21·7
Lothians and Fife	8·7
Clyde and South Western	42·9
Southern	23·7
Angus	3·8

ENERGY

Crude Oil (Discharge Certificates)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the possibility of insisting on discharge certificates for crude oil exports as recommended by the United Nations General Assembly and the Commonwealth experts study group.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to my previous answers to the hon. Member of 11 January 1990 (cols. *693-94*).

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by what process he chose the 12 estate agents who are advising him on the sale of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department's adviser was chosen as a result of a competitive tender. Firms of surveyors for the 12 area boards, the National Grid Company, PowerGen and National Power were jointly appointed by the Department and the company concerned.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what considerations underlie his decision to seek the advice of 12 estate agents on the sale of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Firms of surveyors are providing valuations of the property assets of the electricity supply industry to both the Department and the industry to ensure that value is obtained for these assets as a result of the privatisation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the name of the unsuccessful company which tendered for appointment as marketing and public relations adviser to the Government and the electricity supply industry on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: Lowe Bell Communications was the firm that tendered for the position as joint marketing and public relations adviser to the Government and the electricity industry and was not appointed.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the name of the unsuccessful company which tendered for appointment as special marketing and public relations adviser on electricity privatisation to his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: Dewe Rogerson was the firm that tendered for the position as special marketing and public relations adviser to the Department of Energy and was not appointed.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the contracts with the 12 estate agents who are advising him on the sale of the electricity supply industry preclude them from offering advice or professional services to any purchaser or potential purchaser of shares in the electricity supply industry or any part of its property before and after privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: Contracts with firms of surveyors include both strict confidentiality clauses and requirements to consult me regarding any potential conflict of interest.

Coal, Oil and Gas (Exports and Imports)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the information on coal, oil and gas exports and imports in December 1989 sought in the two questions from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras for answer on 12 February became available to his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: Data on exports and imports in December 1989 were made available to the Library of the House in the December volume of "Overseas Trade Statistics" (OTS) on 6 February 1990. However the "Overseas Trade Statistics" does not include an adjustment for the under-recording of direct exports of crude oil. This is included in the balance of payments figures published by the Central Statistical Office, but is available only some days later.

The comparable figures for 1989, following the answer given on Thursday 9 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, are as follows:

Table 1

Thousand tonnes

	Exports (fob)		*Imports (cif)*		
	Coal	*Oil*[1]	*Coal*[2]	*Gas*[2]	*Oil*
1989	2,072	69,297	12,137	15,082	58,078

[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.
[2] Coal equivalent.

Source: Customs and Excise Overseas Trade Statistics published by the Central Statistical Office.

Table 2

£ million at 1985 prices[1]

	Exports (fob)		*Imports (cif)*		
	Coal	*Oil*[2]	*Coal*	*Gas*	*Oil*
1989	80	11,834	647	1,134	9,365

[1] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports and imports in 1985 to the volumes in 1989.
[2] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.

Source: Volumes from table 1 revalued at 1985 prices.

To enable the different fuels to be compared, the figures in table 1 need to be put on to a common basis. Figures on a common basis, in this case tonnes of coal equivalent, are shown in table 3.

Table 3
Thousand tonnes of coal equivalent

	Exports (fob)		Imports (cif)		
	Coal	Oil[1]	Coal	Gas	Oil
1989	2,072	118,378	12,137	15,082	99,375

[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.

Source: As for table 1.

Coal Generation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of United Kingdom electricity was generated by coal in each year from 1974.

Mr. Baldry: The information required is detailed in the table:

Percentage of gross electricity supplied by coal fired station, 1974-75 to 1987-88
United Kingdom public supply

Year	Percentage
1974-75	60·1
1975-76	66·5
1976-77	68·1
1977-78	66·1
1978-79	67·1
1979-80	70·8
1980-81	72·5
1981-82	73·5
1982-83	70·7
1983-84	72·1
1984-85	39·1
1985-86	71·7
1986-87	66·5
1987-88	69·7

Source: Department of Energy 'Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics', table 54.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the tonnage and cost of British coal to the Central Electricity Generating Board in each year from 1974.

Mr. Baldry: Tables 1 and 2 contain the information required:

Table 1
Coal delivered to CEGB by British Coal 1974-75 to 1988-89

Year	Million tonnes
1974-75	65
1975-76	65
1976-77	69
1977-78	69
1978-79	69
1979-80	78
1980-81	75
1981-82	74
1982-83	79
1983-84	70
1984-85	29
1985-86	80
1986-87	74
1987-88	76
1988-89	74

Source: Central Electricity Generating Board 'Statistical Yearbook' 1975-76 to 1988-89.

Table 2
Average price of coal used by electricity supply industry (Great Britain)[1]

Year	£ per tonne
1974	9·29
1975	14·16
1976	16·89
1977	19·66
1978	21·97
1979	25·32
1980	31·84
1981	37·43
1982	40·21
1983	42·49
1984	42·82
1985	45·68
1986	46·23
1987	43·83
1988	47·17

[1] Includes Scotland.

Source: Department of Energy "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1989" table 68.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average cost of electricity in each year from 1974 to *(a)* industry and *(b)* domestic consumers.

Mr. Baldry: The information required is detailed in the table:

Revenue per Kwh sold by class of customer, pence/Kwh (money of the day)

Year	Domestic	Industry
1974-75	1·288	1·109
1975-76	1·909	1·431
1976-77	2·318	1·649
1977-78	2·635	1·866
1978-79	2·860	2·028
1979-80	3·227	2·314
1980-81	4·221	2·878
1981-82	4·774	3·273
1982-83	5·378	3·503
1983-84	5·379	3·430
1984-85	5·451	3·495
1985-86	5·607	3·599
1986-87	5·622	3·561
1987-88	5·583	3·504
[1]1988-89	5·988	3·745

[1] Electricity Council "Annual Report and Accounts 1988-89".

Source: Electricity Council "Handbook of Electricity Supply Statistics 1988" table 46.

Nuclear Decommissioning

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to seek from his counterpart in France details of the French nuclear power plant decommissioning programme, in so far as it may assist the United Kingdom programme.

Mr. Baldry: My Department and Nuclear Electric have regular discussions with the French authorities on many aspects of nuclear power. As I have already explained to the hon. Member, direct comparisons between France and the UK cannot be made because of the different reactor types currently operational in each country.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the year ended 31 March 1989 *(a)* the amounts of plutonium *(i)* in reactor discharges and dispatches and *(ii)* in irradiated fuel stored at power stations, respectively, for Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactors and *(b)* the allocation of the total plutonium at Sellafield, net of sales and leases, in each case for Central Electricity Generating Board reactors; and if the quoted figures are reproduced to the greatest precision possible from records available to his Department;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the year ended 31 March 1989 *(a)* the amounts of plutonium *(i)* in reactor discharges and dispatches and *(ii)* in irradiated fuel stored at power stations, respectively, for Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactors and *(b)* the allocation of the total plutonium at Sellafield, net of sales and leases, in each case for the South of Scotland Electricity Board; and if the quoted figures are reproduced to the greatest precision possible from records available to his Department.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my Department's press release No. 180 of 5 December 1989, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. My Department compiled the information from a number of sources and therefore requested it in a form conforming with the format of the press release.

Landfill Gas Symposium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department or any scientists from the energy technology support unit will be represented, or present papers, at the international landfill gas symposium to be held in Chicago on 27 to 29 March.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. My Department, through its energy technology support unit, will be represented at the Chicago international landfill gas symposium.

Gas Prices

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the effect on energy conservation of the pricing structure of British Gas to large consumers of gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I received a number of representations about the adverse energy efficiency implications of British Gas's initial price schedule. I am pleased to note that the new schedule, which came into effect on 1 December 1989, appears to have resolved the problem.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 February 1990

ENVIRONMENT

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings have been made across local government as a whole as a result of subjecting local authority contracts to competitive tendering.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No precise figures are available at present. However, the Audit Commission's occasional paper "Preparing for Compulsory Competition" published in January last year indicated that local authorities can obtain savings of 20 per cent. or more in contract price, irrespective of whether work has been won by the private sector or by an authority's own work force.

PSA and Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of financial decisions relating to the privatisation of the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope: Financial decisions in relation to the Crown Suppliers privatisation are expected to be taken in the first half of this year. It is too early to say when those in relation to PSA privatisation will be taken.

Global Warming

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the Government are doing through their various agencies to combat global warming; and what is the total sum spent on this in the current year.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking, through its various agencies, to combat global warming; and what is the total to be spent on this in the current year.

Mr. Trippier: Among many initiatives, the Government actively support the work of the inter-governmental panel on climate change and are leading efforts to gain support for an international framework convention on climate change. We have also taken the lead in international initiatives to phase out the production and consumption of CFCs which are important greenhouse gases. We have amended the Building Regulations to improve the energy efficiency of new houses and announced the establishment of a new centre for the prediction of climate change. In 1990-91 my Department expects to spend over £6 million on climate change-related research and we are contributing £750,000 to the work of the inter-governmental panel on climate change. Other Departments also have important programmes on global warming, for example, the Overseas Development Administration's support for projects to conserve the tropical forests and the research funded by the Department of Education and Science through the research councils.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in order of percentage loss or gain the grant-related expenditure for the standard spending assessments allocations for all English districts in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will list for each the proportion of the population of each authority living in urban areas.

Mr. Chope: I have today placed in the Library a table showing the information requested on grant-related expenditure assessments and standard spending assessments for all non-metropolitan districts in England. I cannot provide information on the proportion of the population living in urban areas as there is no standard way of classifying such areas.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the rate proposed for 1990-91 and the average rate per head payable in the current year for Castle Point district council.

Mr. Chope: I estimate that the average domestic rate bill per adult for Castle Point is about £318 in 1989-90. I have no firm information on the proposed community charge for 1990-91.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the rate proposed for 1990-91 and the average rate per head payable in the current year in Southend-on-Sea.

Mr. Chope: I estimate that the average domestic rate bill per adult for Southend-on-Sea is about £363 in 1989-90. I have no firm information on the proposed community charge for 1990-91.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the rate proposed for 1990-91 and the average rate per head payable in the current year for Wealden district council.

Mr. Chope: I estimate that the average domestic rate bill per adult for Wealden is about £292 in 1989-90. I have no firm information on the proposed community charge for 1990-91.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations informed the decision to treat business and domestic property in a different manner in respect of rates.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to our Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) published in January 1986, and our explanations during parliamentary consideration of what is now the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide figures for inner London and outer London of the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult as against rates, together with the contribution made by the safety net.

Mr. Chope: I have no information on 1990-91 community charges payable in inner or outer London. Tables showing the information requested but based on assumed community charges were placed in the Library on 11 January.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how, with reference to paragraph 3.36 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £59·11 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The figure referred to in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) was determined by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority representatives. It accounts for £82 per adult of Great Grimsby's SSA.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how, with reference to paragraph 3.40 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £5·56 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials may check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the SSA arrived at for Grimsby;

(2) how, with reference to paragraph 3.40 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £9·56 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials may check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the SSA arrived at for Grimsby;

(3) how, with reference to paragraph 3.40 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £4·35 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials may check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the SSA arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The figures referred to in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) were determined by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority representatives. They are used to calculate the other services SSA element for county councils. Following this calculation, there is a transfer of £1 per adult to all districts in the county of Humberside, including Great Grimsby.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total poll tax figure appropriate to Grimsby; and what account he has taken of *(a)* the kind of service, *(b)* the social and economic problems of the area, *(c)* the state of housing stock and *(d)* levels of unemployment, poverty, single-parent families and homelessness in arriving at it.

Mr. Chope: All charging authorities, including Grimsby, could set a community charge of £278 (before the safety net and special grants) in 1990-91 if they and the authorities precepting on the collection fund in their area spent at the level of their standard spending assessments. The assessment for each notifiable authority takes account of the services provided by that authority as set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). That report also sets out the indicators used to calculate SSAs, such as social conditions (including housing conditions), low incomes and single-parent families, and the weight given to each.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Lambeth council will receive from the uniform business rate, revenue grant and other non-poll tax sources of revenue for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: Lambeth charge payers will benefit from revenue support grant, business rates and inner London education grant paid to help meet the cost of services provided by Lambeth, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority and the Metropolitan police. In 1990-91 these will amount to £174,276,383, £50,465,924 and £9,475,207, respectively.

Lambeth council will also receive specific grants from the Government to help meet specific expenditure. Lambeth can raise revenue through its own fees and charges for services provided.

Some charge payers in Lambeth will pay a reduced community charge as a result of community charge benefit and transitional relief, which will be paid for by the Government.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the past 12 months from officials or members of Suffolk county council relating to the size of Government grant for 1990-91; and what inquiries his Department has made to date into the spending plans of Suffolk for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received two written representations from members of Suffolk county council; one in July 1989 concerning total standard spending, grant distribution and the safety net; the other in November 1989 concerning Suffolk's standard spending assessment, new duties of local authorities and the safety net. In addition, I met my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) to discuss Suffolk's representations.

No inquiries have been made specifically to Suffolk county council about its spending plans for 1990-91, but all authorities have been requested to supply to the Department details of their budgets within seven days of their budget decision.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of his figure of £176·40 per head for Tonbridge and Malling, given in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *178*, into its main components.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to provide the breakdown requested. There are no components of revenue support grant. Grant is unhypothecated and is paid to receiving authorities in support of the revenue expenditure of authorities in their area.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West on 5 February, *Official Report*, columns *431-32*, what is the corresponding amount and proportion of the education component of grant-related expenditure assessments 1989-90 for each authority which derives from the operation of factors relating to the payment of London weighting and other cost differences between London and surrounding areas and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is shown in the table:

Amount and proportion of the 1989-90 education grant related expenditure assessment (adjusted for changes in function between 1989-90 and 1990-91) deriving from the London based area cost adjustment factor

Authority	*Amount of education GRE derived from the area cost adjustment in £ millions*	*Percentage of education GRE derived from the area cost adjustment*
City of London	0·054	9·1
Camden	3·455	9·1
Greenwich	5·386	9·1
Hackney	5·976	9·1
Hammersmith and Fulham	2·986	9·1
Islington	4·204	9·1
Kensington and Chelsea	1·950	9·1
Lambeth	6·907	9·1
Lewisham	5·632	9·1
Southwark	5·577	9·1
Tower Hamlets	5·978	9·1
Wandsworth	5·510	9·1
Westminster	2·802	9·1
Barking and Dagenham	3·683	8·6
Barnet	4·767	6·3
Bexley	3·986	6·3
Brent	7·617	8·6
Bromley	4·613	6·3
Croydon	5·591	6·3
Ealing	7·373	8·6
Enfield	4·925	6·3
Haringey	5·332	8·6
Harrow	3·479	6·3
Havering	4·294	6·3
Hillingdon	3·958	6·3
Hounslow	3·761	6·3
Kingston upon Thames	2·106	6·3
Merton	3·538	8·6
Newham	7·011	8·6
Redbridge	4·000	6·3
Richmond upon Thames	2·020	6·3
Sutton	2·777	6·3
Waltham Forest	4·232	6·3
Berkshire	2·584	1·2
Buckinghamshire	1·245	0·7
Essex	4·251	1·0
Hertfordshire	5·785	2·1
Kent	1·366	0·3
Surrey	6·239	2·6
West Sussex	0·734	0·4

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 the direct total grants made to Waveney district council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population;

(2) if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1981 the direct total grants made to Suffolk county council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Direct Revenue Grants—[1] Waveney

	Cash Terms[1] (£ million)	*Constant Price Terms 1981-82[2] (£ million)*	*Cash Terms per Head of Population £*
1981-82	3·308	3·308	33
1982-83	3·611	3·368	36
1983-84	3·947	3·517	39
1984-85	4·298	3·649	42
1985-86	4·416	3·570	43
1986-87	4·862	3·789	46
1987-88	5·216	3·860	49
1988-89	5·382	3·714	51
1989-90	5·815	3·750	55

[1] Excluding Domestic Rate Relief Grant.
[2] Using GDP Deflator.

Direct Revenue Grants—[1] Suffolk

	Cash Terms[1] (£ million)	*Constant Price Terms 1981-82[2] (£ million)*	*Cash Terms per Head of Population £*
1981-82	90·036	90·036	150
1982-83	93·920	87·599	155
1983-84	94·948	84·608	155
1984-85	97·534	82·797	158
1985-86	90·914	73·240	146
1986-87	92·285	71·927	147
1987-88	98·124	72·622	155
1988-89	104·403	72·049	163
1989-90	99·397	64·101	156

[1] Excluding Domestic Rate Relief Grant.
[2] Using GDP Deflator.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 the expenditure of Waveney district council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population;

(2) if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1981 the expenditure of Suffolk county council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Net current expenditure—Waveney

	Cash terms	*Real terms 1981-82 prices[1]*	*Cash terms per head[2]*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£*
1981-82	3·360	3·360	34
1982-83	3·815	3·558	38
1983-84	4·299	3·831	42
1984-85	4·437	3·767	43
1985-86	4·820	3·883	47
1986-87	5·204	4·056	50
1987-88	5·524	4·088	52
1988-89	5·905	4·075	55
1989-90	6·694	4·316	63

Net current expenditure—Suffolk

	Cash terms	*Real terms 1981-82 prices[1]*	*Cash terms per head[2]*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£*
1981-82	161·042	161·042	268
1982-83	175·258	163·463	289
1983-84	186·098	165·832	304
1984-85	195·393	165·869	317
1985-86	205·461	165·519	329
1986-87	223·867	174·482	356
1987-88	243·835	180·462	384
1988-89	266·449	183·876	417
1989-90	280·023	180·587	438

[1] Using the gross domestic product deflator to convert from cash values to constant prices.
[2] Population figures used to derive per capita values are latest available Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid year estimates of total population.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the standard spending assessment totals for 1990-91 for each service within *(a)* the district other services block and *(b)* the county other services block for the London borough of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Neither the SSA element for the district other services block nor the SSA element for the county other services block is broken down between sub-services within the element. The services covered by each element are listed in annex D to the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). The figures for the two elements for Westminster are:

	£ million
District level services	51·583
County level services	14·819

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his plans for regulations concerning the disclosure of anonymous poll tax data will give community charges registration offices the option of whether to disclose data; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The limited amount of personal information that may be disclosed and the circumstances in which such information may not be disclosed are prescribed in part II of the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 12 February, *Official Report*, column *56*, if he will make an estimate of the monetary value of the shift in the burden of business rates from the north to *(a)* the London boroughs and *(b)* the London borough of Hillingdon.

Mr. Chope: I estimate that as a result of the revaluation and move to a uniform poundage, the non-domestic rate burden in the north will reduce substantially. The table below shows the aggregate reduction at 1989-90 prices in rate bills in the northern regions and the corresponding increases in London. The figures make no allowance for the effect of the transitional arrangements and are based on the rating lists deposited on 20 December 1989.

Change in non-domestic rate burden

	£ million
North West region	290
Northern region	140
Yorkshire and Humberside region	150
Inner London authorities	610
Outer London boroughs	20

On the same basis, I estimate that non-domestic ratepayers in Hillingdon will face increases of about £13 million.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a revised version of table 5 in the analysis of the effect of the new business rating system published by his Department on 20 December 1989, showing changes in rate bills by English region for the property of private business and nationalised industries.

Mr. Chope: The analysis to which my hon. Friend refers, a copy of which is in the Library (Deposited Paper NS 5522), relates to properties occupied by private businesses and nationalised industries. Table 5 of the paper, unlike the other tables, inadvertently included property occupied by local authorities. I am therefore, as my hon. Friend asks, placing in the Library a revised table covering the property of private businesses and nationalised industries only.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reply is being sent to the letter to the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities of 29 January on Manchester and the poll tax from the leader of Manchester city council.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* I have replied to the letter of 29 January from the leader of Manchester city council making clear that high community charges in Manchester would not be the result of our settlement but due solely to the council's own budget decisions. I have pointed out to Mr. Stringer that a community charge of £700 plus which he has argued would be needed to keep services in Manchester running at this year's level implies expenditure in 1990-91 more than 40 per cent. higher than the comparable amount for this year. Even charges of £450 or a little below would imply increases in spending approaching some 20 per cent. Under the settlement Manchester receives an increase in SSA over GRE of 13·3 per cent.—the highest increase for all metropolitan districts.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to those responsible for administering the community charge in Bradford and elsewhere that application forms for rebates should be made available in bulk to local advice agencies, including citizens advice bureaux and law centres.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Local authorities have statutory responsibility for the administration of the community charge benefit. It is for each authority to decide where claim forms should be made available.

Local Government Staffing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 the *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* total staffing levels of Waveney district council.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Waveney district council: staffing levels at June

	Full-Time	*Part-Time*	*Total*
1979	819	79	898
1980	746	74	820
1981	742	86	828
1982	725	74	799
1983	750	103	853
1984	722	87	809
1985	743	110	853

	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
1986	773	108	881
1987	778	115	893
1988	789	113	902
1989	781	129	910

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1981 *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* total staffing levels of Suffolk county council.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Suffolk County Council: Staffing Levels at June

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1981	11,625	9,868	21,493
1982	11,479	9,504	20,983
1983	11,595	9,929	21,524
1984	11,521	10,169	21,690
1985	11,463	10,371	21,834
1986	11,394	10,954	22,348
1987	11,463	11,598	23,061
1988	11,397	12,338	23,735
1989	11,207	12,017	23,224

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the payment of grants to owners of sites of special scientific interest for the purposes of *(a)* preventing damage to, and *(b)* enhancing, the nature conservation interest of the land.

Mr. Trippier: The Government encourage the Nature Conservancy Council to use the powers set out in section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 to protect and enhance the nature conservation interest of sites of special scientific interest and its powers to assist financially any person to carry out any project which is conducive to nature conservation interests.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current statutory seaward limit of sites of special scientific interest in tidal waters.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to increase the sentences and penalties available to magistrates courts under part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in line with the proposals contained in the recent White Paper on criminal justice.

Mr. Trippier: There are at present no plans to do so. The level of fine on summary conviction for offences under part 1 of the Act against the most vulnerable species is set out at the current statutory maximum.

Large Combustion Plants

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the targets set by the European Community directive on large combustion plants.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have agreed to the European Community directive on large combustion plants. It commits us to reducing sulphur dioxide emissions from existing plants by 20 per cent. by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003 from their 1980 base line, and emissions of nitrogen oxides by 15 per cent. by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998, as well as setting stringent emissions standards for new plants. My Department issued a consultation paper on 31 August 1989 explaining in detail our proposals for implementing the directive. A copy of the paper is in the Library of the House.

Gipsies

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons he issued a direction in November 1989 under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to Hertfordshire county council requiring it to provide sites for a further 110 caravans for gipsies residing in or resorting to the county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment directed Hertfordshire, in November 1988, because of the county council's lack of progress in making adequate site provision for those gipsies residing in, or resorting to, its area.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has written to local authorities drawing their attention to the direction issued to Hertfordshire county council under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has written to other poor-performing local authorities drawing their attention to the direction issued to Hertfordshire, and has since directed Surrey county council in similar terms.

Wild Birds

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish such records as are kept of the numbers of protected wild birds destroyed annually by those so authorised by him;

(2) to what extent he authorises the destruction of wild birds from time to time that are otherwise protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act; to whom such authorisations are granted; and why the exemptions are made.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the numbers of birds killed under licences granted under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, where known, are included in the Government's annual reports to the European Commission of derogations made under the EEC directive on the conservation of wild birds. Copies of the reports are available in the Library and are circulated to interested bodies.

Licences to kill wild birds are granted to relevant individuals and authorities principally to preserve public health or public or air safety, to prevent the spread of disease, or to prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or fisheries.

Beaches

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the Government's current plans to deal with the pollution of Britain's beaches.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are investment programmes totalling £1·4 billion at November 1989 prices to improve bathing water quality. It is expected that 95 per cent. of bathing waters will comply with EEC standards by the mid-1990s, and the full compliance programmes should be completed within 10 years.

House of Commons (Repairs)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is a cash limit on the amount of money to be spent on minor repairs at the House of Commons in 1989-90.

Mr. Chope: Minor repairs to the parliamentary estate are funded from class XX, vote 18 which is cash limited.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Manchester.

Mr. Chope: Such statistics are not maintained by my Department. Manchester city council operates policies which avoid putting homeless families into bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a percentage and absolute number breakdown by grade of the final responses of the administrative and executive grades, stores and support grades to the Crown Suppliers secondment exercise.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Following is the information:

	AEG grades	*Support grades*	*Stores grades*	*Totals*
Total number of eligible staff as at 3 February 1990	446	45	13	504
Total number non-respondents	10	1	1	12
Number who have opted to second	304	30	12	346
Percentage who have opted to second	68	66	92	69
Number who have opted to leave TCS before privatisation	122	11	0	133
Percentage who have opted to leave TCS before privatisation	27	24	—	26
Number who have opted to transfer outright to purchaser	10	3	0	13
Percentage who have opted to transfer outright to purchaser	2	7	—	3

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking a guaranteed minimum level of Crown business to the privatised Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* None.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the buying agency business line of the Crown Suppliers needs to be adopted by a Crown Department if it is to be able to continue serving public sector needs after privatisation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Individual Government Departments, including the Crown Suppliers are already responsible for ensuring that public sector procurement procedures are complied with. Following privatisation any Government Department will be able to employ the Crown Suppliers to act as its agent to carry out these procedures on its behalf.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the percentages and absolute numbers of Liverpool staff who opted for secondment to the privatised Crown Suppliers before the provision of a guaranteed job back in the Civil Service; and how many opted for secondment after that guarantee was given.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Of the 95 Liverpool staff who were eligible, 12 (13 per cent.) opted originally for secondment to the purchaser of the Crown Suppliers. Of the 96 Liverpool staff who are eligible today, 57 (59 per cent.) have now opted for secondment.

Conferences

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will be represented at the conference on liability under environment legislation, organised by the Institute for International Research, to be held in London on 27 to 28 February.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* No.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the impact of the uniform business rate and the non-domestic revaluation on properties in the areas of urban programme authorities, overall and by type of property.

Mr. Chope: Businesses in the areas of the 57 urban programme local authorities in England will on average face substantially lower rate bills as a result of the new system of business rating. At the uniform business rate of 34·8p for 1990-91, the aggregate rate bills of such businesses would be £508 million or 16·3 per cent. lower than in 1989-90 before transition. Most classes of property benefit on average from lower bills. All businesses will have the guarantee that the uniform business rate will in future rise by no more than the rate of inflation. These reforms will therefore give a major fillip to businesses in inner-city areas.

The full figures requested by my hon. Friend are as follows:

	Aggregate of old rate bills £ million	Aggregate of new rate bills (before transition) £ million	Change £ million	Change Percentage
Shops	659·8	639·7	−20·1	−3·1
Offices	553·9	499·5	−54·3	−9·8
Factories	765·7	447·4	−318·3	−41·6
Warehouses	393·4	263·5	−129·9	−33·0
Other properties	744·6	759·5	14·9	2·0
All properties	3,117·4	2,609·6	−507·8	−16·3

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

46. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information he has on the famine situation in Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: As the House knows, up to 4 million people are at increasing risk and some 1·1 million tonnes of food aid will be required up to the end of October of which about half has already been pledged. Our critical objectives remain to get the earliest distribution of food particularly within Tigré, as agreed on 18 January, and to find a speedy route towards the end of fighting and a negotiated solution.

71. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being offered to the inhabitants of Tigré and Wollo in northern Ethiopia; and what steps are being taken to ensure that such assistance is getting through.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the middle of 1989, we have made commitments of food and other emergency assistance to the value of some £5·8 million for the benefit of those threatened by famine in Tigré. This assistance is being channelled through British non-governmental organisations which have long experience of work of this kind in Ethiopia. The world food programme is also advising on the situation and how best to ensure that the food aid reaches those for whom it is intended. Because of the military situation in Wollo, it has not so far been possible to provide aid to that region.

Cambodia

47. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what United Kingdom assistance has been given to the non-Communist resistance in Cambodia in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Chalker: Since 1 March 1989 a total of £702,000 has been provided, mainly through UNBRO and British NGOs, for non-Communist Cambodians living in camps on the Thai border.

54. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement about Government policy on *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid to Cambodia; and whether he will give details of Britain's contribution to date in each case for the current financial year.

68. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his officials' recent visit to Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) on 15 February at column *351*.

59. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that food is not being sent from United Nations Border Relief Organisation camps on the Thai-Cambodia border to Khmer Rouge soldiers.

60. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further investigations have been made on reports of the diversion of food and other aid to Khmer Rouge soldiers fighting in Cambodia, from the camps on the Thai-Cambodia border.

Mrs. Chalker: We have repeatedly sought and been given assurances by UNBRO that food and other aid supplies intended for families and ordinary people in Thai-Cambodia border camps are not diverted, either directly or indirectly to the Khmer Rouge.

I saw the camps for myself last week and reiterated our concern. UNBRO officials assured me that they were taking all possible steps to ensure that supplies went to the people for whom they were intended and that they were looking again at their monitoring procedures. British embassy officials based in Bangkok also visit the camps regularly to monitor the situation.

Vietnam

50. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's consideration of the issues raised in the report by the International Monetary Fund staff report for the 1989 article IV consultation, 11 August 1989, on Vietnam's economy.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government welcome the positive initial steps taken by the Vietnamese authorities towards more market-oriented policies.

61. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what programme of aid Her Majesty's Government have developed for Vietnam.

73. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to re-establish a bilateral aid programme with Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have provided some assistance to Vietnam to help the people who are returning to resettle there. As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 16 January, consideration is also being given to whether the time is right to provide support for community development programmes administered by British non-governmental organisations in Vietnam.

Debt

51. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much debt owed by developing countries Her Majesty's Government propose to write off in this coming year.

Mrs. Chalker: We have already cancelled the old aid debt of 23 countries, and rescheduled on concessional terms other official debt of 12 countries. The 1988 Toronto summit agreed to provide such debt relief to the poorest countries pursuing economic reforms, and we expect more to benefit in 1990.

South Africa

52. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what factors determine Britain's aid programme to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our aid programme is a practical demonstration of our commitment to promote fundamental change leading to the creation of a just, democratic and non-racial society in South Africa. It is helping to prepare for the day when South Africa's black citizens will be playing the major role in government and in economic development. Our programmes are planned and implemented directly with community groups, non-governmental organisations and some universities.

53. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to South Africa by the Minister for Overseas Development.

63. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent visit to Johannesburg by the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mrs. Chalker: While in Johannesburg on 30 January I visited the Alexandra health centre, which is one of over 200 community projects that we support in South Africa. I met many of the teachers involved in the Molteno literacy project which we have helped for nearly 10 years and which has developed teaching materials now in use in well over 5,000 primary schools. I also visited the new British Council offices.

64. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Minister for Overseas Development's visit to southern Africa and the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Committee.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 15 February at column *352* to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Eastern Europe

55. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom aid given to ex-Communist countries to liberalise their economies is given on a multilateral basis.

Mrs. Chalker: We have only just started giving aid to the reforming countries of eastern Europe, and precise statistics are accordingly not yet available. But a substantial proportion of the United Kingdom's aid to eastern Europe will be given multilaterally.

56. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds are being made available for students from central and eastern Europe to study development economics in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: No funds are currently set aside specifically for this purpose. However some £750,000 will be available in 1990-91 for students from eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to study in Great Britain through the FCO scholarships and awards scheme. Applications from students wishing to study development economics will be considered along with other applications.

In addition, we hope to establish a general scholarships programme through the know-how funds. This will be administered by the British Council. Detailed proposals are awaited and no financial limits have yet been set. Development economics will certainly be a discipline in which training will be eligible for support.

65. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that in all future years aid to eastern Europe will be additional to aid for developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government's substantial economic support for eastern Europe is entirely separate from and additional to our regular aid programme. We shall maintain our substantial aid programme to developing countries.

Brazil

57. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest discussions with Brazil on rain forest matters.

Mrs. Chalker: We have continued our discussions with Brazilian institutions on the details of individual project proposals and several project proposals are now being considered by the Brazilian Government. We expect the Brazilian Government to approve the first project under the memorandum of understanding, a research project to investigate the relationship between deforestation and climate, involving the Institute of Hydrology, within the next few days. We hope to reach agreement shortly on some of the other projects which could then begin in the second quarter of the year.

Black Rhino

58. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is directed toward programmes aimed at protecting the black rhino.

Mrs. Chalker: In my answer to the hon. Member of 29 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *257*, I referred to the list, placed in the Library of the House, of wildlife conservation activities in general in Africa in which we are involved. This includes the funding of a gamewarden to co-ordinate the Kenya rhino rescue project. We are now actively considering ways in which we may be of further help in conserving rhino in Tanzania.

Tibet

62. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether in the forthcoming year Her Majesty's Government will fund a cultural or medical aid package to Tibet.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have no plans to fund a cultural or medical aid package to Tibet.

Bangladesh

66. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was discussed with the Government of Bangladesh during the Minister for Overseas Development's recent visit.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 15 February, column *350*.

Food Production

67. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the overseas aid programme contains any provision for developing new technologies to increase food production in developing countries.

69. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Overseas Development Administration is taking to increase food production in developing countries through research on sustainable systems of agriculture.

72. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution is made through research and development funded from the aid programme to efforts in developing countries to improve food production.

Mrs. Chalker: I regard research on sustainable agricultural systems for developing countries and its dissemination as an important part of the British aid programme. The Overseas Development Administration has recently published a new "Strategy for Research on Renewable Natural Resources", a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House. This strategy lays stress on the need for all natural resources research programmes to take account of factors which make for sustainable and environmentally sound development. Total expenditure on renewable natural resources research under the Overseas Development Administration research strategy in FY 1989-90, including contributions to the programmes of international agricultural research centres, will be some £19 million, of which nearly 90 per cent. will be related to food production and the technologies needed to increase it. Specific research programmes which bear directly on agricultural sustainability will include among others farming systems, agroforestry and soil science, and will be carried out at centres of excellence such as the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute and the Oxford Forestry Institute. The transfer and adaptation of newly developed technologies is assisted through our bilateral country programmes.

India

70. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the quality of Her Majesty's Government's aid programme to India, in view of the recently published investigation carried out by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) on 15 February at column *351*.

Children's Education

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom aid budget is spent on education; how much of this is spent on primary education; and whether he has any plans to increase spending in this area.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1988, expenditure on technical co-operation in education, including sums provided to the British Council amounting to £42 million, came to about £95 million or 23 per cent. of total technical co-operation. Some £1·7 million or 0·4 per cent. of total technical co-operation was specifically for primary education, but there are other projects which benefit both primary and other areas of education. Some £6·5 million or 3·2 per cent. of the ODA total financial project aid was spent on education; £1·1 million or 0·6 per cent. was on primary education. In determining how much the ODA spends on the various levels of education in each recipient country it takes into account existing or proposed projects by those organisations.

We shall wish to discuss with Education Ministers of Commonwealth countries at the Commonwealth conference of Education Ministers in Barbados later this year what proportion of our assistance they wish us to commit to primary education. We shall undertake discussions with other Governments in the light of the forthcoming world conference on education for all.

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the proportion of children worldwide who fail to undertake or complete primary education.

Mrs. Chalker: The following information on the percentage of children enrolled in primary education is taken from the World Bank world development report 1989. In an explanatory note the report states that the figures are estimates of children of all ages enrolled in primary schools. Figures are expressed as the percentage of pupils to the population of school age children. Figures in italics are for years other than those specified. While many countries consider primary school age to be six to 11 years, others do not. The differences in country practices in the ages and duration of schooling are reflected in the figures given. For some countries with universal primary education the gross enrolment figures may exceed 100 per cent. because some pupils are younger or older than the country's standard primary school age.

I have no information on the number of children who fail to complete the period of primary education.

Primary

	Total		Male		Female	
	1965	1986	1965	1986	1965	1986
Low-income economies	[1]73	[1]103	—	[1]113	—	[1]92
China and India	[1]83	[1]113	—	[1]124	—	[1]101
Other low-income	[1]49	[1]76	[1]60	[1]83	[1]37	[1]68
1. Ethiopia	11	36	16	44	6	28
2. Bhutan	7	23	13	29	1	17
3. Chad	34	43	56	61	13	24
4. Zaire	70	—	95	—	45	—
5. Bangladesh	49	60	67	69	31	50
6. Malawi	44	64	55	72	32	55
7. Nepal	20	79	36	104	4	47
8. Lao PDR	40	94	50	102	30	85
9. Mozambique	37	82	48	92	26	73
10. Tanzania	32	69	40	70	25	69
11. Burkina Faso	12	35	16	45	8	26
12. Madagascar	65	121	70	125	59	118
13. Mali	24	22	32	27	16	16
14. Burundi	26	59	36	68	15	50
15. Zambia	53	104	59	112	46	101
16. Niger	11	29	15	37	7	20
17. Uganda	67	—	83	—	50	—
18. China	89	129	—	137	—	120
19. Somalia	10	20	16	26	4	13
20. Togo	55	102	78	125	32	78
21. India	74	92	89	107	57	76
22. Rwanda	53	67	64	68	43	66
23. Sierra Leone	29	—	37	—	31	—
24. Benin	34	65	48	87	21	43
25. Central African Republic	56	66	84	81	28	50
26. Kenya	54	94	69	97	40	91
27. Sudan	29	50	37	59	21	41
28. Pakistan	40	44	59	55	20	32
29. Haiti	50	78	56	83	44	72
30. Lesotho	94	115	74	102	114	127
31. Nigeria	32	—	39	—	24	—
32. Ghana	69	63	82	75	57	59
33. Sri Lanka	93	103	98	104	86	102
34. Yemen PDR	23	—	35	—	10	—
35. Mauritania	13	46	19	57	6	35
36. Indonesia	72	118	79	121	65	116
37. Liberia	41	—	59	—	23	—
38. Afghanistan	16	—	26	—	5	—
39. Burma	71	—	76	—	65	—
40. Guinea	31	29	44	40	19	27
41. Kampuchea, Democratic	77	—	98	—	56	—
42. Viet Nam	—	100	—	107	—	94
Middle-income economies	[1]93	[1]104	[1]99	[1]108	[1]86	[1]100
Lower-middle-income	[1]89	[1]104	[1]96	[1]108	[1]81	[1]100
43. Senegal	40	55	52	66	29	45
44. Bolivia	73	87	86	93	60	82
45. Zimbabwe	110	129	128	132	92	126
46. Philippines	113	106	115	107	111	106
47. Yemen Arab Republic	9	79	16	125	1	31
48. Morocco	57	79	78	96	35	62
49. Egypt Arab Republic	75	87	90	96	60	77
50. Papua New Guinea	44	—	53	—	35	—
51. Dominican Republic	87	133	87	131	87	135
52. Cote d'Ivoire	60	78	80	92	41	65
53. Honduras	80	102	81	103	79	102
54. Nicaragua	69	98	68	93	69	103
55. Thailand	78	99	82	—	74	—
56. El Salvador	82	70	85	69	79	70
57. Congo, People's Republic	114	—	134	—	94	—

	Total		Male		Female	
	1965	1986	1965	1986	1965	1986
58. Jamaica	109	—	112	—	106	—
59. Guatemala	50	76	55	82	45	70
60. Cameroon	94	107	114	116	75	97
61. Paraguay	102	99	109	102	96	97
62. Ecuador	91	14	94	—	88	—
63. Botswana	65	105	59	101	71	109
64. Tunisia	91	118	116	127	65	108
65. Turkey	101	117	118	121	83	113
66. Colombia	84	114	83	112	86	115
67. Chile	124	110	125	110	122	109
68. Peru	99	122	108	125	90	120
69. Mauritius	101	106	105	105	97	106
70. Jordan	95	—	105	—	83	—
71. Costa Rica	106	102	107	103	105	101
72. Syrian Arab Republic	78	111	103	117	52	105
73. Malaysia	90	101	96	100	84	99
74. Mexico	92	114	94	115	90	113
75. South Africa	90	—	91	—	88	—
76. Poland	104	101	106	101	102	101
77. Lebanon	106	—	118	—	93	—
Upper-middle-income	[1]97	[1]104	[1]102	[1]107	[1]93	[1]101
78. Brazil	108	105	109	—	108	—
79. Uruguay	106	110	106	111	106	109
80. Hungary	101	98	102	97	100	98
81. Panama	102	106	104	109	99	104
82. Argentina	101	109	101	109	102	109
83. Yugoslavia	106	95	108	95	103	94
84. Algeria	68	95	81	105	53	85
85. Korea, Republic	101	94	103	94	99	94
86. Gabon	134	126	146	127	122	125
87. Portugal	84	117	84	131	83	123
88. Venezuela	94	110	93	110	94	110
89. Greece	110	106	111	106	109	106
90. Trinidad and Tobago	93	95	97	93	90	96
91. Libya	78	—	111	—	44	—
92. Oman	—	94	—	101	—	86
93. Iran, Islamic Republic	63	117	85	127	40	107
94. Iraq	74	99	102	107	45	91
95. Romania	101	97	102	98	100	97
Low- and middle-income	[1]78	[1]103	[1]84	[1]112	[1]62	[1]94
Sub-Saharan Africa	[1]41	[1]66	[1]52	[1]73	[1]31	[1]58
East Asia	[1]88	[1]123	—	[1]131	—	[1]117
South Asia	[1]68	[1]84	[1]83	[1]98	[1]52	[1]69
Europe, Middle East, and North Africa	[1]83	[1]97	[1]94	[1]104	[1]71	[1]91
Latin America and Caribbean	[1]98	[1]108	[1]99	[1]110	[1]96	[1]108
17 Highly indebted	[1]88	[1]106	[1]91	[1]109	[1]84	[1]104
High-income economies	[1]105	[1]102	[1]106	[1]103	[1]105	[1]102
OEDC members	[1]107	[1]102	[1]107	[1]103	[1]106	[1]102
Other	[1]74	[1]90	[1]80	[1]94	[1]67	[1]87
96. Spain	115	101	117	104	114	103
97. Ireland	108	100	107	100	108	100
98. Saudi Arabia	24	71	36	78	11	65
99. Israel	95	99	95	98	95	100
100. New Zealand	106	105	107	106	104	104
101. Singapore	105	115	110	118	100	113
102. Hong Kong	103	105	106	106	99	104
103. Italy	112	97	113	99	110	99
104. United Kingdom	92	106	92	105	92	106
105. Australia	99	106	99	106	99	105
106. Belgium	109	96	110	95	108	97
107. Netherlands	104	114	104	113	104	115
107. Austria	106	100	106	100	105	100
109. France	134	112	135	113	133	111

	Total		Male		Female	
	1965	1986	1965	1986	1965	1986
110. Germany, Federal Republic	—	97	—	97	—	97
111. Finland	92	104	95	104	89	104
112. Kuwait	116	98	129	99	103	96
113. Denmark	98	98	97	98	99	98
114. Canada	105	105	106	106	104	104
115. Sweden	95	99	94	97	96	99
116. Japan	100	102	100	101	100	102
117. United Arab Emirates	—	100	—	99	—	101
118. Norway	97	98	97	97	98	97
119. United States	—	102	—	103	—	103
120. Switzerland	87	—	87	—	87	—
Total reporting economies	[1]82	[1]103	[1]88	[1]110	[1]70	[1]95
Oil exporters	[1]68	[1]110	[1]78	[1]114	[1]59	[1]105
Non-reporting non-members	[1]102	[1]105	[1]103	—	[1]102	—

[1] Weighted average.

Oban-Korup Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Her Majesty's Government are giving to Nigeria and Cameroon, directly or indirectly related to helping protect the Oban-Korup rain forest; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Overseas Development Administration is contributing to the sustainable development of the Korup national park in Cameroon and the Oban hills area of Nigeria, both by supporting the World Wide Fund for Nature through the joint funding scheme and from bilateral country programme funds.

Our present total commitment for Korup is £700,000 over the period 1987 to 1992. It includes a soils survey, preparation of a master plan, and a contribution to the World Wide Fund for Nature's work in setting up new agroforestry areas and buffer zone protection.

For the Oban hills area, we have spent £210,000 on the design of a conservation master plan, and an Overseas Development Administration team has just visited Nigeria to draw up proposals for future assistance.

Development Assistance

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing British official development assistance, as defined by the OECD, in constant 1989 prices, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: The answer is as follows:

Net official development assistance 1979 to 1988 at constant 1989 prices

	Constant 1989 prices £ million
1979	2,098
1980	1,377
1981	1,676
1982	1,481
1983	1,453
1984	1,399
1985	1,466
1986	1,417
1987	1,323
1988	1,589

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentres

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans regarding the privatisation or contractorisation of jobcentres and their services.

Mr. Eggar: No. As my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced on 1 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 461, the employment service will be launched as a Next Steps agency in April. Agency status will involve the setting of clear objectives and targets for the employment service and will clarify accountability for policy, management and performance. This will enable the employment service to provide greater value for money and improved customer service. My right hon. Friend also announced that the employment service will progressively integrate its jobcentre and benefit services. This will represent a significant improvement on the present system where most people have to visit both a benefit office and a jobcentre as part of claiming benefit and looking for work.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost to the Exchequer for each job created as a result of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Eggar: For the financial year to March 1989, the net cost to the Exchequer for each entrant to the enterprise allowance scheme is estimated at £1,900.

Small Firms Loan Guarantees

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost per job to the Exchequer of jobs created as a result of the Government's small firms loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Eggar: The net Exchequer cost of the loan guarantee scheme per person leaving the unemployment count is estimated to be of the order of £450. This figure is derived from the costs of a typical loan adjusted by the benefit, tax and national insurance savings relating to those leaving the count in the first year of a loan as a direct result of the scheme.

Reactive Dyes

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to whom a leaflet published by the Health and Safety Commission, warning of the health hazards of reactive dyes, is being circulated; what are the main precautions the leaflet advises workers and employers to adopt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The leaflet "Your Health and Reactive Dyes" published by the Health and Safety Commission on 1 February 1990, is being distributed widely in the finishing sector of the textile industry and is also being sent to the Society of Dyers and Colourists and to further education establishments specialising in textile technology. The leaflet is specifically intended to inform workers. The main precautions which the leaflet advises are: to open, dispense and weigh out dye powders at a dust control booth; to clean up any spillages by vacuum or wet method; to wear a suitable respirator and protective clothing when instructed to do so; to pay attention to personal hygiene and to seek medical advice if specified symptoms occur.

Small Firms

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small firms used his Department's small firms advisory service in 1989.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989 the small firms service in England handled 314,625 inquiries and provided 50,013 counselling sessions to 35,572 clients.

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has yet received advice from the Health and Safety Commission on whether regulations should be made under section 235 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: The chairman of the HSC has written to me with the Commission's advice on this matter. There are no present plans to introduce regulations.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure attributed to the action for jobs campaign in 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: Total expenditure on the action for jobs campaign in 1988-89 was £600,000.

New Businesses

131. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses were started over the past year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* In 1988, the latest year for which figures have been published by my Department, the net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses was 64,000, an average of just over 1,200 per week. This was the net result of 230,000 new registrations and 166,000 deregistrations. Early indications from data collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are that there was a net increase of some 80,000 in 1989, or 1,500 per week on average.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No security firms are employed by my Department.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of the recently agreed entitlement to two days paid paternity leave.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Gymnasium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council on how many occasions in the past 12 months clothing belonging to right hon. and hon. Members has been reported as going missing while they have been using the House of Commons gymnasium; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: None.

Refreshment Department

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, under which vote the £370,179 shown as the total for staff costs, including wages and salaries, social security costs and staff meals, in the account for the House of Commons refreshment accounts in the year 1988-89, is shown in the appropriation accounts.

Mr. Beith: The sum referred to represents the cost of meals provided by the Refreshment Department for its staff, the wages of casual staff, and overtime payments and associated social security contributions wholly attributable to the banqueting services of the Department. Since 1 April 1980, when the Refreshment Department became a Department of the House, those costs have been met from the Department's trading fund, the accounts of which are approved each year by the House of Commons Commission and presented to the House by Mr. Speaker, together with the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.

The wages of all the permanent full-time staff of the Refreshment Department are met from the House of Commons: administrative vote (class XXA, vote 1); and appear in the appropriation accounts for that vote. In 1988-89 expenditure on wages, allowances and national insurance contributions for the permanent full-time staff of the Refreshment Department was £2,632,853.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Female Teachers

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to assist female teachers to take a break in their career and then return to teaching.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government are keen to encourage former teachers to return to teaching. On 18 January 1990, my right hon. Friend announced a £4 million education support grant programme over two years to help LEAs attract qualified teachers back into teaching and recruit new mature entrants. This funding will help LEAs to provide career break and keeping-in-touch schemes, job-share and part-time working and creche facilities. In addition, LEA training grant scheme funding is available for updating the skills and knowledge of qualified teacher returners. It is for LEAs and schools as employers to take advantage of these funds to respond to the specific needs of women returners.

Student Loans

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average debt expected for a student starting his or her degree course in autumn 1990 under the student loans system and studying *(a)* a three-year arts or humanities degree, *(b)* a four-year engineering degree and *(c)* a five-year medical degree at an English university or polytechnic.

Mr. Jackson: The loan facility is available to support students' maintenance. The size of the debt in any individual case will depend on the amount of loan facility drawn down. The size of the facility does not relate to the nature of the course.

If inflation runs at 3 per cent., a student at a higher education institution outside London and living away from home, starting a course in 1990-91 taking up the maximum loan facility in each year, would have a total debt in real terms of £1,317 for a three-year course, £1,922 for a four-year course, and £2,592 for a five-year course.

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider weighting student loans to take account of regional variations in the cost of accommodation.

Mr. Jackson: The loan facility, like the maintenance grant, will be available at three levels, according to whether the student is living during term time in the parental home, away from home in London, or away from home outside London. Differences in regional accommodation costs were also taken into account in distributing the higher education access fund between the various sectors. We wish the UFC and PCFC to have regard to relevant accommodation costs in making allocations to their institutions.

National Vocational Qualifications

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve co-operation in bringing about the comprehensive framework of national vocational qualifications.

Mr. Jackson: The work of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) lies at the heart of Government policy for the reform and rationalisation of vocational qualifications. When NCVQ was established in 1986, the Government accepted the advice that a voluntary process of reform, through the procedures of NCVQ, represented the best way of securing the commitment of all concerned with the formulation and delivery of quality national vocational qualifications.

My right hon. Friend attended NCVQ's council meeting on 29 January 1990 when he acknowledged the progress that had already been made and invited the council to identify ways in which he might assist in its future work. He plans to hold a further meeting with the chairman and chief executive of NCVQ as part of that process, and continues to keep in close touch with the major examining and validating bodies offering vocational qualifications.

Further Education

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number, and the relevant percentages, of young people aged 16 and 17 years who are currently in full-time education.

Mr. Jackson: Estimates of numbers and percentages of the population of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in England in 1988-89 are as follows:

	Aged 16		*Aged 17*	
	Numbers ('000s)	*per cent.*	*Numbers ('000s)*	*per cent.*
School	223	33·1	148	20·5
Full-time further education (excluding YTS)	114	16·9	101	13·9
Full-time further education (YTS)	13	2·0	5	0·7

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities in their submissions to him of funding schemes for further education have named 1 April 1991 as the date for delegation of budgets; how many of these authorities have had this date changed by him to 1 April 1990; if he will list the local education authorities in both categories; and under what powers he imposed these changes.

Mr. Jackson: The following local education authorities named 1 April 1991 as the date for delegation of budgets:

Bolton
Durham
Rotherham
Havering
Sunderland
Ealing
Hillingdon
Merton
Bexley
Cleveland
Doncaster
Kingston
Barnsley
Rochdale
St. Helens
Sutton
Barnet
Waltham Forest
Hertfordshire

Using powers under section 140 of the Education

Reform Act 1988 my right hon. Friend has to date modified the schemes of the following local education authorities to introduce delegation from 1 April 1990:

Cleveland
Doncaster
Havering
Kingston

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken to educate children about the dangers of solvent abuse.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The National Curriculum Science Order requires that pupils should study the risks of solvent abuse and how it affects body processes. The Department will be supporting LEA expenditure of up to £7 million in 1990-91 on preventive health education, including education about solvent abuse. The Department has also contributed funding towards the production by Re-Solv of a video on solvent abuse for use in schools.

Mummified Relics

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central of 9 February, *Official Report*, column 795, whether he will take steps to establish how many aboriginal and Maori skulls and skeletal remains are in United Kingdom universities.

Mr. Jackson: No. Responsibility for university collections rests solely with the institutions concerned.

University Intakes

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish *(a)* the target intake figures for each university education department or faculty for 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 and *(b)* the actual intake in each case for 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Initial teacher training target and intake figures for individual universities are as follows:

University	*(a) Target*				*(b) Intake*		
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Bath	147	162	177	156	122	131	142·0
Birmingham	159	159	159	189	157	164	160·0
Bristol	134	134	134	164	132	146	139·0
Brunel	95	85	75	36	27	38	25·0
Cambridge	222	227	227	249	221	213	202·0
Durham	269	274	279	293	276	271	284·0
East Anglia	165	180	200	212	157	172	194·0
Exeter	348	388	423	489	374	441	474·0
Hull	148	154	160	224	146	131	215·0
Keele	162	167	167	198	127	153	178·0
Leeds	317	322	327	393	285	329	327·0
Leicester	320	330	340	393	320	321	308·0
Liverpool	146	151	156	170	126	140	142·0
London: Goldsmiths College	395	395	395	395	353	346	337·0
London: Institute of Education	530	540	550	598	523	528	497·5
London: Kings College	234	239	239	244	206	175	159·0
Loughborough	189	209	229	251	171	183	210·0
Manchester	266	218	223	248	271	232	232·0
Newcastle	165	170	175	219	174	185	188·0
Nottingham	203	203	203	249	206	209	218·0
Oxford	150	150	150	186	145	137	150·0
Reading[1]	116	116	352	393	114	113	360·0
Sheffield	146	146	146	194	140	137	153·0
Southampton	115	115	115	176	108	130	112·0
Sussex	111	121	126	144	104	139	146·0
Warwick	345	382	422	439	345	355	387·0
York	98	98	98	163	111	110	120·0
Aberystwyth	178	183	183	248	156	175	212·0
Bangor	180	185	195	110	150	97	93·0
Cardiff	189	194	199	36	176	187	176·0
Swansea	158	163	173	321	146	129	165·5
Total	6,400	6,560	6,997	7,780	6,069	6,217	6,706

[1] incorporating numbers for Bulmershe college of higher education from September 1989.

Qualified Teachers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the numbers of successful and unsuccessful applicants for qualified teacher status, holding degrees from institutions in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, west Africa and the West Indies; what is the average length of wait for qualified teacher status for successful applicants from these countries; and if he will give the preceding information for each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The arrangements for according qualified teacher status changed with effect from 1 September 1989. Prior to that date, teachers trained overseas could be granted qualified teacher status under paragraph 2(b) of schedule 5 to the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 provided their course of initial teacher

training was comparable to a course of training available in this country. Details of the applications considered are contained in the table. Detailed information on the average time taken to process cases is not available.

Country or Region	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	West Africa	West Indies	Total
1985						
Total Considered	171	55	17	35	26	304
Accepted	57	16	10	2	2	87
Rejected	114	39	7	33	24	217
1986						
Total Considered	144	44	18	26	19	251
Accepted	35	15	8	4	3	65
Rejected	109	29	10	22	16	186
1987						
Total Considered	185	29	14	47	34	309
Accepted	20	7	0	2	5	34
Rejected	165	22	14	45	29	275
1988						
Total Considered	105	35	19	47	19	225
Accepted	14	5	6	2	0	27
Rejected	91	30	13	45	19	198
1989						
Total Considered	123	36	21	62	26	270
Accepted	18	7	8	1	3	37
Rejected	105	29	13	63	23	233

Institute of Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of scientists employed at the Institute of Food Research at *(a)* Reading, *(b)* Norwich and *(c)* Bristol at the beginning of each of (i) 1988, (ii) 1989, (iii) 1990 and *(iv)* 1991.

Mr. Jackson: The figures in the following table refer to scientists employed, or expected to be employed, as at 1 April in each year. Those for 1990 and 1991 are estimates. The table excludes vacancies but includes period appointments.

	Bristol	Norwich	Reading	Total
[1]1988	143·0	200·0	100·0	443·0
[1]1989	141·5	192·5	87·0	421·0
[2]1990	86·0	199·0	113·0	398·0
[2]1991	0·0	231·0	156·0	387·0

[1] Actual numbers.
[2] Planned numbers.

Universities Funding Council

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Universities Funding Council; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Universities Funding Council from time to time in the course of normal business.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sentencing

37. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Attorney-General how many recent appeals there have been against over-lenient sentencing; and how many were successful.

The Attorney-General: Since February 1989, when the power became effective, I have applied for leave to refer the sentencing in nine cases to the Court of Appeal. Leave has been granted in seven such cases, and sentences have been increased in six of the cases. I have withdrawn two cases in the light of later information. I have referred one case to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland; the sentence in that case was also increased.

Crown Prosecution Service

38. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Attorney-General how many defendants were prosecuted in 1988-89 by the Crown prosecution service in *(a)* magistrates courts and *(b)* the Crown court.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service prosecuted 1,234,344 defendants in magistrates courts and 121,912 in the Crown court during 1988-89.

40. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss relations between the police and the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: I refer to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Director of Public Prosecutions

39. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what subjects were discussed.

41. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Serious Fraud Office

42. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the head of the Serious Fraud Office; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I frequently discuss matters of departmental interest with the director of the Serious Fraud Office and last met him for this purpose on 13 February.

Management Consultants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Oxford, East on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *189*, if he will list the research reports commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department as part of the civil justice review and give the cost of each contract; and if he will list any similar reports commissioned from outside management consultants since 1985 and give their date of completion and cost.

The Attorney-General: The following reports were commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department as part of the civil justice review:

"Personal Injuries Litigation Study": Inbucon Management Consultants Limited: 10 June 1985 to 31 January 1986: £140,498.

"Small Claims Study": Touche Ross Management Consultants: 9 December 1985 to 30 September 1986: £92,000.

"Commercial Court Study": Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited: 17 March 1986 to 28 November 1986: £72,340.

"Enforcement of Debt Study": Touche Ross Management Consultants: 17 March 1986 to 9 January 1987: £138,000.

"Housing Cases Study": School for Advanced Urban Studies at the University of Bristol: 1 March 1986 to 9 January 1987: £144,702.

The Lord Chancellor's Department has commissioned work from a number of management consultants since 1985 but only the following has been commissioned to report on an area similar to those listed above:

Touche Ross: "A survey of Solicitors' firms conducting criminal legal aid work": October 1988: £24,000.

THE ARTS

Three Graces

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what meetings he has had with *(a)* the Victoria and Albert museum, *(b)* the National Heritage Memorial Fund and *(c)* other interested parties on the future of Canova's Three Graces.

Mr. Luce: I have had a meeting with the director and other representatives of the Victoria and Albert museum and the director of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. I have also discussed the matter with the chairmen of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art and the National Art Collections Fund.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the future of Canova's Three Graces.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations about the future of Canova's Three Graces.

CIVIL SERVICE

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Luce: None.

WALES

Community Hospitals

15. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current number of community hospitals in Wales; and what he expects the figure to be in five and 10 years' time.

Mr. Grist: There are currently 30 community hospitals in Wales. On the basis of health authorities' present plans a further five such hospitals may be completed by 1995 and perhaps as many as 11 within 10 years.

Welsh Counties Committee

18. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what subjects were discussed when he last met the Welsh Counties Committee.

29. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met leaders of district councils in Wales; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met representatives of the Welsh Counties Committee and the Council of Welsh Districts on 30 January to discuss local authority budgets for 1990-91.

Health Authorities

19. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from health authorities within Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend receives many representations from health authorities in Wales on a wide variety of issues.

Pollution Inspectorate

20. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met Her Majesty's inspector of pollution; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: I met Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on 28 November 1989 to discuss waste disposal in Wales.

Transport

21. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from bodies concerned with the development of transportation systems within Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I and my officials have frequent dealings with local authorities and others about the development of transport systems within Wales.

Public Appointments

22. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of appointments to public bodies which have been made *(a)* solely by himself and *(b)* jointly with other Ministers from June 1987 to the present day.

Mr. Peter Walker: The totals are 660, and somewhat over 500, respectively.

Toxic Waste

23. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to reduce the dumping of toxic and other wastes within Wales.

Mr. Grist: Waste minimisation is central to the Government's integrated pollution control proposals. However, there will always be some wastes that will have to be disposed of, preferably as near as practicable to their points of origin.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the possible release of toxic effluent from the Trehir tip at Bedwas and the Coed-y-Brain tip at Llanbradach; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend does not collect such information. The responsibility for the regular inspection, including such matters as leachate control and monitoring, of all licensed sites or those operated under a council resolution, rests with the district council, which has appropriate powers under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

The National Rivers Authority and Dwr Cymru are responsible for the monitoring of discharges into water courses and sewers respectively.

Welsh Language

24. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the recommendations made to him by the Welsh Language Board.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is considering the practical implications of the board's recommendations for legislation and other related matters. The board has also been concerned with a range of other matters where it has been instrumental in finding practical solutions to problems experienced by Welsh speakers.

Agriculture

25. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from farming organisations about the downgrading of his Department's agricultural department at Ruthin.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received a number of representations from the National Farmers Union, the Farmers Union of Wales, the Country Landowners Association and the Welsh Mountain Sheep Society. I have assured these organisations that the present high level of service will continue both from the area office which will be maintained at Ruthin and from the enlarged divisional office at Caernarfon.

Local Government Finance

26. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the community charge in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The House debated Welsh local government finance matters on 24 January. I have no plans to make a further statement.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the available proposed final community charge figure for Welsh local authorities.

Mr. Grist: Welsh local authorities are in the process of setting their budgets for 1990-91. Until that process has been completed, charging authorities cannot set their community charge. The figures requested are therefore not available.

Labour Statistics

27. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the most recent figures for male and female unemployment in the Ogmore constituency, Ogwr borough and Mid Glamorgan county council areas and the total in Wales; and what were the equivalent figures in June 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 11 January 1990 there were 1,888, 3,053, 14,831 and 67,736 unemployed males in the Ogmore constituency, Ogwr borough, the county of Mid Glamorgan and Wales respectively. Comparable figures for unemployed females were 595, 1,086, 4,373 and 22,613 respectively. Figures for June 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

M4

28. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the successful tenderer for the building of the missing part of the M4 near Port Talbot.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Construction of the M4 between Baglan and Lonlas will be undertaken under three separate contracts. We announced the tenderer for the first contract, Earlswood to Lonlas, on 16 February.

Higher Education

30. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve local authority higher education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, which advises my right hon. Friend on higher education matters, has considered a report setting out proposals for strengthening the provision of local authority higher education in Wales. The proposals will now be the subject of a consultation seminar arranged for 5 March. WAB will consider the report again on 6 April taking account of the comments made at the seminar, and will then decide what advice to offer my right hon. Friend.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 18 December, *Official Report*, columns *57-58*,

concerning the accountancy firms employed by his Department, if he will indicate *(a)* the names of the six firms, *(b)* a list of payments made to each in 1988 and 1989 and *(c)* details of the consultancy contracts given to each firm.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Firm and Project

Coopers and Lybrand
Developing and implementing All Wales Strategy, including Resource Management, for NHS in Wales.

Price Waterhouse
Project 2000—option appraisal of nurse training.
Advice on longform reports and fraud and system audit.*

Peat Marwick
Review of financial accounting systems for NHS in Wales.

Ernst and Young
Advice on computer audit.

Touche Ross
Provision of financial advice on longform reports, reporting accountant consistency and project management.*

Deloittes
"K" setting.*

Those marked with an asterisk were jointly appointed with DOE as part of the water privatisation proposals. The full cost of the "K" setting project is being borne by DOE.

It would be inappropriate on grounds of commercial confidentiality to list individual payments. However, total payments amounted to £292,373 in 1988 and £117,238 in 1989.

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will provide for the districts of Cardiff, Monmouth and Pembroke the number and rateable value of houses and so on with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

A55

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the development of the A55 has cost over the last 10 years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Expenditure on major improvement schemes on the A55 for the financial years 1980-81 to 1988-89 totalled £374·3 million; forecast outturn for 1989-90 is £69·5 million giving total expenditure of £443·8 million over the 10-year period.

Unemployed People

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available statistics showing the number of people registered as unemployed who are not in receipt of benefit.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available in the form requested.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department currently has contracts with two private security firms, the Royal British Legion Attendants Company Limited and Delta Security. Detailed information in relation to individual contracts is treated on a commercial in confidence basis, but the aggregated number of employees engaged by the two firms on our contracts with them presently varies between 11 and 13. The total value excluding VAT, of all contracts with private security firms from 1984-85 is as follows:

	£
1984-85	64,229
1985-86	68,550
1986-87	72,989
1987-88	72,989
1988-89	75,835
1989-90	81,196

Disabled and Elderly People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the organisations representing or concerned with the needs of *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* people with physical, sensory or mental disability and *(c)* carers which receive financial support from his Department, together with the figure for each such organisation for the financial years 1987-88, 1988-89 and the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Elderly People

Elderly Initiative Grant Scheme	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
(i) Voluntary Organisations			
Cardiff City Farm	—	—	4,977
DayBreak Trust	—	33,972	41,984
South Glamorgan Care for the Elderly	5,682	34,886	98,916
South Riverside Community Development Centre	—	68,245	48,221
(ii) Statutory Organisations			
Clwyd County Council	1,687	12,430	20,439
Clwyd Health Authority	30,375	104,030	151,996
Gwent County Council	4,050	43,482	13,585
Gwent Health Authority	5,105	98,416	130,827
Gwynedd County Council	—	38,250	—
Mid Glamorgan County Council	23,972	106,392	108,187
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority	—	9,000	14,625
Powys County Council	—	—	26,454
Powys Health Authority	—	—	26,351
South Glamorgan County Council	22,950	50,176	28,453
South Glamorgan Health Authority	25,183	88,124	115,529
West Glamorgan County Council	103,545	415,974	259,403
S64 Health Services and Public Health Act 1968			
British Association for Service to the Elderly	—	—	12,000
Help the Aged (Wales)	—	805	1,347
Age Concern Wales	46,498	44,358	74,900

(b) Physical, sensory, mental disability

People with a Physical and/or Sensory Disability
S64 Health Services and Public Health Act 1968

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Wales Council for the Disabled	80,775	68,500	[1]98,750
Wales Council for the Deaf	23,213	28,573	47,700
Wales Council for the Blind	12,194	15,078	15,500
Arts for Disabled People in Wales	14,498	15,000	20,000
Physically Handicapped Able Bodied	—	—	10,000
Slippage (local groups)	—	31,620	—
Other			
Wales Disabled Drivers Assessment Centre	5,000	5,000	5,000

[1] Provisional.

People with a Mental Handicap
All Wales Mental Health Strategy

County Joint Planning Teams	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Clwyd	1,131,620	1,669,883	2,536,091
Dyfed	724,055	1,030,790	1,537,940
Gwent	1,400,599	1,875,467	2,852,000
Gwynedd	1,561,391	2,025,635	2,557,085
Mid Glamorgan	1,906,820	2,604,240	3,200,000
Powys	480,037	652,227	916,971
South Glamorgan	1,153,803	1,660,498	2,360,000
West Glamorgan	1,237,489	1,917,922	2,580,000
Sub total	9,595,814	13,436,662	18,540,087

Voluntary organisations and others	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
BAAF	24,806	—	16,519
Catholic Children's Society	26,840	3,454	45,940
Mencap in Wales	49,620	41,979	52,050
Pengwern Hall	25,500	26,775	29,000
SCOVO	47,400	63,823	84,748
DRIVE	58,722	—	—
Pre-School Playgroups Association	21,500	—	—
Arts for Disabled People in Wales	—	4,200	1,672
Clinical Psychology Training	70,800	73,250	41,250
Education Research Project	18,826	2,930	—
First Choice Housing Association	12,236	8,000	—
Stackpole Project	—	122	—
Training Support Unit	67,006	64,210	—
"Working Together" Training Course	10,000	25,000	—
"Patterns for Living" Training Course	8,676	—	—
South Wales Federated Housing Association	3,000	—	—
British Institute of Mental Handicap	4,562	—	3,795
Barnado's	738	—	—
Challenging Behaviour Project, Dyfed	—	—	1,555
Advocacy Project, Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital	—	—	24,000
Cartrefi Cymru	—	—	14,500
Sub total	450,232	313,743	315,029
All Wales Advisory Panel	1,459	4,835	10,000
TOTAL	10,047,505	13,755,240	18,865,116
Section 64 Health Services and Public Health Act 1968			
CUSS (slippage)	3,665	—	—

Note: The figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 represent actual payments.
The figures for 1989-90 represent allocations to the bodies concerned.

People with a Mental Illness

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
S64 Health Services and Public Health Act 1968			
Wales MIND	59,550	57,863	[1]57,166

[1] Provisional.

(c) Carers

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
S64 Health Services and Public Health Act 1968			
Crossroads (Wales)	12,611	16,826	17,000
St. David's Foundation (slippage)	—	237	—

Some of the foregoing organisations, eg Wales MIND, are concerned with the interests both of sufferers and carers in the relevant field.

In addition, support for all these client groups is given by way of other programmes, notably urban programme and joint finance. A detailed breakdown is not readily available but in global terms, per client group, the figures are as follows:

Urban Programme	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Elderly people	249,000	285,000	571,000
People with a physical/sensory disability	133,000	152,000	241,000
People with a mental handicap	108,000	—	—
People with a mental illness	81,000	58,000	58,000
Carers	52,000	67,000	106,000

Notes:
1. Figures represent provision made.
2. Mental handicap strategy moneys 'taken out' of UP after 1987-88.

Joint finance and mental health development moneys

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Elderly People	122,000	312,003	195,000
People with a Physical/ Sensory Disability	13,000	—	22,000

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
People with a Mental Illness	1,389,000	1,364,356	1,424,000
Elderly Mentally Ill	582,000	1,313,339	707,000
People with a Mental Handicap	342,000	314,358	—
Other client groups[1]	4,000	43,000	—
Mixed client groups[2]	—	44,109	—
Unspecified	—	—	—

[1] Alcohol related problems, Autism, AIDS, acute, renal problems (mainly elderly).
[2] Physical and mental handicaps, mental illness and elderly mentally ill.

Retail Prices Index Error Moneys

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Elderly People	—	33,200	24,300
People with a Physical/Sensory Disability	—	41,038	128,346
People with a Mental Handicap	—	4,000	6,845
People with a Mental Illness	—	1,600	3,770
Carers	—	—	10,170

Notes:
1. RPI payments only applicable for 1988/89 and 1989/90.
2. Includes £7,600 grant to the Wales Carers' Alliance.

Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme in Wales

Grants (up to a maximum of £15,000) are given to all the above client groups but in the time available cannot be disaggregated.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *10*, if he will list the draft circulars issued by his Department between 1 January 1987 and 31 January 1990 which have not been followed up with a full circular and which deal with the needs of, and provision for, disabled people in the fields of *(a)* health, *(b)* social services, *(c)* housing, *(d)* education and *(e)* transport.

Mr. Peter Walker: Three draft circulars have yet to be followed up by a full circular. They are:

(i). Services for People with Physical and/or Sensory Disabilities (issued 29 December 1989).
(ii). House Adaptations for Disabled People (issued 28 December 1989).
(iii). House Renovation Grants (issued 28 December 1989).

It is intended to issue the final version of (i) next month.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give details of the expenditure of Dyfed county council in each year since 1974-75 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms; and if he will indicate the percentage increase in each year in real terms;

(2) if he will give details of the expenditure of Preseli-Pembrokeshire district council in each year since 1974-75 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms; and if he will indicate the percentage increase in each year in real terms;

(3) if he will give details of the expenditure of South Pembrokeshire district council in each year since 1974-75 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms; and if he will indicate the percentage increase in each year in real terms.

Mr. Grist: The information requested for each year since 1979-80 is given in the table. Comparable figures for 1974-75 to 1978-79 are not available centrally.

Total expenditure[1]

	Preseli-Pembrokeshire			South Pembrokeshire			Dyfed		
		At constant prices[2]			At constant prices[2]			At constant prices[2]	
	Cash	Value	Percentage increase on previous year	Cash	Value	Percentage increase on previous year	Cash	Value	Percentage increase on previous year
	£000	£000		£000	£000		£000	£000	
1979-80	3,043	5,730	n/a	2,022	3,807	n/a	80,844	152,226	n/a
1980-81	3,868	6,154	7·4	2,487	3,957	3·9	96,606	153,706	1·0
1981-82	3,667	5,314	−13·7	2,495	3,616	−8·6	106,940	154,972	0·8
1982-83	3,595	4,859	−8·6	2,381	3,218	−11·0	113,391	153,256	−1·1
1983-84	4,003	5,169	6·4	2,592	3,347	4·0	120,506	155,610	1·5
1984-85	4,184	5,147	−0·4	2,431	2,991	−10·7	126,488	155,605	0·0
1985-86	4,409	5,147	0·0	2,776	3,241	8·4	130,335	152,165	−2·2
1986-87	4,628	5,227	1·5	3,115	3,518	8·6	147,245	166,300	9·3
1987-88	4,829	5,179	−0·9	3,292	3,531	0·4	159,590	171,166	2·9
[3]1988-89	5,060	5,060	−2·3	3,538	3,538	0·2	174,299	174,299	1·8
[3]1989-90	5,928	5,540	9·5	3,943	3,685	4·2	192,445	179,855	3·2

[1] Total expenditure for Block Grant purposes.
[2] Deflated to constant 1988-89 price basis using GDP deflator.
[3] Provisional.
n/a denotes not applicable.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the figures for the total number of staff employed by each of Dyfed county council, South Pembrokeshire district council and Preseli-Pembrokeshire district council in each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Grist: The information held by the Department regarding the number of full-time and part-time employees for March of each year is set out in the following tables. No information on employees by individual authorities is held by the Department prior to December 1978.

Number of full-time employees

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	[1]1989
Dyfed	8,388	8,324	8,091	7,992	7,984	8,058	7,846	7,693	7,883	7,856	7,917
Preseli Pembrokeshire	532	521	500	512	n/a	504	507	503	494	492	496
South Pembrokeshire	354	336	330	306	298	287	284	282	278	280	272

Number of part-time employees[2]

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Dyfed	5,296	5,374	4,996	5,123	5,336	5,349	5,341	5,538	6,166	6,296	6,294
Preseli Pembrokeshire	39	42	41	41	n/a	38	42	46	53	53	62
South Pembrokeshire	21	18	18	22	26	24	24	26	25	28	27

[1] Provisional.
[2] There is a wide variation in the hours worked by part-time employees in different local authorities.
n/a Denotes not available.

Hospitals

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on proposals by the European Community to charge value added tax on new building and fuel for National Health Service hospitals and the action he is taking to increase capital and revenue allocations to ensure that health authorities are reimbursed for such expenditure.

Mr. Grist: The Government are reviewing the most appropriate way of compensating health authorities for the application of VAT to new construction. An announcement will be made in due course.

The capital and revenue allocations announced recently to health authorities take into account the effect of the charge in relation to VAT on fuel and power.

Highways

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total budget of the Welsh Office highways department in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90; and what proportion of this money was spent in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Gross provision was £136 million in 1988-89 and £157 million in 1989-90; outturn expenditure was £153 million in 1988-89. The proportion of these moneys spent in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys is not yet available.

PRIME MINISTER

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what paternity leave is allowed to staff in her Department; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements following agreement in principle with the Civil Service unions for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

Criminal Justice System

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received concerning the operation of the criminal justice system.

The Prime Minister: I receive a wide range of representations about the criminal justice system, many concerning sentencing.

A White Paper "Criminal Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm 965) published on 6 February sets out our proposals for a coherent statutory framework for sentencing.

EC (New Member States)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the responsibility for the cost to the European Economic Community of admitting new member states, including East Germany.

The Prime Minister: There is a consensus within the EC that no decisions on applications for membership of the EC will be possible until at least 1993. The implications of German unity for the EC will of course be discussed fully within the Community.

Engagements

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 February.

The Prime Minister: On 15 February I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I had further meetings later that day.

Local Authority Taxation

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what consideration she has given to the constitutional implications of different forms of local authority taxation being imposed on Scotland and England;

(2) what consideration she has given to the economic consequences of different forms of local authority taxation being imposed on Scotland and England.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no intention of introducing different forms of local authority taxation in Scotland and England. To do so would cause immense trouble in both places.

Inflation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the level of price rises which might be deemed likely to feed inflation.

The Prime Minister: The Autumn Statement forecast is for RPI annual inflation to fall to 5·75 per cent. by the fourth quarter of 1990. It is not the practice to provide more detail than published in table 2·7 of the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Leo Marks

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what approaches have been made to the authorities by Mr. Leo Marks for information and permissions relating to his book and history relating to alleged betrayal involving the Dutch Resistance and the Special Operations Executive during the period 1939 to 1945; what response has been sent; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Leo Marks has used, over several years, the publicly available facility of seeking and obtaining information for his book from the SOE adviser at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to trace the 200-page file sent by Mr. Colin Wallace to 10 Downing street in 1984; and whether she will outline the circumstances in which it went missing.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the information contained in the letter of 30 January from my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Post Office Letters

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the privatisation of Post Office Letters.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received a number of such representations from members of the public and organisations, the majority urging privatisation or the introduction of some form of competition.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will identify where in the *Official Report* she or other Ministers answered the question put to her on 15 February by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 15 February 1990 at column 391.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has had from Lord Callaghan on issues related to security in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

The Prime Minister: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure (Uprating)

Mr. Ian Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what items of public expenditure are subject to uprating by reference to the retail prices index *(a)* by statute and *(b)* by current policy commitment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A large number of public service pension schemes are increased in line with the retail prices index under the Pensions Increase Act 1971 and are specified in schedule 2 of that Act. The main schemes are as follows:

Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme;
Local Government Superannuation Scheme;
Police Pension Scheme;
Firemen's Pension Scheme;
Judicial Pension Scheme; and
Overseas Pensions administered by the Overseas Development Administration.

The Government are also committed to increase armed forces pensions in line with the RPI, although this is not required by statute: the increases each year are paid under regulations (Order in Council for the Navy, royal warrant for the Army and Queen's regulations for the RAF: the powers to make regulations are provided under three separate Acts of Parliament).

The following Department of Social Security and Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services benefits are uprated by statute by the movement in prices, for which this Government have used the retail prices index:

Retirement Pension (Basic RP, and SERPS, Pension Increments, and Graduated RP);
Widow's Benefits (excluding Widow's Payment);
Industrial Death Benefit;
Industrial Disablement Benefit;
Invalid Care Allowance;
Attendance Allowance;
Invalidity Pension;
Severe Disablement Allowance;
Guardian's Allowance; and
Child's Special Allowance.

There is no statutory requirement with respect to war pensions but these are uprated by the RPI by current policy commitment.

There are also a number of contracts between Government and other bodies which are subject to uprating by reference to the RPI.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of manufacturing investment in the last two quarters.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *378-79*.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the levels of industrial investment in the light of the Confederation of British Industry's latest survey.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Manufacturing investment reached a record level in 1989 after six years of growth averaging 8 per cent. per year.

Balance of Payments

Dr. Reid: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the current account of the balance of payments for 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The CSO's latest estimate is for a current account deficit of £20·3 billion in 1989, in line with the Autumn Statement forecast of around £20 billion.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much personal allowances would need to be increased, in cash and percentage terms, so that in conjunction with a one penny cut in the basic rate of tax, revenues remained the same, taking the impact of tax paid for someone on income levels from £5,000 up to £50,000 in steps of £5,000 and indicating the number of people brought into tax as a result of these changes.

Mr. Lilley: A one penny cut in the basic rate combined with a 1½ per cent. increase in allowances and the basic rate

limit over their 1989-90 levels would cost about the same in a full year at 1990-91 income levels as indexing allowances and the basic rate limit by 7·7 per cent., the amount required for statutory indexation. The 1½ per cent. increase in allowances would result in about 650,000 more individuals being liable to tax compared with indexation.

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. Further information is given in the tables:

Table 1: A 1½ per cent. increase in the 1989-90 levels of personal allowances and basic rate limit, compared with indexation, 1990-91

Allowance	*£ per annum*
Personal allowance (aged under 65)	−170
Personal allowance (aged 65-74)	−220
Personal allowance (aged 75 and over)	−220
Married couple's allowance (aged under 65)	−100
Married couple's allowance (aged 65-74)	−130
Married couple's allowance (aged 75 and over)	−130
Additional personal and widow's bereavement allowance	−100
Aged income limit	−700
Taxable income bands	
Basic rate limit	−1,200

Table 2: Effect on Tax Liability of a 1½ per cent. increase in the 1989-90 levels of personal allowances and the basic rate limit and a one penny cut in the basic rate of tax, compared with indexation, 1990-91

Income £ per annum	*Increase(+)/Decrease(−) in Tax Liability*	
	Single Person[1] *£ per annum*	*Married Man*[2] *£ per annum*
5,000	20·85	62·05
10,000	−29·15	12·05
15,000	−79·15	−37·95
20,000	−129·15	−87·95
25,000	−8·75	−137·95
30,000	37·00	77·00
35,000	37·00	77·00
40,000	37·00	77·00
45,000	37·00	77·00
50,000	37·00	77·00

[1]Assumes single person receives no other tax allowances and reliefs except the personal allowance (aged under 65).

[2]Assumes married man with wife not working and no children, who receives no other tax allowances and reliefs except the personal allowance (aged under 65) and the married couple's allowance (aged under 65).

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each year that personal equity plans have been in operation what is *(a)* the number and proportion of people with personal equity plans who are on the higher rate of tax and *(b)* the cost to the Exchequer in total of personal equity plans and per person with a personal equity plan.

Mr. Lilley: Information on personal equity plans is available only in respect of the number of plans and the amounts invested.

Estimates of the costs to the Exchequer are as follows:

	Total (£ million)	*Per Personal Equity Plan (£)*
1986-87	Negligible	Negligible
1987-88	5	10
1988-89	15	35
1989-90	20	30

Costs are expected to increase in future.

Income Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many households where the woman is the single earner will lose their present entitlement to the additional tax allowance in 1990-91 as a result of Government proposals for independent taxation.

Mr. Lilley: Under existing law a husband who does not have sufficient income to make full use of the married man's allowance can transfer any surplus to his wife. Under independent taxation he will be able to transfer any surplus married couple's allowance but his personal allowance is not transferable. However, where the married man's allowance was transferred to a wife in 1989-90 the transitional arrangements announced in the 1988 Budget will mean that, in addition to her own personal allowance and the transferred married couple's allowance, the wife will receive a further allowance. This will ensure that the couple's total allowances in 1990-91 are not less than their total allowances in 1989-90 as a result of the change to independent taxation. It is estimated that in 1990-91 just under 200,000 married couples will benefit from this transitional relief.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many single people and married couples do not pay tax in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Provisional estimates of the numbers of adult non-taxpayers in 1989-90 are 7·7 million single people and 3·2 million married couples.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the reduction in the standard rate of income tax would need to be to secure a £216 per annum benefit to the average taxpayer.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates for a single person and a married man on average male earnings in 1990-91 are given in the table:

Reduction in income tax from a cut in basic rate in 1990-91

	Reduction Per cent.	*Gain to individual £ per annum*
Single person[1]	1·5	[2]191·89
Married man[1]	2·0	[2]221·45

[1] Assuming average earnings for full time adult males in all occupations. In 1990-91, they are assumed to be £303·8 per week; in line with the assumptions of the growth in average earnings in 1989-90 and 1990-91 (from £256·3 per week in 1988-89) as published in paragraph 3.02 of the 1989 Autumn Statement.

[2] Calculations assume that 1989-90 personal allowances and the basic rate limit have been indexed by 7·7 per cent. to 1990-91. The gain to an individual quoted in the table is that figure closest to £216 per annum obtainable from a basic rate reduction to the nearest ½ per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units would become liable for

income tax in 1990-91 if personal allowances were frozen at their 1989-90 level; and how many of these would face marginal tax and benefit withdrawal rates of *(a)* 40 per cent. or over, *(b)* 60 per cent. or over, *(c)* 80 per cent. or over and *(d)* 90 per cent. or over.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]*: In 1990-91 it is estimated that just over half a million single people and married couples would be brought into tax if personal allowances were frozen at their 1989-90 levels in 1990-91. The estimate is based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and is provisional.

Estimates by marginal rate of tax and benefit withdrawal are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are currently in profit-related pay schemes; how many were in each of the years since it was introduced; how many registered schemes have existed in each year; and what is the distribution of schemes by number of people in them.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

Live Registered Schemes

	December 1987	*December 1988*	*December 1989*
Number of participants			
1-50	244	517	650
51-100	64	114	149
101-500	88	156	245
501-1,000	23	28	37
Above 1,000	11	15	31
Total schemes	430	830	1,112
Participating employees	72,000	122,000	226,000

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average income and the distribution of income of those in profit-related pay schemes.

Mr. Lilley: Average annual earnings of participants in registered profit-related pay schemes were about £12,000 in March 1989. I regret that information on the distribution of earnings is not available.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue raised from taxing workplace nurseries as a benefit in kind.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 12 February, *Official Report*, column *15*.

Business Expansion Schemes

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost so far of business expansion tax relief for 1989-90; and what was the cost in previous years of the scheme.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated cost of relief for 1983-84 to 1989-90 is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	50
1984-85	75
1985-86	85
1986-87	95
1987-88	110
1988-89[1]	130

[1] Provisional.

A forecast of £60 million for the cost of relief for the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 was published in "The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1990-91 to 1992-93" (chapter 21, ref CM 1021, appendix F), but no information is yet available centrally from official sources to provide a reliable estimate of the outturn.

Imports

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest trends in imports.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the fourth quarter of 1989, import volumes (less oil and erratics) fell by 4 per cent. This is clear evidence that import growth is slowing sharply in response to the slowdown in domestic demand.

Mortgages

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average level of mortgage entered into in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of the average new building society mortgage for each region on all dwellings for the third quarter of 1989 are given in the table:

Region	*Average New Mortgage* £
Northern	28,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,600
East Midlands	34,700
East Anglia	44,600
Greater London	60,900
South East	53,200
South West	43,700
West Midlands	33,800
North West	31,300
Wales	30,200
Scotland	26,500
Northern Ireland	24,200
United Kingdom	38,300

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many mortgagors claiming mortgage tax relief have an outstanding mortgage greater than *(a)* £30,000, *(b)* £35,000, *(c)* £40,000 and *(d)* £45,000; and what is their average annual income.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]*: Provisional estimates for 1989-90 are given in the table:

Mortgage greater than £	*Mortgagors (thousands)* £	*Average total income* £
30,000	2,100	23,500
35,000	1,600	23,500
40,000	1,200	24,500
45,000	900	26,000

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the average outstanding mortgage for mortgagors claiming mortgage interest tax relief for annual income ranges *(a)* under £5,000, *(b)* £5,001 to £7,500, *(c)* £7,501 to £10,000, *(d)* £10,001 to £15,000, *(e)* £15,001 to £20,000, *(f)* £20,001 to £30,000, *(g)* £30,001 to £50,000 and *(h)* over £50,000.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Provisional estimates for 1989-90 are given in the table:

Range of total income £ per annum	*Average mortgage £*
under 5,000	12,300
5,001 to 7,500	14,900
7,501 to 10,000	17,700
10,001 to 15,000	19,600
15,001 to 20,000	23,700
20,001 to 30,000	28,200
30,001 to 50,000	42,200
over 50,000	78,700

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the table published in his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), *Official Report*, 15 May 1989, column *16*, on mortgage tax relief, giving projections for 1990-91.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Latest estimates for 1989-90, based on the assumption that interest rates remain at current levels for the rest of 1989-90, are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1989-90 of information in the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and the 1986 family expenditure survey and are provisional. Projections for 1990-91 will depend on the levels of borrowing and interest rates.

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1989-90

Range of total income	*Numbers receiving mortgage interest relief (thousands)*	*Average value of relief per mortgage (£)*	*Total cost of relief (£ million)*
Up to £4,000	320	450	150
£4,001–£5,000	130	420	50
£5,001–£6,000	140	470	70
£6,0001–£7,000	230	520	120
£7,001–£8,000	440	570	250
£8,001–£9,000	450	640	290
£9,001–£10,000	390	640	250
£10,001–£12,000	870	610	530
£12,001–£15,000	1,440	700	1,000
£15,001–£20,000	2,030	750	1,510
£20,001–£25,000	1,220	790	970
£25,001–£30,000	660	870	570
Over £30,000	980	1,270	1,240
Total	9,300	750	7,000

Investment Growth

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the United Kingdom investment growth figures for each of the last 10 years; and if he will list comparable figures for each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information on gross fixed capital formation in the United Kingdom is published by the CSO in "Economic Trends Annual Supplement" 1989 and for 1988 in "Economic Trends" December 1989. Figures for each of the other EC countries are published by the OECD in "Economic Outlook" December 1989.

Trade Deficit

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the trade deficit for the current year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A new forecast will be published at the time of the Budget in March.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At present, paternity leave is not available to civil servants. However, Her Majesty's Treasury is finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last 10 years for which statistics are available *(a)* the size of the nation's investment in premium bonds, *(b)* the proportion of these funds available for prizes, *(c)* the value of the prizes and *(d)* the notional odds against winning a prize for a person with a £100 investment in premium bonds.

Mr. Ryder: The net investment in premium bonds, the value of prizes paid and the odds against winning a prize in any month with a holding of £100, for each of the last 10 financial years are as follows:

	Net investment at 31 March (£ million)	*Value of prizes paid in year (£ million)*	*Odds at 31 March with holding of £100 (to nearest whole number)*
1979-80	1,405	79	185 to 1
1980-81	1,462	93	141 to 1
1981-82	1,506	101	145 to 1
1982-83	1,586	104	150 to 1
1983-84	1,674	110	157 to 1
1984-85	1,768	122	110 to 1
1985-86	1,833	135	110 to 1
1986-87	1,926	141	110 to 1
1987-88	2,093	138	110 to 1
1988-89	2,273	139	110 to 1

None of the money invested in premium bonds is paid in prize money. Premium bond prizes are paid from a prize fund calculated on the total value of bonds eligible to participate in the prize draw. The variable rate of interest used to calculate the value of the prize fund has been at the following levels in the last 10 years:

	Percentage per annum
From:	
1 July 1980	7·0
1 November 1984	7·75
1 August 1987	7·0
1 July 1988	6·5

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the last five years and for the six months before, and the six months following the increase in the minimum purchase of premium bonds to £100, the number of bonds and the number of purchases of bonds at each denominational value at which they could be sold.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The number of premium bonds issued for each denominational value is shown in the table:

Bond denomination	*Number in thousands*						
£	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*January to June 1989*	*July to December 1989*
5	802	52	55	57	32	30	2
10	831	1,010	1,002	995	567	505	63
20	66	149	163	177	121	102	18
25	52	71	72	76	43	40	3
30	42	69	74	80	56	46	10
40	28	41	44	49	33	28	5
50	204	273	290	318	198	171	27
100	123	159	167	176	247	95	152
200	39	49	52	56	53	28	25
300	17	21	22	24	23	12	11
400	10	12	13	16	14	8	7
500	36	46	52	58	49	27	22
1,000	28	39	51	62	52	29	24
2,000	21	35	58	75	60	33	27

Note: Because premium bonds are issued only in certain denominations, for some purchases it is necessary to issue two or more bonds to make up the total value of the purchase. At present the average number of bonds issued for each purchase is 1·13.

National Insurance Earnings Limit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many male and female employees with earnings above the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions pay income tax at the standard rate only.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* In 1990-91 about 2·1 million employees will pay income tax at the basic rate and have earnings above the upper earnings limit for class 1 national insurance contributions. Of these, about 1·8 million are male and about 300,000 female.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised from freezing the inheritance tax threshold at its 1989-90 level; and how many estates would be brought into tax as a result.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The direct revenue yield, in a full year at 1990-91 levels, from freezing the inheritance tax threshold at £118,000 rather than increasing it in line with indexation is estimated to be about £85 million. About 3,000 estates would be brought into tax by this measure.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table on the same basis as that given in his reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in the *Official Report*, 18 July 1988, column *433*, on reductions in inheritance tax liability relative to the 1987-88 rate scale, giving figures for 1990-91.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Assuming statutory indexation of the 1989-90 rate scale, the inheritance tax liability on transfers in 1990-91 is estimated to be about £320 million lower than on an indexed 1987-88 rate scale. The distribution of the reduction in inheritance tax liability, by percentiles of the 22,000 estates which are expected to pay tax on 1990-91 transfers, assuming an indexed 1989-90 rate scale, is as follows:

Percentiles of estates	*£ million*
(a) top 1 per cent.	75
(b) top 5 per cent.	150
(c) top 10 per cent.	190
(d) bottom 70 per cent.	[1]65
(e) bottom 60 per cent.	[1]60
(f) bottom 50 per cent.	[1]50
(g) bottom 25 per cent.	[1]40

[1] includes about £20 million from about 8,000 estates which would be liable under the indexed 1987-88 rate scale but not liable under the indexed 1989-90 rate scale.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost in 1990-91 and in a full year of reducing the small companies rate of corporation tax to 20 per cent.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Table 4.5 of the 1989 Autumn Statement shows the direct effect of a 1 percentage point change in the small companies rate is £35 million in 1990-91. The corresponding full year effect is £50 million.

Subject to the qualifications in that table, the costs associated with a 5 percentage point reduction to 20 per cent. may be expected to be broadly pro rata to the effects of a 1 percentage point change.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in 1990-91 and in a full year of introducing stock relief based on the retail prices index into the corporation tax system.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* Information is not available on which to base a reliable estimate of this cost.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the cost in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* a full year of tax relief on private medical insurance; how many people benefit; and what proportion of these already have private medical insurance;

(2) how many people he expects to benefit in 1990-91 from the introduction of tax relief on private medical insurance; how many of these are pensioners; and what is the income distribution of those who gain.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Tax relief on private medical insurance for the over-60s will not be available until April. The cost in 1989-90 will be nil, and in 1990-91 about £40 million. This estimate is based on the assumption that about 600,000 individuals, with 330,000 policies, are to benefit in the first year of the relief and that about 90 per cent. of these already have private medical insurance. In subsequent years, as take-up increases, this proportion is expected to fall and the amount of tax relief will rise. The further details requested are not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the effect of indexing personal allowances *(a)* fully, *(b)* three quarters of full indexation, *(c)* half of full indexation, *(d)* quarter of what would be necessary for full indexation and *(e)* not indexing at all, on (i) tax revenue in both 1990-91 and in a full year, (ii) the average gain per person on incomes of £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £30,000, £40,000 and £50,000 plus and (iii) the number of people paying tax;

(2) what would be the effect of indexing personal allowances *(a)* fully, *(b)* three quarters of full indexation, *(c)* half of full indexation, *(d)* quarter of what would be necessary for full indexation and *(e)* not indexing at all, on a one-earner family of four on an income of £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £30,000, £40,000 and £50,000.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Available information is given in the tables. All estimates assume independent taxation and that the basic rate limit is increased in line with personal allowances. Estimates in tables 1 to 3 are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Table 1: Tax Revenue Cost(−)/Yield(+)

Increase	*1990-91 £ million*	*Full year £ million*
Full indexation	−1,670	−2,270
Three-quarters of full indexation	−1,260	−1,710
Half of full indexation	−850	−1,150
One-quarter of full indexation	−430	−580

Table 2: Average gain to individuals of increasing personal allowance and basic rate limit from their 1989-90 levels, at 1990-91 levels of income

Income (lower limit) £ per annum	*Average[1] gain per individual under: Full indexation £ per annum*	*Three-quarters indexation £ per annum*	*Half indexation £ per annum*	*One-quarter indexation £ per annum*
Under 5,000	50	40	25	15
5,000	65	50	35	15
10,000	80	60	40	20
15,000	80	60	40	20
20,000	100	75	50	25
30,000	335	255	170	85
40,000	370	275	185	90
Over 50,000	370	275	185	95

[1] Based on individuals liable to tax in 1989-90.

Table 3: Effects on number of individuals of increasing personal allowances and basic rate limit from their 1989-90 levels, at 1990-91 levels of income

Increase	*Decrease in number of individuals liable to tax '000s*
Full indexation	810
Three-quarters of full indexation	630
Half of full indexation	440
One-quarter of full indexation	200

Table 4: Gain for one-earner family of four of increasing personal allowances and basic rate limit from their 1989-90 levels

Income £ per annum	*Gain for one-earner family of four[1] under: Full indexation £ per annum*	*¾ indexation £ per annum*	*½ indexation £ per annum*	*¼ indexation £ per annum*
5,000	87·50	65·75	43·75	22·00
10,000	87·50	65·75	43·75	22·00
15,000	87·50	65·75	43·75	22·00
20,000	87·50	65·75	43·75	22·00
30,000	380·00	285·20	190·00	95·20
50,000	380·00	285·20	190·00	95·20

[1] Assumes the married man receives all the income and that he receives no other tax allowances and reliefs except for the personal allowance and the married couples allowance in 1990-91.

Inland Revenue (Scotland)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue jobs are located in Scotland.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* About 6,500.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many jobs are currently located at the Inland Revenue office in Cumbernauld; and what projection is made of staffing levels over the next five years.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* There are currently about 1,050 permanent posts at the Inland Revenue offices in Cumbernauld. Staffing levels over the next few years will depend on a number of factors, including levels of work and progress with computerisation projects.

Consumer Spending

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the figures for consumers' expenditure on rent, rates and water charges in table 1·6 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" include mortgage interest; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1979 in nominal and real terms the amount spent on local authority rents, other rents, rates, water and sewage charges, and mortgage interest.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Mortgage interest payments are not included in consumers' expenditure.

A split of local authority and other rents is not readily available. Estimates since 1979 of total rents paid, imputed rent (in respect of owner-occupation), and rates, water and sewage charges are given in the table in nominal and real terms. Figures for mortgage interest (gross of tax relief) are available only in nominal terms and to the nearest £ hundred million.

	Rents paid	*Imputed rent*	*Rates, water and sewage charges*	*Mortgage interest*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Current prices				
1979	3,367	6,522	3,464	4,800
1980	3,841	7,830	4,377	7,000
1981	4,998	9,114	5,333	7,900
1982	5,989	10,160	6,274	9,300
1983	6,352	11,181	6,182	9,300
1984	6,508	11,917	6,587	11,700
1985	6,988	12,783	7,151	16,000
1986	7,394	13,622	8,031	17,000
1987	7,920	14,439	8,843	19,600
1988	8,568	15,474	10,032	22,300
At constant 1985 prices				
1979	7,532	10,886	6,694	—
1980	7,491	11,162	6,794	—
1981	7,377	11,490	6,818	—
1982	7,201	11,899	6,912	—
1983	7,043	12,259	6,974	—
1984	6,945	12,584	7,061	—
1985	6,988	12,783	7,151	—
1986	6,997	13,027	7,245	—
1987	7,087	13,208	7,343	—
1988	7,184	13,404	7,449	—

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide for Grimsby the numbers and rateable values of houses with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

German Reunification

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the likely cost to the United Kingdom of German reunification; and if he will give the amount and the years in which it is likely to arise.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* My right hon. Friend is monitoring the steps being taken on reunification closely. However, it is too early to assess whether there are any costs to the United Kingdom, and if so what they may be.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect of German monetary union on the nature and timing of European monetary union.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* It is far too soon to assess the implications on European monetary union of any possible monetary union between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

ENERGY

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department of Energy has only one contract, with Securicor, for one post at one of its out-stations. The actual cost of this service is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives the Energy Efficiency Office is taking to promote the use of combined heat and power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department is actively promoting combined heat and power through the best practice programme. In particular my Energy Efficiency Office has planned a series of regional CHP marketing events to be held in 1990.

Sizewell B

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman-designate of Nuclear Electric to discuss the generation costs of Sizewell B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman-designate of Nuclear Electric regularly to discuss a wide range of nuclear issues.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Wakeham: None.

Global Warming

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action his Department is taking, through its various agencies, to combat global warming; and what is the total to be spent on this in the current year.

Mr. Wakeham: Much of the current research into global warming centres on ascertaining its detailed

scientific basis which does not fall within the responsibility of my Department. But we have various programmes concerned with particular aspects of energy production and supply which are highly relevant to future reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide, which is the main greenhouse gas emitted by the non-transport energy sector. They are:

renewable forms of energy (1989-90 forecast expenditure £18 million)
nuclear R&D (£137 million)
energy efficiency R&D (£8·9 million)
clean coal combustion (£2·5 million).

The privatisation of the electricity supply industry will promote further efficiency (and hence lower emissions) in the supply of power; and the non-fossil fuel obligation will ensure that both nuclear and renewable technologies make appropriate contribution to reductions in emissions.

Officials from my Department have made, and are continuing to make, a strong input to the deliberations of the response strategies working group of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. The United Kingdom report for the energy and industry subgroup of the working group was recently published as Energy Paper 58 —"An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them". A copy of that paper is in the Library of the House.

Departmental Energy Policy

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy to what extent environmental criteria determine energy policy within his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department's general aims centre around ensuring that the nation's energy needs are met, both now and in the future, in a manner which makes best use of resources, within the framework of Government policy and of our international obligations. These considerations include the preservation of the environment, both at the national level and more widely. On a detailed level, my Department's research and development objectives (published in the "Annual Review of Government Funded R&D") include environmental acceptability as a specific criterion.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest assesssment of the potential energy savings from a programme of energy efficiency measures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Across the economy, consumers could improve their energy efficiency by at least 20 per cent. through cost-effective measures.

Nuclear Fusion

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what research his Department is funding into nuclear fusion technology.

Mr. Baldry: The Department contributes to fusion research through the current Community fusion programme by supporting JET and the programme of work undertaken by the AEA.

Energy Paper Projections

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the projections in Energy Paper 55 will be next updated.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The projections for the long-term contributions to energy supply from different renewables contained in Energy Paper 55 are kept under review. As the results from our renewable energy research programme become available they are fed into the regular reviews of the individual technologies that are undertaken. Since the publication of Energy Paper 55 our research has indicated that these published projections are still broadly appropriate given the uncertainty attached to such projections.

Electricity Code of Practice

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether persons who are *(a)* suspected of illegal extraction of electricity or *(b)* have been convicted of that offence are to be excluded from the code of practice on disconnections.

Mr. Baldry: The requirement for public electricity suppliers to prepare a code of practice on the payment of bills is designed to give guidance to all domestic consumers. The codes are to be drawn up by the public electricity suppliers in consultation with the consumers committees and approved by the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Combustion Plants Directive

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if it remains the policy of his Department to meet the targets set by the large combustion plants directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are determined to implement in full the EC large combustion plants directive.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the present programme for retrofitting power stations to ensure compliance with emission levels, as determined by the European Community directive on large combustion plants.

Mr. Baldry: The Government will be assessing the electricity generators' plans for complying with the EC large combustion plants directive. The retrofitting of the 4 GW Drax power station is already under way and further retrofits are in prospect.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what contribution he estimates low-sulphur coal can make to meeting the emission levels set by the European Community directive on large combustion plants; what steps are being taken to protect United Kingdom sources of low-sulphur coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The burning of low-sulphur coal is an option open to the electricity generators as they prepare their plans to comply with the EC LCPD. The source of such coal will be a matter for the generators. The best protection of the United Kingdom coal industry is for it to produce reliable supplies which are competitive on the world market.

Amoco Application

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what date Amoco submitted its final annex B to the Department for the development of the Everest and

Lomond gas fields and for the CATS transmission system; and in what time scale the application is likely to be decided.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No such development plan has yet been received by my Department.

Generation Prices

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his Department's latest estimates, expressed in pence per kilowatt hour, of the price of advanced gas-cooled reactor generation and gas turbine electricity generation in stations of similar size.

Mr. Baldry: The prices paid for electricity from different generating stations are currently the subject of commercial negotiation between the area boards and the generators.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the capacity expressed in megawatts of the current electricity interconnector between Scotland and England; on what time scale it is to be upgraded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 6 February 1990 at column *585*. I shall ask the chairman designate of the National Grid Company to write to the hon. Member.

Scottish Electricity

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate from the Department of the likely requirement for each of the next 10 years of Scottish-generated electricity in the English grid.

Mr. Baldry: This is a commercial matter for the companies concerned and will depend on market prices in England and Wales and the prices at which the Scottish electricity companies are prepared to offer electricity.

Neptune Consortium

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Neptune Consortium has sought approval from his Department for the development of North sea fields or transmission systems.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No, nor would I necessarily expect to receive such an application from a group which I understand is a prospective purchaser of gas from the North sea.

Mining Skills

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has met with, or received representations from, the company Mining Skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Coal

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report from British Coal on pricing policy on selling coal to the new power-generating companies.

Mr. Baldry: No. As I indicated to the House on 4 December at column 29, under the new contracts with National Power and PowerGen British Coal's prices will continue to fall each year in real terms. The details of these contracts are still being negotiated between the parties. In Scotland, British Coal is continuing to negotiate commercial terms for coal supply to the SSEB, in the light of the recent court judgments. British Coal's pricing policy is a commercial matter for the corporation.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will give details of the sulphur content in deep-mined coal in (1) Yorkshire, (2) Nottinghamshire, (3) Wales, (4) Scotland, (5) north-east England and (6) Derbyshire;

(2) if he will give details of the sulphur content in opencast-mined coal in (1) Yorkshire, (2) Nottinghamshire, (3) Wales, (4) Scotland, (5) north-east England and (6) Derbyshire;

(3) if he will list the private mining companies operating licensed mines in (1) Scotland, (2) Wales, (3) Yorkshire, (4) Derbyshire, (5) Nottinghamshire and (6) north-east England.

Mr. Baldry: These are matters for the British Coal Corporation.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the sulphur content in imported coal from (1) Colombia, (2) South Africa, (3) China, (4) Australia, (5) America, (6) Poland, (7) Belgium.

Mr. Baldry: Detailed information is not available centrally for all of these countries, but the bulk of coal imports, particularly from the United States and Australia, is of relatively low sulphur specification, primarily for use in the metallurgical industry. Steam coal imports from Colombia are also relatively low in sulphur.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last had discussions with private mining companies involved in opencast mining; and what he discussed.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the National Association of Licensed Opencast Operators on 7 December 1989. A range of issues affecting the prospects of the licensed mine sector were discussed.

Union of Democratic Mineworkers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total and source of financial contributions from public funds to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department makes no payments to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and what he discussed.

Mr. Baldry: I met the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers on 23 January to discuss a range of issues affecting the coal industry.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Market

76. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies Her Majesty's Government have undertaken with regard to the effect of the single European market in 1992 on trade with Asian and African developing nations.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has authorised payment towards the conduct of a study by the Overseas Development Institute on the effect of the completion of the internal market on developing countries. The study is scheduled for completion in July 1990. An interim briefing paper is already available.

My Department has also given careful consideration to the external implications of the single market programme. The removal of remaining trade barriers will make it easier for non-EC companies to do business across the Community. After 1992, Asian and African developing countries will continue to enjoy preferential access to the Community market under arrangements established by the Lomé convention and the generalised scheme of preferences.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out the research and findings that have been given by Warren Springs laboratories on carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles with and without catalytic converters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: WSL has made no direct comparisons between catalyst and non-catalyst versions of popular makes and models of cars. Catalyst-equipped versions of these vehicles have not been available.

Our experience of catalyst cars is confined to specialist imports and manufacturers' prototypes, with relatively new catalysts.

We will measure emissions from production catalyst cars as they become available in the vehicle parc.

Our experience with relatively new catalysts shows a conversion efficiency of 80-90 per cent. for CO, hydrocarbons and NO_x. WSL has done no work as yet on degradation of catalyst performance with age, in use.

In non-catalyst cars, the CO and HC emissions would ultimately be oxidized to CO_2 in the atmosphere over periods of several months. Catalysts effect this oxidation at the tailpipe immediately.

The difference in CO_2 emissions between models with or without catalysts therefore depends almost entirely on the respective fuel consumptions. At present, catalyst vehicles have to operate at relatively rich air-fuel ratios, leading to a fuel consumption penalty of the order of 10 per cent.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received, and from whom, about section 62 of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: My Department receives a considerable number of representations on various aspects of the Financial Services Act. In recent months some of these have referred to section 62A, which will be inserted by section 193 of the Companies Act 1989 and which will limit the rights of action conferred by section 62. The Department will shortly be consulting over its proposals for the implementation of section 62A.

Capital Flows

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the annual capital flows, including loans granted and loan interest repaid, between the United Kingdom and the five poorest countries by 1990 standards in Latin America, Africa and Asia since 1975.

Mr. Redwood: It is not possible to provide the information requested without disproportionate expenditure.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the individuals prosecuted by the Department of Trade and Industry for insider dealings since January 1979 and indicate how many prosecutions succeeded and how many failed.

Mr. Redwood: Insider dealing became a criminal offence in July 1980. Since then there have been prosecutions by the DTI (or by the Department of Trade) for insider dealing offences of 21 individuals where the case has been determined. Eleven were convicted, but the conviction of one of them was overturned on appeal. Information about these prosecutions is as follows:

Number of defendants	*Security(ies) Involved*	*Date(s) of Offences or alleged Offences*	*Outcome*
2	Joseph Stocks and Sons (Holdings) Ltd.	11 December 1980 and a day between 15 April 1980 and 11 December 1980	Both convicted
1	Harris and Sheldon Group plc	Day between 4 June 1981 and 18 June 1981	Convicted
2	Blockley plc	9 August 1982	Acquitted
1	Martin the Newsagent plc	6 March 1984 and 9 March 1984	Convicted
1	Thomson T-Line plc	5 December 1985	Acquitted
1	Reardon-Smith Line plc	28 May 1985	Convicted
1	AE plc and Cadbury Schweppes plc	3 November 1986 and 14 October 1986	Convicted
1	The British and Commonwealth Shipping Co. plc and Steel Brothers Holdings plc	14 October 1986 and 14 November 1986	Convicted
1	Wordplex plc	30 April 1987	Acquitted on Appeal

Number of defendants	Security(ies) Involved	Date(s) of Offences or alleged Offences	Outcome
2	Mercantile House Holdings plc	5 January 1987	One convicted, case against the other withdrawn
3	Press Tools plc	5 August 1987	All Acquitted
1	Piccadilly Radio plc	19 December 1988	Convicted
1	Wheway plc	10 November 1987	Acquitted
1	Centreway Industries plc	3 July 1987, 9 July 1987, 29 July 1987, 30 July 1987	Acquitted
1	Ealing Electro-Optics plc	between 20 June 1988 and 20 July 1988	Acquitted
1	Minet Holdings plc	25 November 1987	Convicted

Prosecutions have also been concluded in the case of five other individuals. One of those prosecutions was by the procurator fiscal, two were by the Director of Public Prosecutions and two by the Crown prosecution service.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *393*, the insolvency service or any other Government agency collects information about the going concern qualifications received by failed companies.

Mr. Redwood: No such information is collected either by the insolvency service or any other Government agency.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward legislation to clarify and increase the effectiveness of the company rescue procedures in the Insolvency Act 1986, in particular to reduce the need to go to court for guidance on interpretation.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans at present to do so, though the insolvency service monitors the effectiveness of current insolvency legislation.

As is the case with new legislation, particularly where new concepts, such as the administration procedure, are introduced, precedents are established by early court decisions. As time goes on the need for court involvement is reduced.

Companies Acts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has taken steps to encourage companies to disclose non-financial and qualitative information.

Mr. Redwood: The Companies Act 1985 requires companies to disclose a range of such information in the directors' report. The Government favour any disclosure of such information by companies which goes beyond the requirements of the Companies Acts when companies consider that this would be helpful.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will consider legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to explain the safety of their products;

(2) if he will consider legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to explain the steps taken to conserve energy;

(3) if he will introduce legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to detail the steps taken by the company to control pollution;

(4) whether he will consider legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to state the amount spent on employee training;

(5) whether he will introduce legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to list steps taken to conserve energy;

(6) whether he will seek to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to explain the steps taken to enhance employment opportunities for women;

(7) if he will consider legislation to amend the Companies Acts to require the directors' reports of large companies to explain action which the company has taken to conserve Britain's natural resources.

Mr. Redwood: No. It would be unreasonably burdensome to require all large companies to provide such information. Companies are best placed to decide, in the light of their individual circumstances, whether this information is likely to be of interest to their members and other users of their reports and accounts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to amend the Companies Acts to give all employees of large companies a statutory right to receive a copy of the company's annual report and accounts.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to amend the Companies Acts so as to require the directors of large companies to file details of any information which they pass to their brokers.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will take steps to amend the Companies Acts to require directors' reports of large companies to explain the steps taken to safeguard and promote health and safety of their work force.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to exercise his power to make regulations under paragraph 10 of schedule 7 to the Companies Act 1985.

Invisible and Visible Trade

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the net invisible trade and *(b)* the net visible trade between the

United Kingdom and the five poorest nations, by 1990 standards, in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia since 1975.

Mr. Redwood: Information on invisible trade with individual countries is not available. The information requested on the balance of visible trade between the United Kingdom and the poorest nations in South America, Africa and Asia is given in the table:

United Kingdom visible trade with the five countries with the lowest per capita GNP in South America

Exports (fob) minus imports (cif) £000

	Haiti	Guyana	Bolivia	Dominican Republic	Honduras
1975	2,004	−18,160	−13,728	1,407	3,471
1976	1,820	−7,883	−13,830	5,248	4,097
1977	2,352	−12,873	−25,266	8,477	5,863
1978	3,524	−23,423	−15,893	8,681	6,220
1979	2,048	−14,390	−28,019	4,456	5,029
1980	1,902	−15,184	−24,458	6,730	3,151
1981	1,102	−21,872	−24,184	3,847	4,554
1982	1,087	−37,410	−16,231	4,409	−37
1983	2,621	−29,127	−10,122	4,933	2,491
1984	2,334	−43,043	−2,882	6,915	−4,979
1985	3,581	−33,971	−3,991	6,750	−2,113
1986	4,248	−41,798	−6,563	7,580	3,933
1987	4,706	−43,131	−11,140	15,250	5,747
1988	5,916	−32,928	−7,195	8,712	−404
1989	5,763	−41,307	−11,518	14,296	−6,603

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

United Kingdom visible trade with the six countries with the lowest per capita gross national product in Africa

Exports (fob) minus Imports (cif)

	Ethiopia £000	Chad £000	Guinea-Bis £000	Zaire £000	Mozambique £000	Malawi £000
1975	5,428	808	192	−7,410	7,426	−10,688
1976	−2,331	−501	312	−20,843	−6,113	−18,847
1977	14,561	574	514	−45,010	−2,270	−35,612
1978	12,614	4,993	2,787	−77,912	6,970	−25,654
1979	3,094	372	−235	−44,753	5,166	−19,113
1980	10,696	82	482	−24,969	333	−20,651
1981	11,490	363	595	4,466	16,047	−12,741
1982	16,735	1,080	430	5,189	3,856	−21,624
1983	22,021	2,235	384	9,936	19,455	−23,877
1984	49,613	2,905	499	28,573	6,794	−42,333
1985	52,284	748	1,207	−222	4,435	−66,693
1986	27,710	−1,555	1,105	17,024	11,841	−28,426
1987	33,271	−94	1,136	17,598	14,587	−26,153
1988	39,210	−1,125	903	17,590	18,644	−2,565
1989	31,376	2,640	1,156	19,350	5,686	2,714

United Kingdom visible trade with the five countries with the lowest per capita gross national product in Asia

Exports (fob) minus imports (cif)

	Bhutan £000	Bangladesh £000	Nepal £000	Laos £000	Burma £000
1975	8	6,264	1,783	−15	3,724
1976	31	4,987	1,006	176	4,333
1977	35	5,051	2,104	336	8,675
1978	24	27,255	634	1,509	20,663
1979	2	27,807	4,234	215	12,644
1980	93	37,354	750	688	15,165
1981	−17	30,147	656	477	24,423
1982	89	32,624	795	526	38,888
1983	98	25,797	−1,102	569	17,235
1984	86	5,089	890	483	10,068
1985	109	34,274	−1,513	517	10,306
1986	75	14,101	−1,644	1,310	4,743
1987	396	18,929	376	1,120	20,915
1988	12,289	13,769	−4,416	1,330	7,258
1989	35	25,743	−504	−1,369	8,733

Enterprise Initiative

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will supply figures for the number of firms that have applied for and obtained subsidised consultancies under the enterprise initiative *(a)* for the period up to July 1989 and *(b)* for the period from July 1989 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

	13 January 1988 to 30 June 1989	1 July 1989 to 2 February 1990
Applications received	29,863	12,786
Completed projects	6,572	6,803

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will supply figures for the number of firms, by standard planning region, that have applied for and obtained subsidised consultancies under the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows, as at 2 February 1990:

DTI Region[1]	Applications received	Completed projects
North East	2,168	626
North West	6,075	2,264
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,929	1,389

DTI Region[1]	Applications received	Completed projects
West Midlands	4,490	1,518
East Midlands	2,731	904
South West	4,005	1,009
East	3,516	812
South East	10,597	2,840
Scotland	2,834	1,240
Wales	2,304	773
Total	42,649	13,375

[1] Data is collected for DTI Regions and for Scotland and Wales.

Bookmaking Industry

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any scrutiny is under consideration of the role of the bookmaking industry in respect of the control of shareholding in the company Satellite Information Services through the introduction of approved shareholdings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* No such scrutiny is under consideration.

Footwear Industry

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if the British Government have put any proposals to the European Community in discussions on the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round concerning the footwear industry;

(2) what restrictions on footwear imports he is pressing for in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The Government's objectives in the current round of GATT negotiations are to expand trade, not restrict it. We are not, therefore, pressing for restrictions on imports of footwear. We have been in regular contact with the footwear industry over the past year about the issues raised in the current negotiations and have passed to the European Commission the details the industry has given us of tariff and non-tariff barriers in Third-world countries. We will make every effort to ensure that these are properly addressed as the detailed phase of the negotiations begins this year.

Personal Data

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to amend the Data Protection Act to ensure that companies holding personal data for the purpose of crime prevention are not prosecuted for contravening the Act because theirs is a purpose for which such companies were not so registered.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to do so.

HEALTH

Bonuses

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is the practice for health authority managers to be paid performance-related bonus, following revenue-saving unit closures.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The assessment for performance-related pay will take account of all the objectives set for the manager concerned, improving the use of an authority's resources or developing new patterns of service.

Blood Transfusion

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what volume of blood was donated via the blood transfusion service in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1979;

(2) what volume of blood was imported for use in the National Health Service in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1979; and if he will indicate which countries supplied the imports, giving percentages;

(3) what was the volume of blood used by the National Health Service in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the tables. No whole blood was imported for use in the National Health Service during the years 1979, 1984 and 1989.

National blood transfusion service for England and Wales
Numbers of units of blood donated 1979, 1984, 1988

	Units
[1]1979	2,144,484
1984	2,158,626
1988	2,140,810

[1] Number of donors reporting to blood transfusion centres.

National blood transfusion service, England and Wales[2]
Units of blood issued to NHS hospitals, 1982, 1984, 1988

	Units
1982	1,637,536
1984	1,730,049
1988	1,704,705

[2] Excludes Oxford region, for which figures are not available.

Urban Development

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure designed to support the urban programme.

Mr. Freeman: Capital funds allocated to health authorities in support of the urban programme are:

	£ million
1987-88	11·5
1988-89	11·3
1989-90	11·2
1990-91	11·0

Figures are at cash for each year.

Shropshire Health Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of *(a)* out-patients, *(b)* day-patients and *(c)* in-patients in Shropshire health authority's area in 1978-79 and 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested for 1978-79 and 1988-89 is given in the table:

Patients treated, NHS hospitals, Shropshire district health authority, 1978 and 1988-89

	1978	1988-89
In-patient cases treated	39,929	52,498
Day cases	1,329	3,047
New out-patients	49,393	36,306
Total out-patient attendances	207,991	211,655

Source: SH3 return 1978; SH3a, KP70, KH09 and KH18 returns, 1988-89.

General Practitioners

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been removed from general practitioner lists in the last six months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 8 January at column *508*.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to make Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease a notifiable disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to do so. The study to be conducted by Dr. R. G. Will—I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 10 January at column *665*—is considered to be a more reliable method of monitoring the incidence of this disease.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the numbers and percentages of abortions performed on pregnancies under statutory grounds 2 (alone) and 3 (with any other) for each week of gestation from 18 weeks to 28 weeks.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

Number, and percentage of all abortions, performed under the Abortion Act 1967, by gestation weeks, and statutory grounds[1] 2 (alone) and 3 (with or without 2) on residents and non-residents of England and Wales, 1988

Gestation weeks	All grounds (Nos)	2 (alone) (Nos)	Percentage	3 (with or without 2) (Nos)	Percentage
18	3,192	2,827	88·57	181	5·67
19	1,911	1,661	86·92	89	4·66
20	1,495	1,243	83·14	70	4·68
21	948	845	89·14	42	4·43
22	1,035	939	90·72	32	3·09
23	1,039	988	95·09	19	1·83
24	69	48	69·57	1	1·45
25	6	—	—	—	—
26	9	—	—	—	—
27	7	—	—	—	—
28	—	—	—	—	—

[1]Statutory grounds.

Notes:

1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
5. To save the life of the pregnant mother.
6. To prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the child.

Ambulance Stations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many official visits he has paid to ambulance stations in the last 100 days.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. However, I visited Northumbria ambulance service headquarters on 24 January 1990.

British Medical Association

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the British Medical Association to discuss the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had no meetings with the British Medical Association specifically about the National Health Service and Community Care Bill since it was laid before the House. Discussions about our proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" last took place on 18 October 1989. I have had recent meetings with the BMA on the pay, terms and conditions of its members.

Health Provision, North-West

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to respond to the letter of 17 November 1989 of the hon. Member for Stretford requesting a meeting to discuss health provision in the north-west.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State replied to the hon. Member on 29 January 1990.

Operations (Cancellations)

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many theatre sessions were cancelled in the Lancaster health authority in each of the last five years for which figures are available in *(a)* urology and *(b)* orthopaedics; and how many of these cancellations were due to (i) non-attendance of the consultant and (ii) non-attendance of the patient.

Mr. Freeman: Information requested about theatre sessions is given in the table:

Cancelled operating theatre sessions in the Lancaster health authority

	Urology	Trauma/ Orthopaedics
1985-86	5	27
1986-87	7	52
1987-88	10	58
1988-89	11	66
1989-90[1]	7	69

[1] Part year.

The reasons for the cancellation of theatre sessions are extremely varied and no information is held centrally to distinguish, for example, cancellation resulting from the upgrading of theatre facilities from the non-availability of consultants or non-attendance of patients.

Head Lice

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evidence he has received about the increase of head lice among schoolchildren; and what advice his Department has issued to district health authorities on this matter;

(2) what evidence he has received about the increase of head lice among schoolchildren; and what advice his Department has issued to local education authorities on this matter.

Mr. Freeman: Information about the incidence of head lice infestation is not available in the form requested. We have the following information on infestations identified by school nurses:

Health Surveillance by Nurses: Maintained Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*
Number of Infestations[1] (England)				
Number of pupils examined (thousands)	9,401·9	7,288·2	6,089·6	4,546·3
Number of pupils found to be infested (thousands)	132·1	105·5	94·6	91·4
Infested pupils as a percentage of the maintained school population	1·74	1·42	1·29	1·27

[1] Infestations include head lice, vermin, scabies, ringworm, impetigo and verrucae

Responsibility for the control of head lice infestation amongst school children lies with the individual health authorities through co-operation between the school health services and local education authorities.

It is for them to determine the policy for dealing with this problem in the light of local circumstances. Many have stopped routine head inspections and are now pursuing approaches which, for example, combine selective inspections with far more emphasis on health education programmes and advice to parents and children on managing the problem. The Department issued advice on the control of communicable diseases including Pediculosis (head lice) in 1977. This guidance document is currently being revised. The Health Education Authority has also issued guidance.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of unfilled vacancies for speech therapists in Greater London; and what steps are being taken to fill these vacancies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally in the form requested.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that any consideration he gives to applications for grant funding from other organisations providing support, care, counselling and education to people with HIV or AIDS will not prejudice his Department's continuing support for the work of the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department awarded the Terrence Higgins Trust a grant of £450,000 for the financial year 1989-90 towards the administrative costs of its health education, drugs education, counselling support and buddy and helper cell programmes. We have agreed in principle to continue grant aid up to a maximum of £450,000 for 1990-91. In determining the final level of grant for the coming financial year, our primary consideration will be the trust's record of achievement in the current year.

General Medical Council

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the fees incurred by an individual bringing a case to the General Medical Council.

Mr. Freeman: Individual complainants are required to provide the GMC with a sworn statement of evidence in support of their complaint and have to pay the legal fees involved. For any subsequent disciplinary action the GMC offers complainants the services of its solicitor free of charge. Complainants who choose to use their own solicitors will normally be reimbursed part of their legal costs by the GMC.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the procedures operated by the General Medical Council if a general practitioner is referred to the council by both an individual and his Department.

Mr. Freeman: In such circumstances, I understand that the GMC will normally take action on the referral from the Department which contains the evidence which has already been established against a doctor.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the procedure for ordering a second hearing of a case before the General Medical Council.

Mr. Freeman: Statutory Instrument 1988 No. 2255 governs the procedures to be adopted by the GMC in respect of disciplinary hearings. As the council is responsible for implementing these procedures I suggest the information requested is sought from it.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has a policy of giving way to an individual when both wish to proceed with a case to the General Medical Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is a long-standing arrangement under which the Department sends the General Medical Council information on cases which have a bearing on a practitioner's professional conduct. The Department does not act as a complainant or make a formal reference to the General Medical Council—it merely passes on the information in its possession. Any action taken on this information is a matter entirely for the General Medical Council. The Department is not a party to that action.

Regional Allocations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to make a substantive reply to the question from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central tabled for priority written answer on 30 January, to which he gave a holding answer.

Mr. Freeman: I replied to the hon. Member on 15 February.

NHS Reform

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications he has received for the establishment of fund-holding practices from general practitioner practices in Manchester.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Formal applications cannot be made until there is legislative provision for fund-holding. Practices have been invited to return forms to their RHAs registering their interest in fund-holding. We do not have details of the numbers of interested practices in individual FPCs.

North Western RHA

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants now work in the North Western regional health authority and the South Manchester health authority; and how many did so in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of hospital medical and dental consultants, in the North Western regional health authority, at 30 September 1979 and 1988, were 1,078 and 1,284 respectively.

Details of consultants working in district health authorities are not available centrally.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far *(a)* in Manchester and *(b)* nationally by (i) his Department, (ii) district health authorities and (iii) family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 14 February at columns *308-9*.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of junior hospital doctors working a one-in-three rota.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Recent reports from health authorities indicate that at September 1989 some 5,103 junior doctors (around 22 per cent. of the total) were on rotas of one in three with prospective cover or worse. That number is planned to fall to 4,230 by September 1990, of which some 2,942 (around one in eight) are on rotas which are also considered locally to be onerous. "Prospective cover" means contractual cover for the annual and sick leave of colleagues.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been paid by the London ambulance service to the Metropolitan police for costs arising from the present dispute in each week, from the commencement to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The sums paid by the London ambulance service to the Metropolitan police in respect of the costs arising from the ambulance dispute are as follows:

Period covered	*Cost (£)*
23-24 October 1989	131,566
Week ending	
12 November 1989	537,235
19 November 1989	601,063
26 November 1989	525,724
3 December 1989	471,856
10 December 1989	504,854

Later information on a weekly basis is not currently available, but expenditure is continuing at roughly the same level.

Myeloid Leukaemia

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update the list of the 20 areas with the highest incidence of myeloid leukaemia contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) of 15 April 1986, *Official Report*, columns *371-72*.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not immediately available in the form requested but will be extracted for local authority district areas for 1988. I will let the hon. Member have the results as soon as they are available.

NHS Funding

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the regional health authorities in rank order according to the percentage of National Health Service money *(a)* allocated to the regions in 1989-90 and *(b)* that will be allocated in 1990-91 using the new formula.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The table gives the ranking of each regional health authority according to the percentage of National Health Service money allocated in 1989-90 and 1990-91:

Region	*Ranking 1989-90*	*Ranking 1990-91*
Northern	10	10
Yorkshire	6	6
Trent	2	2
East Anglian	14	14
North West Thames	7	7
North East Thames	4	4
South East Thames	5	5
South West Thames	8	8
Wessex	11	11
Oxford	13	13
South Western	9	9
West Midlands	1	1
Mersey	12	12
North Western	3	3

Notes:

1. 1989-90 is based on allocations for services provided in the region using the resource allocation working party formula (RAWP).
2. 1990-91 is based on the allocations for resident population, calculated using the new allocation formula, adjusted for the effect of cross boundary flows, so that they are on a comparable basis to 1989-90.
3. Both 1989-90 and 1990-91 are before the additions for SIFT supra-regional services and other special additions specific to individual regions.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the regional health authorities in rank order according to the growth money *(a)* they received in 1989-90 and *(b)* will receive on current assumptions in 1990-91.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 February 1990]*: The table gives the ranking for each regional health authority according to the amount of cash increase over the previous baseline for the region, allocated for 1989-90 and 1990-91:

Region	*Ranking 1989-90*	*Ranking 1990-91*
Northern	9	11
Yorkshire	6	7
Trent	2	2
East Anglian	14	12
North West Thames	7	10
North East Thames	4	4
South East Thames	5	3
South West Thames	8	8
Wessex	11	9
Oxford	13	13
South Western	9	6
West Midlands	1	1
Mersey	12	14
North Western	3	5

Notes

1. 1989-90 is based on the allocations for services provided in the Region using the resource allocation working party formula (RAWP).

2. 1990-91 is based on the allocations for resident population using the new allocation formula, adjusted for the effect of cross boundary flows, so that they are on a comparable basis to 1989-90.

3. Both 1989-90 and 1990-91 exclude the additions for SIFT supra-regional services and other special additions specific to individual regions.

SCOTLAND

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will provide for the districts of Stirling, Perth and Kinross and Ross, Cromarty and Skye the number and rateable value of houses and so on, immediately prior to the introduction of the poll tax with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. The available information is given in the table:

Domestic rateable subjects at 1 April 1988

Bands of rateable value	*Stirling*		*Perth and Kinross*		*Ross and Cromarty*		*Skye and Lochalsh*	
	Number	*Total rateable value (£)*	*Number*	*Total rateable value (£)*	*Number*	*Total rateable value (£)*	*Number*	*Total rateable value (£)*
£0 to £300	677	127,893	3,201	505,831	2,351	419,310	1,106	168,606
£301 to £600	13,435	6,551,918	25,321	11,489,921	10,309	4,843,669	1,832	797,024
£601 to £900	9,286	6,576,092	12,951	9,312,270	4,209	3,013,623	544	395,687
£901 to £1,200	4,376	4,553,954	6,870	7,138,130	1,379	1,390,534	179	180,148
£1,201 to £1,500	2,176	2,884,471	2,807	3,727,934	199	261,652	27	35,006
Over £1,500	1,341	2,386,397	1,078	1,876,567	79	153,699	13	25,910
Croft houses/separately assessed caravans	127	38,106	270	55,701	1,572	397,544	1,935	445,746
Total	31,418	23,118,831	52,498	34,106,354	20,098	10,480,031	5,636	2,048,127

Green Pound

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes have been made over the past 12 months in the green pound arrangements for Scottish farmers; and what estimate he has made of the effect this has had on their standard of living.

Mr. Rifkind: In April 1989, as part of the price-fixing settlement, we obtained a substantial devaluation of the green pound, reducing United Kingdom monetary gaps generally by half, and in the case of beef removing the gap completely. The devaluations were estimated to boost Scottish farm incomes by between £15 and £20 million in a full year.

In January this year an EMS realignment created new negative monetary gaps for some currencies, including sterling. Under agreed rules, such gaps are removed automatically and the United Kingdom will benefit from a devaluation of about 1·5 percentage points, which will add about £6·5 million to Scottish farm incomes in a full year.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes to take to reduce the disadvantage to Scottish farmers as a result of the current levels of the green pound and interest rates.

Mr. Rifkind: The disadvantage to Scottish and other United Kingdom farmers will be overcome by reducing monetary gaps through devaluation of the green pound in the current price-fixing negotiations. We are seeking a substantial devaluation as part of our commitment to remove all monetary gaps by 1992. The high level of interest rates is necessary to control inflation which, if unchecked, would harm the farming industry as much as other sectors of the economy.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Rifkind: Information relating to the value of current contracts with private security companies and the number of staff employed on these contracts are matters of contractual and commercial confidentiality which it would not be proper to disclose.

The total value of all contracts awarded during the period 1984-85 to 1988-89 is show at column 1, and details of the private security companies with which contracts are currently in operation are set out at column 2:

1. *Year*	*Total value of all contracts (inclusive of VAT)* £
1984-85	68,384
1985-86	70,468
1986-87	261,306
1987-88	294,229
1988-89	515,982

2. *Companies*
Group 4 Total Security Ltd
Chubb Wardens Ltd
Shorrock Guards Ltd
Burns International Security Services (UK) Ltd
Wackenhut UK Ltd
Castlemilk Enterprises Ltd

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

House Prices

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will estimate the number of houses owned by Glasgow district council which have a market value of less than £10,000;

(2) if he will estimate the number of houses owned by Scottish local authorities which have a negative market value.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no basis on which to make such an estimate.

Slumberdown Limited

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regional development grants or other industrial assistance have been paid in the past six years to Slumberdown Limited, or its parent company the Walter Alexander Group, in respect of its premises at Broxburn; and what was the value of each such payment.

Mr. Rifkind: One payment of £128,945 of regional development grant has been made.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial allocations he has made to health boards for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has allocated £2,061·498 million to health boards in Scotland to meet their gross recurrent expenditure commitments on hospitals and community health services in 1990-91. This figure includes £89·891 million allocated for specific commitments including NHS review, national cardiac surgery services, AIDS, nurse training and pay review body awards. After expected income is taken into account, the net cash allocations to individual health boards are as follows:

Health Board	*Recurrent Expenditure (net) £ million*
Argyll and Clyde	142·956
Ayr and Arran	111·671
Borders	32·801
Dumfries and Galloway	54·062
Fife	103·308
Forth Valley	96·487
Grampian	184·696
Greater Glasgow	503·944
Highland	77·960
Lanarkshire	164·513
Lothian	319·217
Orkney	6·076
Shetland	7·214
Tayside	184·386
Western Isles	10·646
	1,999·937

A further £36·511 million will be distributed during the year for specific initiatives to tackle waiting lists, for the breast cancer screening service and other specific initiatives.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Old-Age Programmes

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list showing expenditure on programmes for old age as a proportion of gross domestic product at market prices for European Community member states for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest statistics available were published in June 1989 in issue 1989/2 of Eurostat's "Rapid Reports on Population and Social Conditions", a copy of which is in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when income support was increased to fund the balance of community charge after rebate, and by how much.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 5 February 1990 at column *524*.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce his proposals for the withdrawal of social security benefits from students.

Mr. Scott: It is Government policy that full-time students should be funded from one source—the educational maintenance system. To this end we propose to withdraw entitlement to unemployment benefit, income support and housing benefit from the majority of students from the start of the next academic year in September. The regulations to give effect to these proposals have today been referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation. The draft regulations describe those

students in vulnerable groups who will retain eligibility to income support and housing benefit. They also set out the proposed treatment in the income-related benefits of top-up loans and payments from the access funds.

Bereavement

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider amending social security regulations to exempt recently bereaved claimants from the actively seeking work provision for a specified period.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We do not consider that a change to the legislation is required. In determining whether a person has taken reasonable steps in any week to actively seek employment, the regulations require an adjudication officer to have regard to all the circumstances of the case. This provision allows an adjudication officer to take into account exceptional circumstances, like bereavement, in determining whether the actively seeking work condition has been satisfied.

Transitional Protection

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants are in receipt of a transitional addition at present; and how many were in receipt before the April 1989 uprating.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that next month about 485,000 income support claimants will be in receipt of normal statutory transitional protection. The corresponding number immediately before the April 1989 uprating was estimated at 1·2 million.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the change in benefit income to claimants following the introduction of the transitional protection arrangements currently in practice.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As a result of the transitional protection arrangements noone who has been continuously on benefit since April 1989 in unchanged circumstances will have suffered a reduction in benefit income in cash terms. We estimate that 95 per cent. of claimants on income support either saw an increase in that benefit income in October, as a result of the restructuring of premiums for older and disabled pensioners, or will see such an increase in April 1990 as a result of the general uprating.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to amend current transitional protection regulations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We amended the regulations as recently as December 1989. We have no plans for further amendment.

Industrial Injuries and Adjudication

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the figure given in the *Official Report*, 7 February, column *978*, concerning claims made under regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Adjudication) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 1986, by geographical region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The geographical distribution of new claims and review applications made under regulation 13(2) of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Adjudication) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 1986 is estimated to be as follows:

Region[1]	*New claims and review applications*
North Eastern	15,000
London North	300
Wales and South West	800
Midlands	800
North Western	5,500
Scotland	2,300
London South	1,300
Great Britain	26,000

[1] Standard social security regions.

Note:
Based on special returns received from local offices up to 30 November 1989 extrapolated to the end of December 1989.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a table for the income support personal allowances for *(a)* a single person aged 18-24 years, *(b)* a single person aged 25 years plus and *(c)* a couple without children, showing (i) the illustrative figures in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper, (ii) the illustrative figures uprated by the ROSSI index since then, (iii) the amount provided to compensate for the exclusion of 20 per cent. at rates from housing benefit and (iv) the personal allowances for April 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table:

	Aged 18-24 single £	*Aged 25+ single* £	*Couple, no children* £
Technical annex to 1985 White Paper	24·00	30·60	48·00
Uprated by ROSSI[1]	28·28	36·06	56·56
Help towards 20 per cent. domestic rates from April 1988	1·00	1·30	1·30
Help towards 20 per cent. community charge from April 1989[2]	1·15	1·30	2·30
April 1990 rates	28·80	36·70	57·60

[1] Based on movement in the index of retail prices (less housing) between November 1985 and December 1989 (the latest date for which the index is available).

[2] These amounts were introduced to coincide with the introduction of the community charge in Scotland in April 1989. They replaced the amounts previously included to help towards 20 per cent. of domestic rates but continue to provide help towards domestic rates for people in England and Wales.

Disability

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people are currently in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* severe disablement allowance;

(2) how many people are in receipt of attendance allowance at *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate; and what is the average period for which attendance allowance is paid.

Mr. Scott: The estimated number receiving these benefits in 1989-90 is set out in the following table:

	Higher rate	*Lower rate*	*Total*	*Average length of award*
Attendance allowance	320,000	475,000	795,000	3 years
Severe disablement allowance	—	—	265,000	—

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently in receipt of *(a)* invalidity pension and *(b)* invalidity allowance; and how many were disqualified from each in the past year.

Mr. Scott: At 2 April 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,047,500 people in receipt of invalidity pension. Of these 509,100 were also getting invalidity allowance (IVA) and in addition there are 360,300 people who do not receive invalidity allowance because the rate of additional pension or guaranteed minimum pension they receive exceeds the rate of invalidity allowance which would have been payable. I regret that information on the number of people disqualified from invalidity benefit is not available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently in receipt of invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: The estimated average number receiving invalid care allowance in 1989-90 is 110,000.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of *(a)* the disability premium, *(b)* the severe disability premium and *(c)* the disabled child premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In May 1988, the latest date for which this information is available, the number of claimants receiving each of these premiums was as follows:

	Numbers
(a) Disability premium	248,000
(b) Severe disability premium	35,000
(c) Disabled child premium	14,000

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been disqualified from receiving severe disablement allowance in the last year; and for what reasons.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receive disability benefit; how many receive this benefit at the main disability percentage levels; and how many have been disqualified from receipt of this benefit in the past year.

Mr. Scott: In April 1988, the latest available date, 189,000 people received disablement benefit. The distribution of assessed levels of disability is as follows:

Percentage assessment	*Number of claimants*
1 to 19	25,000
20 to 24	66,000
25 to 34	47,000
35 to 44	22,000
45 to 54	11,000
55 to 64	7,000
65 to 74	4,000
75 to 84	2,000
85 to 94	1,000
95 to 100	4,000
TOTAL	189,000

Figures on numbers of disqualifications are not available.

Reduced Earnings Allowance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of reduced earnings allowance.

Mr. Scott: Including previous recipients of special hardship allowance, some 150,000 people are estimated to be recipients of reduced earnings allowance.

Social Fund

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of applicants for a social fund loan have received money advice *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each local Department of Social Security office area.

Mr. Scott: Information at national and regional levels in the period 1 April 1989 to 31 January 1990 is given in the table. Information relating to each local office could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Number of money advice interviews as percentage of loan applications processed

	per cent.
National	2·3
London North	1·2
London South	1·5
Midlands	2·4
North East	1·8
North West	3·9
Scotland	2·1
Wales and South West	2·6

Self-Employed People

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what numbers paid national insurance contributions as self-employed people in each of the years 1979 to 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 16 November 1989 at column *442*. Agreed figures for 1988-89 are still not available.

Private Rents

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance has been issued to local authorities on the matter of poll tax and inclusive private rents;

(2) what subsidy arrangements have been made for local authorities where housing benefit payments are to be made on the basis of inclusive rents becoming the new net rent after the abolition of rates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Guidance on the subsidy arrangements for community charge benefit and other matters connected with inclusive private rents was contained in circular HB/CCB (90)2, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been given to rent officers in reaching determinations of eligible rents under the housing benefit regulations.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989 lays down the basis on which rent officers assess the rents paid by, and accommodation occupied by, private tenants claiming housing benefit. Advice on how rent officers might approach this task—particularly in circumstances where no direct market evidence is available—was included in a study of the private rented housing market commissioned by the Department from the consultants Price Waterhouse. Copies of that report were circulated to rent officers and placed in the Library in February 1989.

Young People

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of young people affected by each change listed in the reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), *Official Report*, 27 July, columns *878-84*, and the cost or saving incurred by his Department as a result.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* The cessation of entitlement to income support for most 16 and 17-year-olds in September 1988 was estimated to have affected approximately 100,000 young people and reduced expenditure by around £100 million. The vast majority of young people who chose to participate in YTS received a training allowance at a rate exceeding income support. The additional costs of these allowances, and the cost of training provision, were borne by the Department of Employment's Training Agency. At the same time, the extension of eligibility to child benefit during the child benefit extension period affected around 43,000 young people at a cost of £4·85 million a year including the consequential effects on dependency additions. The overall cost of increasing personal allowances for income-related benefits by 50p above inflation from April 1989, including increases for children aged under 16, was estimated at around £70 million in a full year. In July 1989 extra help was provided for 16 and 17-year-olds receiving income support who have to live independently, and all those receiving housing benefit only, affecting around 17,000 young people at a cost of £3·7 million a year.

Further information could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his best estimates of the number of applications for deductions from income support for poll tax arrears in 1990-91, the number which will be enforced; the costs of servicing each deduction, and the staffing implications of the increased workload.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 February 1990]:* The Department expects that in any year in England, Wales and Scotland some 850,000 applications for deductions from income support may be made in respect of the community charge, though the number will depend on the extent to which authorities choose to recover unpaid charges using this particular method. We expect about 700,000 of the applications to be enforced. The average annual cost to the Department of servicing each application is estimated to be £26. The total staffing requirement in Great Britain is now estimated to be approximately 470 posts. People in receipt of income support are entitled to maximum community charge benefit which reduces their community charge bill by 80 per cent.

Income support levels were adjusted in April last year to include help towards the average minimum contribution to the community charge that recipients would be expected to pay.

The amounts included were £1·15 a week for single people aged 18 to 24, £1·30 a week for single people aged 25 or over and £2·30 a week for couples. These amounts form part of the overall benefit levels which will be uprated from April this year.

Spending Power

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables using the assumptions in his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June 1988, *Official Report*, columns *575-80*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in Coventry, together with a column showing the extent of the differences resulting from the April 1988 social security changes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 6 February 1990]:* The information requested is set out in the tables.

The tables use the methods and assumptions contained in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper "Reform of Social Security" and in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" published in 1987. They illustrate the impact of the changes on claimants in April 1988, by comparing the results of applying the old and new benefits rules (with an assumed uprating for the former) to the personal circumstances of a sample of cases.

As indicated in the reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June 1988, the result is a hypothetical comparison with what people might have got under the old system. The passage of time, and subsequent changes to the benefit scheme render such comparisons increasingly hypothetical and unrealistic.

It should be noted that, although the comparisons are based on average local authority housing charges in Coventry, they do not necessarily reflect either the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people in the borough actually pay or real families' circumstances and their housing arrangements.

Finally, the comparisons take no account of the housing benefit transitional cash protection announced on 27 April 1988.

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Coventry local authority
Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·40	15·30
Family income supplement	28·70	23·70	18·70	13·70	8·70	3·70	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Child benefit	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	18·78	17·53	16·28	15·03	13·78	12·26	10·18	6·88	3·58	0·00	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	5·46	5·06	4·66	4·26	3·86	3·29	2·47	1·17	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85
Free school meals	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	0·00	0·00	0·00
Free welfare milk	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net weekly spending power	94·48	95·93	97·36	97·31	97·26	94·57	92·54	94·34	96·23	96·54	102·94	109·34

New benefit system from April 1988
Coventry local authority
Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·40	15·30
Family credit	40·32	34·65	28·99	24·37	19·75	16·67	12·19	7·71	3·23	0·00	0·00	0·00
Child benefit	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50	14·50
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	7·52	5·94	4·36	3·07	1·79	0·93	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net income after housing costs	90·85	91·70	92·54	93·23	93·93	94·39	95·38	97·30	99·22	102·39	108·79	115·19
Difference between systems	−3·63	−4·23	−4·82	−4·08	−3·33	−0·18	+2·84	+2·96	+2·95	+5·85	+5·85	+5·85

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Coventry local authority
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·50	15·30
Family income supplement	32·90	30·50	25·50	20·50	15·50	10·50	5·50	0·50	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Child benefit	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	19·82	17·92	16·67	15·42	14·17	12·77	11·12	9·47	6·34	3·04	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	5·79	5·18	4·78	4·38	3·98	3·49	2·84	2·19	0·96	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·95	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85
Free school meals	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	5·10	2·55	0·00
Free welfare milk	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net weekly spending power	109·85	113·04	114·47	114·42	114·37	111·88	110·98	110·98	109·79	111·93	112·74	116·59

New benefit system from April 1988
Coventry local authority
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·40	15·30
Family credit	51·72	46·05	40·39	35·77	31·15	28·07	23·59	19·11	14·63	10·15	5·67	1·19
Child benefit	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75	21·75
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	5·86	4·28	2·70	1·42	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net income after housing costs	107·84	108·69	109·53	110·23	110·79	112·11	114·03	115·95	117·87	119·79	121·71	123·63
Difference between systems	−2·01	−4·35	−4·94	−4·19	−3·58	+0·23	+3·05	+5·87	+8·08	+7·86	+8·97	+7·04

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Coventry local authority
Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·40	15·30
Family income supplement	28·70	23·70	18·70	13·70	8·70	3·70	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Child benefit	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	17·56	16·31	15·06	13·81	12·30	10·65	8·57	5·27	1·97	0·00	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	5·07	4·67	4·27	3·87	3·30	2·65	1·83	0·53	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85	5·85
Free school meals	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	2·55	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Free welfare milk	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	1·83	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net weekly spending power	97·77	99·22	100·65	100·60	100·12	97·22	95·19	96·99	99·56	101·44	107·84	114·24

New benefit system from April 1988
Coventry local authority
Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Earnings head	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00	130·00	140·00	150·00	160·00	170·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	1·22	3·92	6·62	9·32	12·02	14·72	17·42	20·12	22·82	25·52
National insurance	3·00	4·90	5·60	6·30	7·00	9·90	10·80	11·70	12·60	13·50	14·40	15·30
Family credit	40·32	34·65	28·99	24·37	19·75	16·67	12·19	7·71	3·23	0·00	0·00	0·00
Child benefit	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40	19·40
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rent rebate	1·44	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21	6·21
Rate rebate	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Net income after housing costs	89·67	90·66	93·08	95·06	97·04	98·36	100·28	102·20	104·12	107·29	113·69	120·09
Difference between systems	−8·10	−8·56	−7·57	−5·54	−3·08	+1·14	+5·09	+5·21	+4·56	+5·85	+5·85	+5·85

Old tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates for Coventry and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988. Lone mother with two children aged four and six.

	Not working after one year on benefit £	*Working part-time earning £20* £	*Working part-time earning £40* £
Supplementary Benefit	45·93	30·89	14·35
Earnings	—	20·00	40·00
Tax	—	0·00	0·00
National Insurance	—	0·00	2·00
Fares to Work	—	2·92	2·92
Rent	22·28	22·28	22·28
Rates	6·21	6·21	6·21
Housing Benefit	26·92	26·92	26·92
Child Benefit	19·40	19·40	19·40
Free School Meals	2·55	2·55	2·55
Free Welfare Milk	1·83	1·83	1·83
Net Weekly spending power	68·14	70·18	71·64

Benefit system from April 1988
Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987
Average local authority rent and rates for Coventry.
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

	a. Not working after one year on benefit
Income Support	45·35
Rent	22·28
Rates	6·21
Housing Benefit	26·00
CHB	19·40
FSM	2·55
FWM	1·83
Net Weekly spending power	66·64
Difference between systems	−1·50

Benefit system from April 1988
Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987
Average local authority rent and rates for Coventry.
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

	b. Working part time earning £20	*c. Working part time earning £40*
Income Support	40·35	20·35
Earnings	20·00	40·00
Tax	0·00	0·00
NI	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	2·92	2·92
Rent	22·28	22·28
Rates	6·21	6·21
Housing Benefit	26·00	26·00
CHB	19·40	19·40
FSM	2·55	2·55
FWM	1·83	1·83
Net weekly spending power	78·72	78·72
Difference between systems	+8·54	+7·08

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sanctions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all those countries against which the United Kingdom is operating sanctions, the sanctions in each case and the countries or organisations requesting such sanctions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have implemented a variety of restrictive measures on our trade and other relations with a number of countries. These include:

(*a*) controls through COCOM on the export of high technology equipment which could be used for

military as well as civil purposes to a number of proscribed destinations, including to the Soviet Union, eastern Europe and China. COCOM comprises the NATO countries, less Iceland, as well as Japan and Australia.

(b) restrictive measures against South Africa. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 15 February 1990 for a list of the measures adopted by the UK in conjunction with the European Community. We have also agreed with the Commonwealth a number of measures. These are:

(i) The strict enforcement of the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa;

(ii) A re-affirmation of the Gleneagles declaration of 1977, which called upon Commonwealth members to take every practical step to discourage sporting contacts with South Africa;

(iii) Agreement upon and commendation to other Governments of the adoption of the following further economic measures against South Africa:

(a) A ban on all new Government loans to the Government of South Africa and their agencies;

(b) A readiness to take unilaterally what action may be possible to preclude the import of Krugerrands;

(c) No Government funding for trade missions to South Africa or for participation in exhibitions and trade fairs in South Africa;

(d) A ban on the sale and export of computer equipment capable of use by South African military forces, police or security forces;

(e) A ban on new contracts for the sale and export of nuclear goods, materials and technology to South Africa;

(f) A ban on the sale and export of oil to South Africa;

(g) A strict and rigorously controlled embargo on imports of arms, ammunition, military vehicles and paramilitary equipment from South Africa;

(h) An embargo on all military co-operation with South Africa;

(i) The discouragement of all cultural and scientific events except where these contribute towards the ending of apartheid or have no possible role in promoting it;

(j) A voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa;

(k) The implementation of any European Community decision to ban the import of coal, iron and steel and of gold coins from South Africa.

(c) Restrictions not aimed at particular countries, such as those of the missile technology control regime, resulting from our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, and controls on the export of material used in production of chemical weapons.

(d) Special restrictions are applied to arms exports to certain countries, for example, in the middle east, reflecting our wish not to fuel or prolong conflicts in the region, and our determination to take a firm line on state-sponsored terrorism.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the result of discussions held between his Department and representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, over the number of officials allowed residence in each country.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have agreed to work towards a state of relations where limitations on numbers will no longer be necessary. For the moment each side will keep its own numbers within agreed overall limits. A review of progress will be held in due course. We do not foresee difficulties for either side in ensuring adequate representation, both official, and as regards journalists or business men.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave. Authority does, however, already exist to allow staff special leave to cope with unforeseen domestic difficulties, for example, at the time of the birth of a second or subsequent child. This discretion has occasionally been exercised.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March. A Norwegian national exercise, designated "Cold Winter", is planned to take place in which forces from several members of the Alliance, including the United Kingdom, have been invited to participate. The FCO, in accordance with the provisions of the 1986 Stockholm agreement, notified all CSCE states on 30 January of the United Kingdom's participation in the amphibious landing part of this exercise.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the continued production of chemical weapons by any signatory nation to a chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my replies to the questions from the hon. Member for Western Isles on 31 January and 11 December last year noted, the draft chemical weapons convention under negotiation in Geneva would prohibit the production of chemical weapons immediately upon the convention's entry into force. This provision has been agreed by all states participating in the negotiations, including the United Kingdom.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what system of control the authorities in Hong Kong have in place to ensure up-to-date information on ivory stocks is duly recorded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: All holdings of ivory over 5 kg must be licensed and are being entered on the Hong Kong

authorities' computer. Ivory may be traded between licensed holders and their total stocks are adjusted accordingly on the computer. Any increases in ivory holdings require further licences. Stocks are subject to surprise checks to ensure that these procedures are complied with.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Computer Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department has taken, and is taking to improve the security of its computer systems.

Mr. Cope: For unclassified but sensitive systems, the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office follow the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) guidance covering all aspects of IT security. CCTA advice is based on analysis of security risks, requirements and the identification of countermeasures using the CCTA risk analysis and management methodology (CRAMM). The application of CRAMM computer security is kept under continuous review by CCTA and the Northern Ireland Departments.

Following a recent review of all unclassified but sensitive systems a number of additional security countermeasures have been introduced and action plans have been drawn up to apply further improvements where appropriate.

In addition the central information systems division, department of finance and personnel provides central support, advice and training on CRAMM to information technology staff in the Northern Ireland Departments. More stringent conditions apply to classified systems.

Alanbrooke Road, Belfast

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the measures taken to close Alanbrooke road in Belfast.

Mr. Cope: The cost of providing the physical security measures at Alanbrooke road is a matter for Short Bros. plc.

University Students

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many undergraduates there are from *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland at each of the two universities in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional information for the 1989-90 academic year is as follows:

	Northern Ireland	*Republic of Ireland*
University of Ulster		
Full-time	6,458	979
Part-time	1,939	73
Queen's university		
Full-time	6,094	247
Part-time	755	15

School Rolls

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each secondary school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment (At January 1989)
Abbey Grammar	711
Armagh Secondary	624
Markethill High	418
Newry High	568
Newtownhamilton	103
Our Lady's Girls' Grammar, Newry	766
Royal Armagh	558
Sacred Heart Girls' Grammar, Newry	778
St. Brigid's Boys' High, Armagh	332
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	826
St. Colman's College, Newry	771
St. Joseph's Boys', Newry	545
St. Joseph's High, Crossmaglen	539
St. Mary's Girls' High, Newry	544
St. Patrick's High, Keady	832
St. Paul's, Bessbrook	1,240
St. Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	717
Tandragee Junior High	277

Supplies (Purchase)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance has been given to Northern Ireland bodies funded by his Department to source materials and equipment from Northern Ireland suppliers prior to making purchases from companies in the Irish Republic.

Mr. Cope: Northern Ireland Departments are required to comply with the EC directives on fair competition between member states. However, a major effort has been and continues to be made to promote the sourcing of goods and services within Northern Ireland by the public sector with exhibitions throughout the Province and the publication of a comprehensive directory of public purchasers.

Schools (Strangford)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils are at each secondary school in the constituency of Strangford in *(a)* the maintained, *(b)* the controlled and *(c)* the integrated sectors of education.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment[1]
Maintained	
St. Columba's High, Portaferry	405
Controlled	
Comber High	593
Donaghadee High	320
Glastry High	470
Movilla High	663
Newtownbreda High	740
Regent House Grammar	1,613
Scrabo High	487

	Enrolment[1]
Integrated	
Lagan College	545

[1] At January 1989.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are in each of the primary schools in the constituency of Strangford in *(a)* the maintained, *(b)* the controlled and *(c)* the integrated sectors of education.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment[1]
Maintained	
St. Anne's, Donaghadee	53
St. Finian's Newtownards	234
St. Mary's, Portaferry	348
St. Mary's, Comber	31
St. Mary's, Ballygowen	61
St. Mary's, Kircubbin	211
St. Patrick's, Portaferry	80
Controlled	
Alexander Dickson	181
Andrews Memorial	506
Ballykeigle	55
Ballyvester	77
Ballywalter	136
Belvoir Park	295
Braniel	351
Cairnshill	355
Carrickmannon	69
Carrowdore	151
Castle Gardens	617
Comber	457
Cottown	45
Donaghadee	342
Greyabbey	65
Killinchy	228
Kircubbin	58
Kirkistown	43
Leadhill	184
Londonderry Model	266
Loughries	73
Millisle	204
Moneyrea	136
Newtownards Model	401
Newtownbreda	247
O'Neill Memorial	45
Portaferry	46
Portavogie	134
Victoria, Newtownards	797
Victoria, Ballyhalbert	79
West Winds	256

[1] At January 1989.

Note: There are no integrated primary schools in the constituency of Strangford.

Terrorist Suspects (Montage)

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in identifying those members of the Stevens inquiry team responsible for leaving in a Bangor restaurant a montage of terrorist suspects; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 January 1990]:* I am aware of no such incident involving the Stevens inquiry team. I understand that a delegation of visiting overseas police officers left an information pack of unclassified material in a Bangor hotel which was returned promptly to the police by a member of staff. It may be this incident, which did not constitute any security breach, to which the right hon. Gentleman refers.

EC Funds

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund in each financial year up to 31 December 1989; how much of those receipts each year represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much each year was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts were received from the European regional development fund:

Financial year	*Total £ million*
1975-76	2·9
1976-77	7·2
1977-78	6·4
1978-79	4·0
1979-80	16·0
1980-81	21·0
1981-82	16·4
1982-83	18·0
1983-84	13·5
1984-85	16·9
1985-86	18·4
1986-87	23·2
1987-88	45·9
1988-89	46·7
1989-90[3]	[1]23·0
Total	[2]279·5

[1] Provisional outturn

[2] The figures show total ERDF receipts brought to account in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that awards totalling £10·5 million were decommitted by the European Commission on failed industrial projects.

[3] To December 1989.

ERDF assistance is earned by industrial and infrastructure projects, and by programmes combining elements of both. Receipts for infrastructure projects undertaken by non-central Government bodies are passed on to them and represent a direct benefit to those bodies by enabling them to reduce their capital indebtedness.

Receipts for infrastructure projects undertaken by central Government and for industrial projects are paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. All the receipts are subject to normal EC audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations, and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received from the European social fund in each financial year up to 31 December 1989; how much each year represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts were received from the European social fund:

Financial year	*Total £ million*
1973–74	—
1974–75	3·4
1975–76	0·0
1976–77	6·4
1977–78	7·5
1978–79	15·0
1979–80	15·0
1980–81	23·0
1981–82	25·0
1982–83	35·2
1983–84	38·0
1984–85	38·0
1985–86	25·0
1986–87	53·3
1987–88	56·4
1988–89	36·1
1989–90[2]	[1]27·1
Total	404·4

[1] Provisional outturn.
[2] To December 1989.

Receipts earned by the private sector and by non-central Government public sector bodies are paid to the claimant. The receipts represent cash additions to the recipients: Receipts earned by central Government are paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. All ESF receipts are subject to EC audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations, and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received in each financial year since 31 March 1987 from EEC sources apart from payments under the three structural funds.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts have been identified as being received in Northern Ireland from European Community sources other than the three structural funds in the last two financial years:

Financial year	*Total £ million*
1987-88	27·6
1988-89	27·8

Most of the receipts in this category are from the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. However, it should be noted that the bulk of guarantee section receipts are disbursed centrally by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and details of payments are not generally maintained at regional level.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland received in each financial year up to 31 December 1989 from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guidance section; how much of those receipts were paid to the private sector and how much to the public sector; how much of those receipts represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used each year to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts were received from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guidance section:

Individual capital projects

£ million

Financial year	*Private sector*	*Public sector*[1]	*Other guidance schemes (private sector)*[2]	*Total*
1974-75	—	—	0·25	0·25
1975-76	0·45	—	0·21	0·66
1976-77	1·87	0·31	0·27	2·45
1977-78	1·28	0·31	1·28	2·87
1978-79	0·70	0·24	2·46	3·40
1979-80	1·27	0·20	3·21	4·68
1980-81	1·91	1·05	3·35	6·31
1981-82	1·43	0·13	4·69	6·25
1982-83	2·47	0·99	3·30	6·76
1983-84	1·59	0·38	14·65	16·62
1984-85	0·95	0·28	13·29	14·52
1985-86	3·56	0·03	11·83	15·42
1986-87	2·58	0·11	5·96	8·65
1987-88	3·29	—	5·99	9·28
1988-89	2·31	0·51	10·05	12·87
[4]1989-90	[3]2·12	—	—	[3]2·12
TOTALS	27·78	4·54	80·79	113·11

[1] Includes the Milk Marketing Board, which is not financed from public funds although it is a statutory body.
[2] Includes reference to the approximate share of total expenditure in Northern Ireland on various structural schemes which were applied throughout the United Kingdom.
[3] Provisional outturn.
[4] To December 1989.

All these receipts represent cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements.

In addition, £443,000 has been received by the public sector for socio-economic training.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the money received by Northern Ireland in each financial year up to 31 December 1989 from EEC sources has been paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* EC receipts received by the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund in respect of grants paid to Government have been distinguished in the public income and expenditure account only since 1983-84. The figures from that date are as follows:

Financial year	*Total £ million*
1983-84	27·8
1984-85	27·8
1985-86	18·5
1986-87	50·6

Financial year	Total £ million
1987-88	73·6
1988-89	67·7
[1]1989-90	12·6
TOTAL	278·6

[1] To December 1989.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts which Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund since 1973 has been earned by *(a)* infrastructure projects undertaken by non-central Government bodies, *(b)* infrastructure projects undertaken by central Government and *(c)* industrial projects.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts have been received from the European regional development fund to 31 December 1989:

	£ million
Infrastructure:	
Non-central Government	106·0
Central Government	71·3
Industry	77·7
Programmes[1]	24·5
TOTAL[2]	279·5

[1] These programmes combine elements of both industry and infrastructure.
[2] Includes estimated receipts for the first nine months of the 1989-90 financial year.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts which Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund since 1973 has been earned by *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* non-central Government public sector bodies and *(c)* central Government.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The following amounts have been received from the European regional development fund to 31 December 1989:

	£ million
Private sector	15·8
Non-central Government public sector bodies	114·7
Central Government	149·0
Total	279·5

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the £57·9 million of receipts received under the special urban renewal regulation for the Belfast area represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* All £61·8 million of the money due under the urban renewal regulation has now been received. The availability of receipts under the regulation was taken into account when determining public expenditure in Northern Ireland, thereby enabling public expenditure to be set at a higher level than would otherwise have been feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments into the European Economic Community from 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1989; how much was Northern Ireland's share of the receipts for the same period; and how much of those receipts was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* It is not possible to determine Northern Ireland's actual share of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Community because payments are made on a national and not a regional basis. Similarly it is not possible to identify the full extent of receipts from the Community. However, a Northern Ireland attributed share of the contribution to the EC is calculated as an accounting mechanism necessary because of the operation of a separate Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. This national attributed share does not count as an item of expenditure within the Northern Ireland public expenditure programme and has therefore no bearing on the level of public expenditure in the Province.

Figures for the notional attribution of part of Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments and for those areas where the receipts can be separately identified are as follows:

£ million

Financial year	Attributed[1] share (part)	Identified receipts
1973-74	1·0	—
1974-75	5·6	3·6
1975-76	7·9	3·6
1976-77	12·7	16·0
1977-78	16·0	16·8
1978-79	23·9	23·0
1979-80	28·1	36·5
1980-81	28·2	51·0
1981-82	50·3	47·8
1982-83	65·6	61·4
1983-84	65·6	92·4
1984-85	67·9	93·1
1985-86	74·4	85·9
1986-87	62·3	87·9
1987-88	[1]91·6	[2]139·2
1988-89	[1]97·2	123·5
Total	698·3	[3]881·7

[1] Attributed share figures for the last two years are provisional estimates which will be revised when final details of tax revenues are determined.
[2] From 1987-88, outturn figures include certain EAGGF guarantee section receipts for which the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland assumed accounting responsibility on 1 April 1987.
[3] This comprises total identified EC receipts in Northern Ireland, including those from outside the main EC funds.

All receipts represent cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rural Action Project

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received a report from the interdepartmental working group on the future of the Rural Action Project, Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* No. The interdepartmental committee on rural development has only recently been set up and is unlikely to have even an interim report with us before March.

Stormont

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what building will be vacated in the Stormont estate with the transfer of civil servants to the Castle Court building; and what plans there are for the use of the vacant offices.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The transfer of civil servants to the Castle Court building will vacate part of Castle Buildings in the Stormont estate. It is proposed that the space freed in Castle Buildings will be used by DHSS staff moving from Dundonald house, and the space thus vacated in Dundonald house will be used by DANI and NIO, alleviating current overcrowding and allowing greater centralisation of departmental functions.

Cave Hill

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the presence of mineral ores in commercial quantities in or under Cave hill.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* None.

Coleraine Hospital

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will ensure that the proposed option appraisal for the hospital needs of the Coleraine area is definitive and reach a final conclusion as to the needs of the area;

(2) what provision he is making for new hospital building in Coleraine in the current and the next five financial years; and what provision he is making to carry over from one financial year to the next sums allocated but not spent in each financial year;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that the new hospital building for Coleraine is completed by 1997;

(4) whether he will make it his policy to accept the findings of the option appraisal for the Coleraine hospital and immediately it is available build on the basis of its conclusions.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* Responsibility for preparing the option appraisal lies with the Northern health and social services board. Provided that it is carried out to the standards required under the Government's guidelines, the appraisal should lead to a final decision on the future provision of acute hospital services in the Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle area. The earliest on-site dates which can be accommodated within the Department of Health and Social Services major development programme are 1993 for a phased redevelopment of Coleraine hospital and 1997 for a new hospital. The completion date will depend on which option is chosen.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been expended on Coleraine hospital on *(a)* new building work, *(b)* maintenance and *(c)* other capital expenditure in each of the last 10 years; and in the case of *(a)* above what was provided by the major sums expended in that period.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The information is as follows:

	(a) *New building work* £	*(b)* *Maintenance*[1] £	*(c)* *Other capital expenditure*[2] £
1978-80		176,598	104,983
1980-81	430,492	148,348	129,411
1981-82	734,248	126,970	272,017
1982-83	59,819	156,327	332,315
1983-84	31,612	251,629	106,833
1984-85	1,924	231,683	83,854
1985-86		349,312	187,192
1986-87		224,228	98,988
1987-88		236,874	213,464
1988-89		259,721	221,639

[1] Building and engineering.
[2] Capital works, furniture and equipment.
Expenditure at *(a)* provided a 72-bed geriatric unit and 15-place day hospital.

Fishing Industry

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what benefits are available to fishermen who are restricted to only one day's work per week due to the inclement weather; and if he will make a statement on social services assistance to those presently employed in the fishing industry at Portavogie.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Unemployment benefit is available to fishermen for those days of the week on which they are unable to work because of inclement weather provided that their earnings for that week do not equal or exceed the lower earnings level for national insurance contribution liability. This is currently £43 a week. Income support may also be available to fishermen who work for fewer than 24 hours a week subject to the normal rules regarding income and capital.

The provision of social services in the Portavogie area is the responsibility of the Eastern health and social services board. The board would consider sympathetically any requests for social services assistance made to it by those employed in the fishing industry at Portavogie or their families.

Births

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show how many births there were in each hospital in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; what rate per thousand this represented in the catchment areas of those hospitals in Northern Ireland; and what is the number of births in each hospital to United Kingdom women from outside Northern Ireland and citizens of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The number of live births in hospitals in Northern Ireland for each of the five years from 1984 to 1988 are shown in the table. The other information requested is not available.

Births in Northern Ireland by hospital 1984-88

Hospital	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Ulster	2,983	2,015	2,090	2,121	2,070
Mater	728	748	878	936	863
Royal Maternity	3,520	3,547	3,630	3,499	3,467
Belfast City	2,917	3,027	3,132	2,959	2,929
Samaritan	161	132	33	Hospital closed	
Downpatrick Maternity	742	706	745	674	674
Lagan Valley	1,139	1,129	1,104	1,191	1,233
Bangor	1,009	138	—	—	—
Ards	70	1,000	1,026	1,074	993
Route	960	941	999	1,016	1,032
Robinson Memorial	344	338	352	346	305
Dalriada	64	75	65	52	17
Cushendall	19	15	11	5	—
Moyle	424	402	489	543	611
Carrickfergus	124	117	136	114	61
Mid-Ulster	1,023	1,036	968	985	959
Massereene	129	122	139	129	—
Ballymena Cottage	312	260	240	189	106
Waveney	1,172	1,186	1,317	1,467	1,537
South Tyrone	958	886	933	927	914
Tower Hill Maternity	152	177	156	122	50
Craigavon Area	2,195	2,213	2,252	2,316	2,295
Banbridge	193	172	155	175	96
Daisy Hill	1,857	1,855	1,813	1,839	1,807
St. John of God	8	11	7	4	—
Altnagelvin	2,846	2,855	3,066	3,053	3,089
Anderson House	285	218	207	138	—
Roe Valley	61	17	—	—	—
Strabane	122	79	12	—	—
Tyrone Country	1,123	1,097	1,119	1,163	1,018
Erne	961	1,013	986	888	926

[1]1988 figures are for financial year 1988-89—the other figures shown are for year ended 31 December.

DEFENCE

Polish Ex-Service Men

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice his Department will give to the dependants of Polish ex-service men who settled in the United Kingdom as to the circumstances in which his Department will be prepared to offer them assistance with their resettlement in accordance with undertakings given to the ex-service men when they were settled in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to my hon. Friend.

Air Defence

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment/integrated command and control system will be in operation.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the early 1990s.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect Staff Requirement (Naval and Air) 908 will have on the date of coming into operation of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment/integrated command and control system.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Arbitration

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that the arbitration between the Ministry of Defence and UKSL will be completed.

Mr. Alan Clark: Discussions on the interpretation of aspects of the MOD-UKSL contract are commercially confidential. It is not possible to predict when they might be completed.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, how many persons were in the Independent Television network camera crew which embarked on the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet at Glasgow airport; and whether any facility fee was paid to his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two persons were carried. No charges were levied against the camera crew. The extra costs to the Ministry of Defence were small.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, what landing charges were paid for the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet which landed at Glasgow airport; and who paid them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Landing charges of £23·20 for landing at Glasgow on the outbound and return trips were paid by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, what were *(a)* the times of departure from Prestwick of the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet, *(b)* the time of its arrival at Glasgow airport, *(c)* the time of its departure from Glasgow airport and *(d)* the time of its arrival over the search area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The times were as follows: *(a)* 08.04, *(b)* 08.15, *(c)* 08.34 and *(d)* 09.13.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, at what time the radio breakdown was discovered which delayed the departure of the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet; and when this fault was rectified.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The defect was discovered at approximately 07.20 and was rectified at approximately 08.00.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, what is the normal route to the Ben Nevis area from Prestwick by the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The route from Prestwick to Fort William taken by search and rescue crews will vary depending on circumstances such as predicted weather over the flight paths and the time of day. Given the prevailing weather conditions of the area the normal route is via the Crinan canal and then along the coast to Ben Nevis.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *690-91*, what time the request was received that an Independent Television network camera crew be carried on the search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet; and when the request was granted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The request was received by HMS Gannet at approximately 07.20 and permission was given shortly afterwards.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the source or sources of his statement of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 116, that by all accounts Colin Wallace took a great interest in collecting any information, story or rumour which might be of interest.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The collection of information as background for briefing is a normal feature of the duties of information officers. The statement to which the hon. Member has referred was intended as a general acknowledgement of the long hours and considerable effort expended by Mr. Wallace in understanding all aspects of the Northern Ireland situation which might have been relevant to the fight against terrorism. Evidence to that effect was given to the Civil Service appeal board, and is available to Mr. David Calcutt QC in his inquiry.

Submarines

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in the ELF submarine communications programme; what are the reasons for the delays in installation of a trial ELF transmitter in Glengarry; and when he now expects to submit a notice of intention to develop an ELF facility to the Highland regional council.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 9 February 1990]*: Work on ELF communications continues at the Admiralty research establishment. A decision to proceed with limited testing of the technology at Glengarry will depend on the availability of resources. I cannot speculate therefore when a notice of proposed developments might be submitted.

US Military Personnel

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States military personnel are living off-base in the United Kingdom; and what estimate he has made of the lost revenue to local authorities arising from these persons being exempted from paying the community charge.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Defence estimates that 12,500 US military and civilian personnel currently live off-base. I estimate that if they were subject to the community charge for standard spending these personnel would pay a total of £3,475,000 to local authorities in 1990-91. Individual local authorities in England will, however, receive sufficient revenue support grant to enable them to set a charge, before the safety net, at the level of the community charge for standard spending (£278 in 1990-91) if they budget to spend at the level of their standard spending assessment. The grant system therefore compensates for the fact that US military and civil personnel do not pay the personal charge.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Curry: The following list shows the companies that currently have contracts with the Department to provide private security guarding, together with the number of employees involved:

	Number of posts
Blackwater Property Protection Service	1
Compass Security Ltd.	4
Reliance Security Ltd.	1
Securiguard (London) Services Ltd.	2
Shorrock Guards Ltd.	10
UK Security Services Ltd.	2
Wakenhut (UK) Ltd.	1

In keeping with normal commercial practice it would not be appropriate in these cases for me to give the value of each individual contract. Contracts are not necessarily made for financial years but our calculation of the total value of all the contracts in each financial year is as follows:

	£'000
1984-85	170
1985-86	277
1986-87	297
1987-88	312
1988-89	329
1989-90	358

Meat Exports (West Germany)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the level of redundancies or lay-offs in the meat industry following the decision of the West German Government to ban meat imports from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The German authorities have not banned imports of meat from the United Kingdom, but have imposed additional certification requirements for beef. I understand that these requirements do not now apply to boneless beef and that trade in bone-in beef is continuing. Thus the impact on our total meat export trade is only limited. Moreover, in 1989 our beef exports to Germany represented only about 1 per cent. of our total beef production.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many bulls at artificial insemination centres in the United Kingdom have been found to be afflicted by bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and what estimate can be made of the number of calves that these would have fathered during their lives;

(2) what are the latest figures for the number of *(a)* bulls and *(b)* cows affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy;

(3) whether there is any restriction on the sale of calves from bulls later diagnosed as affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: Up to 9 February, BSE had been confirmed in 9,976 cows and 22 bulls in Great Britain. Five of those bulls were found at artificial insemination centres and are estimated to have sired around 1,000 calves between them. Research is in hand to establish whether the BSE agent is transmitted in semen. However, analogy with sheep scrapie suggests that such transmission will not occur and restrictions on the progeny of affected bulls are not, therefore, appropriate.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider introducing a substantial educational programme for farmers including leaflets, booklets and the use of video film to help them recognise the symptoms of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected animals.

Mr. Maclean: Information about BSE has been disseminated extensively through the farming press and has received wide coverage in other press and media. Advisory leaflets are given to all farmers who report a suspect case of BSE. In addition, Ministry veterinary staff make regular presentations, involving widespread material, to farming groups.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the regulations concerned with preventing meat from cattle slaughtered because they are infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy from reaching the human food chain and for ensuring that cattle slaughtered for food are not infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: The legislation is as follows:

The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (No. 2) Order 1988 (as amended).

The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Compensations Order 1990.

The Bovine Offals (Prohibition) Regulations 1989.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is *(a)* the largest number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy recorded on a single farm, *(b)* the average number of cases per affected herd, *(c)* the proportions of herds which have had a single case, *(d)* the proportion of all dairy herds that have had one or more cases and *(e)* the proportion of all beef herds that have had one or more cases.

Mr. Maclean: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

(a) 29
(b) 1·75
(c) 63·3 per cent.
(d) 10·3 per cent.
(e) 0·7 per cent.

Scrapie

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he plans to place any restriction on the sale of breeding rams affected by scrapie.

Mr. Maclean: Research into scrapie has shown that the infective agent is not transmitted in semen. Controls on breeding rams are not, therefore, appropriate.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Veterinary Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary officers were permanently employed in all grades of the state veterinary service throughout England, Scotland and Wales in 1989 and currently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In 1989 422 veterinary staff were permanently employed in all grades of the state veterinary service throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The current figure is 430. It is likely that this number will increase particularly for food safety work including meat hygiene. This was recognised in the recent review of veterinary manpower under the chairmanship of Dr. Ewan Page.

Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list all the research projects currently being carried out at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol and indicate which ones will be transferred to other research establishments, giving the name of the research establishment in each case;

(2) if he will list the projects his Department is funding and the amount of this financial contribution to these projects at each of *(a)* Leatherhead Food Research Association, *(b)* Campden Food Preservation Research Association, *(c)* Huddersfield polytechnic, *(d)* Sheffield polytechnic and *(e)* Dorset Institute of Higher Education for (i) 1988, (ii) 1989, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 1991.

Mr. Gummer: I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of my Department's programme of external research and development on food for 1988-89 and 1989-90. Proposals for 1990-91 are currently under consideration.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations and committees which give him advice on food safety research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I receive advice on research and development (R&D) into food safety from my own officials and the following bodies:

(a) the Priorities Board for R&D in Agriculture and Food;

(b) the Steering Group on Food Surveillance;
(c) the Food Advisory Committee;
(d) the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment;
(e) the Veterinary Products Committee; and
(f) the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

From time to time, I also receive suggestions from other outside organisations.

The Government are firmly committed to funding research and development on food safety and hygiene issues of concern to consumers, producers and industry.

Perrier

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place the results of his Department's tests on Perrier water in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: The results of my Department's tests on Perrier water were made available by the Food Safety Directorate in the form of news release 67/90 on 15 February. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all *(a)* pesticide residue levels and *(b)* levels of pesticide residue breakdown products he has set, indicating the level and type of food and the date when the levels were set; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Statutory maximum residue levels (MRLs) for a range of pesticides used on the more important components of the United Kingdom diet are set out in the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988, SI No. 1378, made on 1 August 1988. Schedule 1 of the regulations lists MRLs for cereals and products of animal origin and came into force on 2 August 1988. Schedule 2 lists MRLs mainly for fruit and vegetables and came into force on 31 December 1988. Schedule 3 lists the individual pesticides and describes how their residues are to be defined in terms of their metabolites or breakdown products.

Fungicides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place the results of his Ministry's tests on the presence of the ethylene biodithiocarbonate fungicides and ethylene thiourea in various foods in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's working party on pesticide residues carries out a programme of tests on food for pesticide residues, which has included these substances. The results are published: the latest report covering 1985-88 came out on 13 March 1989.

Very recently the results of tests for residues of these substances in a range of foodstuffs have been published by Friends of the Earth and Parents for Safe Food. These were carried out by an independent analyst and showed that the majority of the produce had negligible or no detectable residues. A few samples showed levels which, while giving no cause for concern, on health grounds were above predicted levels. With the agreement of the sponsors MAFF will be repeating these tests, both on the samples used by their analyst and on further samples. The results will be placed in the Library of the House, and published.

Domestic Animals (Diseases)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the diseases known to his Department that can cause domestic animal death, but which would not bar their meat from human consumption.

Mr. Maclean: Any animal which has died from any disease is prohibited from being sold for human consumption under the Slaughterhouse (Hygiene) Regulations 1977. The Meat Inspection Regulations 1987 require the meat inspector to have regard to the indications of unfitness set out in schedule 2 to those regulations: those indications include both specific diseases and more general symptoms or conditions.

Poultry Slaughtering

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why poultry slaughter figures are being reorganised from 10-day to monthly figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are no such 10-day statistics on poultry slaughter.

Cattle Offal

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the food products and types of food products which are made, have added to them or are constructed from *(a)* beef cattle offal, *(b)* mechanically recovered beef or beef offal and *(c)* beef cattle residues.

Mr. Maclean: The Department does not hold such information. However, all meat products offered for sale must comply with the provisions of the Food Act 1984, the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 and the Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984. In addition, the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989 prohibit the sale, or use in the preparation of foods for sale for human consumption, of bovine brain, spinal cord, spleen, thymus, tonsils and intestines.

Salmon

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the organisations which have made representations to his Department in support of the commercial drift netting salmon industry of the coast of north-east England.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has received a large number of letters from organisations and individuals about this fishery and the current statutory review following section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986. Those who have made representations in favour of the fishery include:

Anglo-Scottish Fish Producers Organisations Ltd.
Beadnell Parish Council
Cornish Fish Producers Organisation Ltd.
Federation of British Port Wholesale Fish Merchants Associations
Fisheries Organisation Society Ltd.
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee
Whitby Cobleman's Association
Yorks and Anglia Fish Producers Organisation.

Ministers in the Department have also held meetings with representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and a number of local salmon net fishermen.

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make it his policy to relocate the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, currently in Reading, into the premises at Crown buildings, Cathays park, Cardiff, to be vacated in April 1991 by the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland and myself are currently examining the location of part of the work of the intervention board away from Reading.

TRANSPORT

Severn Crossing

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the target date for the completion of the second Severn crossing and its approach roads.

Mr. Atkins: The decision on timing will depend on our final evaluation of the tenders; we remain on course to provide the second crossing by the mid-1990s.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Portillo: None.

A27, Worthing

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many houses on the preferred route announced for the development of the A27 in the Worthing area are officially blighted; how many owners have begun negotiations for their sale to his Department; and how many sales have now been completed.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's preferred route for the A27 Worthing to Lancing would involve the acquisition of land from some 120 houses. Blight notices have been accepted from 79 owners. Of these, 59 have settled compensation with the district valuer and 25 have completed sales to the Department.

Air Safety

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from interested parties regarding the near miss involving an Air UK civil airliner and a military Tornado aeroplane which occurred over Kelso on Wednesday 31 January.

Mr. McLoughlin: The responsibility for investigating airmiss reports rests with the independent joint airmiss working group. This group arranges for all interested parties to make representations to the investigators and in this case it includes the Ministry of Defence, the civil operator and the air traffic control unit which was providing an advisory service to the civil aircraft at the time.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to investigate the near miss involving an Air UK civil airliner and a military Tornado aeroplane which occurred over Kelso on Wednesday 31 January; if he will make it his policy to publish a report on the background to the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The investigation of airmiss reports is the responsibility of the independent joint airmiss working group. The group meets regularly to consider the circumstances surrounding every reported airmiss. Details of its deliberations and assessment of the risk and cause are published every four months by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the civil aircraft involved in a near miss with a military Tornado aeroplane over Kelso on Wednesday 31 January was in unregulated air space at the time of the incident.

Mr. McLoughlin: The incident is the subject of a full investigation by the independent joint airmiss working group. From the facts available at present, it would appear that both aircraft were in unregulated airspace at the time of the incident.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many of the incidents reported to the joint airmiss working party since 1 January 1987 of helicopters coming dangerously close to other aircraft when operating to, from or between offshore installations (1) took place in controlled air space, (2) had aircraft operating under instructions given by air traffic control to either captain, (3) took place in air space for which an advisory service was available, (4) had aircraft in receipt of advisory services and (5) operated outside either controlled air space or advisory services;

(2) how many reported incidents there have been to the joint airmiss working party since 1 January 1987 of helicopters being claimed to have come dangerously close to other aircraft when operating to, from and between offshore installations; what were the identities of the other aircraft, by type and operator; at what heights the incidents took place; and in which cases either the helicopter or the other aircraft were on approach or take-off;

(3) if he will prepare and publish a report on the lessons to be drawn from the incidents of helicopters coming dangerously close to other aircraft;

(4) in which cases where incidents have been reported to the joint airmiss working party since 1 January 1987 of helicopters coming dangerously close to other aircraft when operating to, from or between offshore installations the incidents have been categorised as A, B or C; and where the responsibility for each incident has been laid.

Mr. McLoughlin: These are matters for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation.

I have drawn the questions to the attention of the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority and will ask him to write to the hon. Member direct.

A3 (Noise)

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will complete his review of noise insulation and noise barrier needs to protect residents living adjacent to the A3 trunk road on the Ladymead to Hog's Back section.

Mr. Atkins: No review of noise insulation is being undertaken. I can agree to four of six noise barriers proposed as an interim solution pending the longer-term improvements to this section of the A3 recently announced. The case for two of these barriers nearest the A31 bridge is not made, but is being re-examined following the recent alterations to the A3 northbound carriageway. It is not possible to say yet when this re-examination will be completed.

Motorway Exits

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to eliminate the queueing which is occurring at the exits of junction 6 on the M3 at Basingstoke.

Mr. Atkins: The installation of peak hour traffic signals is being considered to deal with this problem pending longer-term solutions. A scheme for the grade separation of the Black Dam roundabout was added to the trunk road programme last year. This should overcome the problems in the longer term.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to remove the danger of stationary vehicles in queues in nearside lanes waiting to leave motorways.

Mr. Atkins: The proposals announced in "Roads for Prosperity" (Cm. 693) in May 1989, including widening and junction improvements of substantial lengths of existing motorway, will go a long way to reducing congestion, including that caused by vehicles queuing to leave motorways. In the case of some junctions not scheduled for major improvement, minor schemes such as installation of signal controls can reduce queuing, especially at peak periods.

Scottish Lowland Airports

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for the delay in the announcement of his decision on the review of Scottish lowland airports policy; and when he now expects to make it.

Mr. McLoughlin: There has been no delay. Careful consideration is being given to the very full response to our recent consultation, and my right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision before long.

St. John's Wood Station (Escalators)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply on escalators at St. John's Wood to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, *Official Report*, 12 February, column *112*, concerning work on the out-of-service escalator at St. John's Wood station, if he will seek from London Underground an explanation as to why a notice states that the escalator in question will be out of service until early April.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter within London Underground Limited's management responsibility.

Road Projects

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish tables showing the estimated completion dates for the major road projects outlined in the roads White Paper in 1987 and the present estimated completion dates; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the roads report promised in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", has been completed; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he plans to complete and publish the roads report promised in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Preparation of the roads report is complete and will be published very shortly. The report will include tables showing details of all schemes in the national trunk road programme, including completion dates where appropriate. It will cover the schemes under construction or in preparation at the time of publication of "Policy for Roads in England 1987" and additions to the programme made since, including those announced in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity" published last May.

A30 (Dualling)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the present target date for completing dualling of the A30 in *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* Devon; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what progress has been made in drawing up plans for dualling the whole of the A30 in *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* Devon; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether the review of plans for the dualling of the A30 in *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* Devon, promised in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Dualling of the A30 in Devon, west of Exeter, is planned to be completed by the end of 1993.

Current plans for the improvement of the A30 in Cornwall do not provide for dual carriageways throughout, but the assessment of needs of the whole route foreshadowed in "Roads for Prosperity", which will start later this year, will include consideration of the need for further dualling.

A38 (Dualling)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what stage plans for the dualling of the A38 Liskeard to Bodmin have reached; if the review promised in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We expect to consult the public on possible route options in the autumn. The assessment of needs of the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth is expected to start later this year.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct British Rail to give priority in its investment plans for Network SouthEast to improving rolling stock.

Mr. Parkinson: Network SouthEast has already identified rolling stock as its top investment priority. It is planning to invest some £1·2 billion over the next three years, of which about 70 per cent. will be for replacement of old stock and additional trains to relieve overcrowding.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from British Rail about the timing of investment plans to improve the least satisfactory commuter lines in Network SouthEast.

Mr. Parkinson: Network SouthEast will be bringing forward various investments over the coming months to back up its efforts to achieve the quality objectives over every route by 1993. I know that it has begun work on detailed investment proposals for modernising the north Kent lines and the London-Tilbury-Southend line and I look forward to receiving its formal investment submissions as soon as they are ready.

Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, column 46, what was the sample size of the 1988 survey which showed 3·6 per cent. of heavy goods vehicles emitting excessive smoke; and what results were obtained from the regional roadside visual checks of exhaust smoke from heavy goods vehicles undertaken by his Department's vehicle inspectorate in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Atkins: The figures requested are:

Year and region	*Number checked*	*Number emitting excess smoke*	*Per cent. emitting excess smoke*
1985			
North	18,637	663	3·56
Scotland	8,583	640	7·46
South West and Wales	17,050	1,690	9·91
South East	22,855	2,703	11·83
1985			
National	67,125	5,696	8·49
1986			
North	17,032	805	4·73
Scotland	7489	300	4·01
South West and Wales	11,731	1,083	9·23
South East	20,821	2,154	10·35
1986			
National	57,073	4,342	7·61
1987			
North	21,029	894	4·25
Scotland	7,130	199	2·79
South West and Wales	13,368	1,242	9·29
South East	29,338	2,532	8·63
1987			
National	70,865	4,867	6·87
1988			
North	7,824	235	3·00
Scotland	3,817	68	1·78
South West and Wales	10,195	475	4·66
South East	17,726	650	3·67
1988			
National	39,562	1,428	3·61
1989			
North	8,874	275	3·10
Scotland	4,175	48	1·15
South West and Wales	6,921	263	3·80
South East	12,938	346	2·67
1989			
National	32,908	932	2·83

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about pollution from motor vehicles, including motor cycles, detected by his Department's vehicle inspectorate since 1986, including excessive smoke emissions and excessive noise; and whether he will in future take steps to publish annually a separate analysis of such information.

Mr. Atkins: The percentages of heavy goods and passenger service vehicles failing their annual test for excess smoke or for defective exhaust systems are as follows:

	Excess smoke		*Defective exhaust*	
	PSV Percentage	*HGV Percentage*	*PSV Percentage*	*HGV Percentage*
1986-87	1·34	1·09	2·29	0·97
1987-88	1·60	1·18	2·86	1·11
1988-89	1·42	1·06	2·76	1·72

The percentages of vehicles selected at random seen emitting excess smoke during roadside surveys were:

	Heavy goods vehicles (Statistical checks) Percentage	*Public service vehicles (Deregulation survey) Percentage*
1985	8·49	—
1986	7·61	—
1987	6·87	1·89
1988	3·61	1·18
1989	2·83	1·31

The numbers of cars, light goods vehicles and motor cycles failing their MOT test for excess noise is not recorded separately. There are currently no checks for excess emissions in the MOT test.

The vehicle inspectorate executive agency publishes statistics relating to its work in its annual report, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. It is going to expand the amount of data it publishes.

Ferries (Safety)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the report and recommendations of phase I of the research programme into the safety of roll-on roll-off ferries.

Mr. McLoughlin: All the projects in phase I of the Department of Transport-sponsored research programme into ways of increasing the safety of ro-ro passenger ferries have now been completed. The steering committee which has been supervising the programme has nearly completed its assessment of the results, and I expect to receive its report next month. I will, of course, need to consider that report, but it is my intention to make the report and the results of the research widely available as soon as possible.

Clapham Rail Accident

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive British Rail's response to Sir Anthony Hidden's report on the Clapham Junction railway accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The chairman of the railways board, Sir Robert Reid, sent me his initial response to Sir Anthony Hidden's recommendations earlier today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

I am pleased to see that the railways board has been able to accept all the recommendations which apply to it. It has already implemented many of these, including all those that required urgent action.

Several of the recommendations depend on developmental work for their full implementation. I know that Sir Robert Reid and the board are anxious to press on with full implementation as quickly as practicable, and to ensure that the systems are right before installing them. The railway inspectorate is discussing the detailed programme of implementation, including the prototype trials now going ahead, with BR. The implementation of some other recommendations depends on a satisfactory outcome to negotiations between BR and the railway unions: I am sure that both sides will do all they can to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the railway.

Part of the cost of implementation of the Hidden report is covered by the £125 million for safety measures already included in BR's expenditure plans for the next three years and endorsed by the Government. I have asked BR to produce detailed estimates of the cost of implementing the longer-term recommendations; it is now assessing these and will include them in its 1990 corporate plan, which I shall be discussing with it later in the year. We will continue to ensure that BR has adequate funds for safety.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Human Rights

74. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what manner the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and by the international covenant on civil and political rights are directly secured by domestic law to everyone within the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provisions of our common and statute law have always recognised basic human rights and freedoms. New laws are drafted in the light of international conventions and covenants; and, where necessary, existing laws are amended in the light of international judgments to meet our obligations.

75. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about compliance by the United Kingdom with covenants on civil and political rights, detailing how decisions of United Kingdom courts are communicated to international bodies monitoring such covenants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The United Kingdom fully meets its obligations under the various international instruments dealing with civil and political rights to which it is party. Details of court decisions relevant to a particular international instrument would normally be included in the United Kingdom's regular reports to treaty-monitoring bodies.

Criminal Proceedings

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to reduce the time taken to complete hearings in criminal proceedings.

Mr. John Patten: We have urged magistrates and court clerks to concentrate on reducing delays. A training video, "Court in Action", was launched earlier this year. A management information system has been introduced to help magistrates courts monitor their performance and performance targets have been set. We have authorised additional court clerk posts, and we shall be issuing guidance later this year on listing and efficient use of court resources. We intend to extend the operation of statutory custody time limits to the whole of England and Wales by the end of the year.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has taken steps to tackle delays in the Crown court through the provision of more resources and improved management. Additional judges have been appointed and new courtrooms opened.

We shall be monitoring the impact of these initiatives carefully.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

Departmental Circulars

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the name and number of every circular issued by his Department since June 1979; and what monitoring is done for their implementation.

Mr. Waddington: Since 1979 the Home Office has issued each year an average of about 75 circulars to local and police authorities. A list giving details of these circulars is prepared quarterly and a copy sent to the Clerk to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. To list the name and number of every circular and to establish what monitoring has been done for their implementation would require a disproportionate use of resources.

Departmental Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names and previous occupations of advisers currently appointed to his Department, stating their current salaries.

Mr. Waddington: The information is as follows:

Mr. John Godfrey—seconded from Daiwa (Europe) Ltd
Mr. John Taylor (from 19 February 1990)—barrister-at-law

It is not the practice to disclose the salaries of special advisers as they are negotiated individually in relation to previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential.

Dr. Malde Modhwadia

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the case of Dr. Malde Modhwadia of 245 Goodwood road, Leicester; and when he estimates the case will be resolved.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member is aware that inquiries are now being made into new information about this case. I understand that these inquiries will be completed shortly and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as we have had an opportunity to consider the results.

London Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to co-opt on to the local boards of visitors at each London prison members from the local education authorities which are shortly to be set up.

Mr. Mellor: No. At least two members of the board of visitors to prison establishments are required to be Justices of the Peace, but it is not otherwise the practice to appoint members to boards by virtue of their office. In making appointments to boards of visitors, consideration is rather given to the abilities of the individual candidate to discharge the duties effectively and the desirability of maintaining, so far as possible, a representative balance on the board in terms of age, sex and social and ethnic background.

Prison Officers

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons have failed to meet their full establishment figures for prison officers; and what is the shortfall of staff in each of these prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The initial complement figures set for each establishment during the introduction of the "fresh start" arrangements have already been modified in many instances and are in the process of further revision. They will continue to be reviewed during the period of the framework agreement to take account of the resources available to the prison service and of the progressive reduction in the working week for prison officers. This continuing series of changes means that any list of complement figures for each of the 124 establishments around the country would be misleading and unreliable. Nationally the position remains that we have provided and will continue to provide all the additional staff promised under "fresh start": the number of prison officers in post has risen by nearly 20 per cent. over the past three years.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total shortage of trained prison officers in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Although there are still problems in particular establishments, there is no general shortage of officers in the prison service. We are having no difficulty in attracting good quality recruits and are continuing to provide all the additional staff promised under "fresh start." The number of prison officers in post is now over 20,000, nearly 20 per cent. higher than three years ago.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Waddington: The following private security firms are currently employed by my Department:

Burns International
Chubb Wardle Limited
Compass Security
Group 4 Total Security Limited
Potton Leisure Limited
Real Security
Reliance Security
Securicor
Securiguard Services Limited
Security Express
Security Services
Wray Security.

The value of each contract is a matter of commercial and contractual confidentiality. Information about the total value of all such contracts for each year since 1984-85 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about the number of staff employed on each contract is also not readily available; in some cases the number varies from day to day according to operational requirements.

Community Service Orders

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time between sentencing and the start of the community service order in *(a)* inner London and *(b)* the rest of the country.

Mr. John Patten: The implementation of the national standards for community service orders, which were introduced in April last year, is being monitored through quarterly returns from all probation areas. During the first six months (April to September 1989) the following delays were recorded between sentencing and the start of the community service work, based on the returns received and coded so far:

Delays in days	Inner London probation areas		Areas outside inner London	
	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.
0 to 6	127	19·00	4,737	47·8
7 to 9	137	20·50	1,912	19·3
10 to 13	139	20·75	1,570	15·8
14 to 20	139	20·75	1,074	10·8
21 and over	127	19·00	627	6·3
	669	100·00	9,920	100·0

The most frequent reason for delay in beginning work in inner London was the unavailability of work placements. Other reasons included the offender's failure to turn up for interviews or work, health, domestic or mental problems; further offending, conflicting employment commitments and administrative error.

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of criminals sentenced to community service orders completed their full hours.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* The information requested is published in "Probation Statistics England and Wales 1988" (table 6.11). In 1988, the proportion of community service orders that were terminated on completion of the specified number of hours was 72 per cent.

Violent Crime

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further proposals he has to combat and reduce the incidence of violent crime.

Mr. John Patten: Our proposals in chapter 3 of the White Paper, "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm 965), include empowering the Crown court to impose longer sentences on serious violent and sexual offenders where this is necessary to protect the public. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions from the hon. Members for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) and the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), on 25 January at column *864*.

Licensed Hotels

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to compile statistics on how many licensing benches insist on a dry lounge in licensed hotels.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It would not be practicable to compile statistics of the very many different types of conditions which licensing justices may attach when granting an on-licence; and we have no reason to suppose that licences granted under part IV of the Licensing Act 1964 do not normally have a "dry room" condition.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons now serving sentences in British prisons have been convicted of crimes related to drug trafficking.

Mr. Mellor: The available information on the type of drugs offence for England and Wales is published annually in "Prison statistics England and Wales" (Table 1(a) of the volume for 1988, Cm 825). Information on custodial sentences imposed in the United Kingdom for drug trafficking offences is published annually in "Statistics of the misuse of drugs: seizures and offenders dealt with. Supplementary tables" (Table 2.6 of the issue for 1988). Copies of both volumes are in the Library.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the Home Office research unit budget is spent on evaluating the crime prevention potential of different building materials.

Mr. John Patten: None, although some crime prevention demonstration projects funded from time to time may involve, among other things, "target hardening" of doors, windows and frames through improved materials and design.

New Prisons

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department wh. sites for new prisons he has considered and rejected in the north-west over the last two years.

Mr. Mellor: During this period the Home Office has considered some 40 possible sites. Only one of these, at Fazakerley, Liverpool, is being actively pursued at present. Discussions on a number of the sites were on a confidential basis, because of commercial considerations, and it would not be right to list all of the sites involved.

Pop Concerts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he intends to introduce measures to ensure that all security staff at pop concerts are trained in fire control and emergency evacuation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to introduce proposals to ensure that the conditions of entry to pop concerts are better publicised; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that a common grid map should be devised and used by emergency services at all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that all sites used for pop concerts are surveyed for crowd safety purposes; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that all vendors on the sites of pop concerts are prevented from selling alcohol, or drinks in bottles or cans; and if he will make a statement;

(6) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that an emergency control room should be set up at all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(7) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that an evacuation plan approved by the emergency services should be prepared prior to all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(8) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that the heads of security at all pop concerts should be allowed access to non-classified local emergency plans; and if he will make a statement;

(9) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that there should be a defined head of security and a named site controller for all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(10) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure that there should be a VHF exclusive frequency used for radio communications at all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(11) whether he proposes to introduce measures to ensure the reduction of crowd build-up at entry points to pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(12) whether he will introduce legislation to ensure that all senior supervisors at pop concerts are *(a)* within constant radio contact and *(b)* trained in fire control, emergency evacuation and cardiac pressure and resuscitation; and if he will make a statement;

(13) whether he will introduce measures to ensure adequate training and discipline of security staff employed at all pop concerts; and if he will make a statement;

(14) whether he will introduce measures to ensure that all first-aid posts and treatment centres at pop concerts should be left to trained first-aid personnel; and if he will make a statement;

(15) whether he will introduce measures to ensure that one person at pop concerts should be stationed on the stage with the authority to stop the show at any time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, or in London the London Government Act 1963, responsibility for controlling places which are used for public musical entertainments, including pop concerts, is vested in the local authority. One of the purposes of this licensing regime is to ensure that places used for such entertainments have adequate standards of safety and hygiene and the legislation empowers local authorities to attach terms, conditions and restrictions to an entertainments licence. When considering the issue of such licences the local authority will generally have regard to any observations submitted to it by the police and the fire authority, to which advance notice of the application must be given.

We have no present plans for any fundamental alterations to the existing arrangements for the licensing of public entertainments. The local authority is best placed to determine, in the circumstances of each individual application, exactly what conditions relating to crowd safety should be attached to any particular entertainments licence.

To assist local authorities and fire authorities, as well as managers and licensees of premises, we are shortly to publish a comprehensive "Guide to Fire Precautions in Existing Places of Public Entertainment and Like Premises". This consolidates and to some extent revises existing guidance and contains specific advice on fire safety at pop concerts. We are also considering, in consultation with other agencies with an interest in the question, whether any further guidance should be issued to local authorities about crowd safety at public musical entertainments.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a summary of the compelling and compassionate circumstances in which visitors from abroad initially refused entry by immigration officials have been allowed to visit, since the implementation of the relevant change in the immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. Paragraph 10 of the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, which were sent to right hon. and hon. Members under cover of a letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) on 14 December 1988 gives examples of the sort of exceptional and compelling circumstances which would justify deferment of removal. These examples are not exhaustive and each case is considered on its merits.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to change the requirement for United Kingdom citizens resident in Hong Kong who marry other nationalities to be resident in the United Kingdom for three years before the spouse is granted permanent right of abode.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans for changes in the relevant law and practice other than those necessary to implement the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on 20 December 1989 at column 363.

Court Escort Services

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards privatising court escort services.

Mr Mellor: We are at present considering the outcome of the further studies into the likely cost-effectiveness of contracting out court escort services to the private sector, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) commissioned (his statement on 1 March 1989 at columns 277-88 refers to that). We hope soon to announce our conclusions.

INFORM

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grant has been given to INFORM; and for how long.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: INFORM became operational on 1 January 1988. The Home Office funding is designed on a reducing basis over three years: £50,000 in the first full year of operation, and £40,000 and £30,000 in the subsequent years. The amounts in the respective financial years are £25,000 in 1987-88, £45,000 in 1988-89, £35,000 in 1989-90 and (provisionally) £15,000 in 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Dr. Barker was appointed chairman of INFORM; and for how long her appointment runs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We understand that Dr. Barker has been chairman of INFORM since its inception; that she was formally appointed chairman by the board of governors when INFORM became a limited company in February, 1989; and that the length of her appointment is at the discretion of the board of governors.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the annual report of INFORM was published.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the terms of its grant INFORM is required to submit a report on its activities each year. The last such report was received by the Home Office in May 1989. Copies may be obtained from INFORM, and I am asking it to send one to my hon. Friend.

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what subjects were discussed when he last met the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There has been no further formal contact between my right hon. and learned Friend and the Association of Chief Police Officers since I replied to a question from the hon. Member on 5 December at column *182*.

Horserace Totalisator Board

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much, in each case, the Horserace Totalisator Board has invested in capital expenditure for the racecourse division and Tote Credit Ltd over each of the last six years ending 1989-90; and what is the current asset value in each balance sheet.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Other than its annual report submitted to Parliament or in its annual returns to Companies House concerning Tote Credit Ltd and Tote Bookmakers Ltd, the Tote does not publish detailed breakdowns of the information requested as it regards such information as commercially sensitive.

Figures for Tote Credit Ltd's capital expenditure as given in its returns are as follows:

	£000
1983-84	131
1984-85	225
1985-86	188
1986-87	243
1987-88	262
1988-89	[1]2,593

[1] Includes substantial one-off expenditure on the new Wigan headquarters which were opened by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) on 28 February 1989.

Figures for 1989-90 are not yet available.

The net book value of capital expenditure for Tote Credit Ltd on 31 March 1989 was £4,333,000.

Information Storage

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact on the application of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 of the requirement of the Data Protection Act or other legislation controlling information storage and retrieval.

Mr. Mellor: The Drug Trafficking Offences Act enables banks and other financial institutions to disclose suspicions to the enforcement authorities without infringing the law on confidentiality and personal privacy. The evidence is that it has achieved this objective. The Government have stated, however, that they are keeping the working of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act under continuing review, and that they are prepared to take whatever action is necessary if problems are found to arise.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact on the applications of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 of the requirements of the Data Protection Act or other legislation controlling information storage and retrieval.

Mr. John Patten: I have no reason to believe that the application of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 has been impeded by the confidentiality or privacy requirements of other legislation. We will, however, keep the matter under review.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact on the application of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 of the requirements of the Data Protection Act or other legislation controlling information storage and retrieval.

Mr. Mellor: I have no evidence that the application of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 has been impeded by the confidentiality or privacy requirements of other legislation, but I will keep this matter under review.

London Prison Doctors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of fully qualified medical doctors employed in each of the London prisons as at 7 February.

Mr. Mellor: The following is the information requested:

Medical practitioners occupying complemented medical officer posts in London prisons as at 7 February 1990

Establishments	*Principal Medical Officer*	*Senior Medical Officer*	*Medical Officer*	*Part-time Medical Officer*	*Total*
Ashford	—	1	1	—	2
Brixton	1	1	6	2	10
Feltham	—	—	2	2	4
Holloway	1	1	3	2	7
Latchmere House	—	1	—	2	3
Pentonville	—	4	3	1	8
Wandsworth	—	2	2	2	6
Wormwood Scrubs	1	1	1	4	7
Total	3	8	18	15	44

DNA Testing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy towards legal powers to take samples, such as blood or hair roots, in respect of screening people who there may be no reason to suspect of involvement in the offence;

(2) what proposals he has for a DNA databank for use in the fight against serious crime; what type of offences will be covered; what type of sample will need to be taken; and whether types of sample such as blood or hair roots will be taken without the consent of the individual concerned;

(3) whether he will consult the Law Lords on the question which would arise if a doctor was asked to take a blood sample without consent, the question being how to obtain a sample from someone who refuses consent, and may physically resist having a sample taken, and on the question of the acceptability of evidence obtained under duress by the courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the issues set out in the letter which my noble Friend the Minister of State sent to the hon. Member on 7 December. He is currently consulting the British Medical Association and the Association of Police Surgeons on the medical ethics of taking blood samples without consent from suspects in police detention and from convicted offenders. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider what further consultations are necessary in the light of their response. He has no plans to amend the law to enable the police to take blood or other samples from people who are not suspects or convicted offenders and who do not consent. The police are free to ask people to provide samples voluntarily.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to include provisions in his Computer Misuse Bill to promote safeguards to ensure that information stored in a DNA databank would not be open to misuse.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The Data Protection Act 1984 already provides appropriate safeguards against misuse of personal data held on a computer database. These include a requirement that the data user must take security measures against unauthorised access.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the use of DNA material unrelated to crime.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: DNA testing has been used to establish relationship in immigration and paternity cases.

Blundeston Prison

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to publish the prison department's report into the serious disturbance in January at Her Majesty's prison, Blundeston.

Mr. Mellor: As indicated in the reply which I gave to a question by my hon. Friend on 18 January at columns *378-79*, the regional director for the south-east region of the prison service is examining the cause of this demonstration. It is not the practice to publish internal management documents but I shall write to my hon. Friend when the regional director's report has been received and considered.

Management Consultants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Oxford, East on 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *203-4*, who awarded the contracts on *(a)* the practicality of private sector involvement in the remand system to Deloitte Haskins and Sells in 1988 and *(b)* the organisation of the prison service above establishment level to PA Consulting Group in 1989; what was the cost of each contract; and if he will list any similar reports commissioned from outside management consultants since 1985 and give their date of completion and cost.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office awarded a contract to Deloitte Haskins and Sells for a study into the practicality of private sector involvement in the remand system, and another to PA Consulting Group for a review of the prison service organisation above establishment level. For details of the assignment to Deloitte Haskins and Sells I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 13 February 1990 at column *131*. The duration of the contract awarded to PA Consulting Group for a review of the prison service organisation above establishment level was extended in July 1989 and again in December 1989, and remains extant. The total cost of this assignment will not be available until April 1990. For details of similar reports from outside management consultants awarded and completed since 1985, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 31 January 1990 at column *203*.

Bingo

Mr. Ilsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider amending the appropriate legislation to allow the advertising of bingo games.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 17 January at column *265*.

Correspondence

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for East Lothian dated 11 December 1989 about a claim for a refund of the cost of a passport on the part of Mrs. Cameron of Musselburgh, East Lothian.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply will be sent within the next few days.

Motor Vehicle Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about offences relating to pollution from motor vehicles since 1987, including excessive smoke emissions and excessive noise; and whether he will take steps in future to publish annually a separate analysis of such offences.

Mr. John Patten: The available information about offences relating to motor vehicles is published annually in Home Office statistical publications. Summary information is set out in the bulletin entitled "Offences relating to

Motor Vehicles, England and Wales"; the most recent, number 34/89, included data for 1988. Detailed information is given in the publication, "Offences relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Details of noise offences, offence group 22, are included in the supplementary tables publications.

For information relating to emission of smoke offences, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her question on 15 January 1990 at columns *33-34*.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 February 1990

TRANSPORT

Airports

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what expenditure his Department will incur in assisting the development of British airports in 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department does not pay grant for airport development, but it authorises borrowing for the expansion and development of facilities at local authority airports. For 1990-91 borrowing approvals totalling £59 million will be available.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to approve access from the centre of London to Heathrow and Gatwick airports by road, rail and tube;

(2) what plans his Department has to improve the transport infrastructure serving the airports of London and the south-east in the next five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: A number of proposed schemes will improve access to airports in London and the south-east. I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to assist the expansion of London as an international hub for airline traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin: In Heathrow and Gatwick the United Kingdom has the world's two busiest international airports, and BAA plc is currently investing some £400 million in the development of Stansted airport. We have commissioned advice from the Civil Aviation Authority on United Kingdom airport capacity needed through to 2005.

HGV Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he intends to support the amendment proposed by the French Government to regulation 3820/85 on drivers' working hours;

(2) what assessment he has made of the contribution of driver fatigue to road accidents; and what steps he is taking to promote drivers' health, safety and welfare in the discussions at the Council of Ministers on amendments to EEC regulation 3820/85.

Mr. Atkins: The rules on drivers' hours were agreed in 1986 after lengthy discussions. It is too soon to be considering their amendment. A Council directive aimed at improving arrangements for enforcing the social regulations on drivers' hours and tachographs was implemented last year.

Most accidents are caused by a combination of many different factors. Studies indicate that fatigue is a contributory factor in between 4 and 11 per cent. of accidents.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the likely impact on heavy goods vehicle driver employment in the United Kingdom domestic haulage companies of the implementation of the single European market.

Mr. Atkins: A study by the Polytechnic of Central London showed that about 1 per cent. of United Kingdom domestic traffic was at risk from caboteurs, but that there were more than compensating opportunities for United Kingdom hauliers abroad.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the ratio between employed heavy goods vehicle drivers and owner-drivers employed in the United Kingdom and between the two categories of heavy goods vehicles drivers in other European Community member countries.

Mr. Atkins: There are over 1 million current holders of HGV driver licences. Information is not available on the ratio of employed to owner-drivers, but the latter will represent a relatively small proportion. Likewise, we do not keep information on other European Community countries.

Road Haulage

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the likely impact on road haulage rates of the implementation of the single European market.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him today about the effect on the domestic market. Road haulage rates in the United Kingdom are subject to market pricing and this should also apply to rates across the liberalised transport services of the single European market.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he has established for monitoring the introduction of the transitional road cabotage system from July for its effects on competition.

Mr. Atkins: We want to see United Kingdom hauliers making full use of the available cabotage permits. The Department will monitor applications for permits and the use made of them. The Department will also be liaising closely with industry representatives.

Each member state is required to send data to the Commission quarterly on cabotage operations carried out by its hauliers. This is to enable the Commission to analyse the overall effect of the trial scheme in preparation for the definitive scheme from 1992.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in achieving harmonisation of the conditions of competition between road haulage companies in the member states of the European Community prior to implementation of the single European market.

Mr. Atkins: Agreement has been reached on common social conditions (drivers' hours and tachographs), on rules for access to the profession, on weights and dimensions, and on enforcement. A draft directive on the harmonisation of vehicle taxes for heavy goods vehicles is under discussion.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards he intends to introduce with the implementation of the single European market to protect the interests of the United Kingdom domestic hire or reward haulage companies against unfair competition by international hauliers.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his previous question. We shall enforce the agreed rules. United Kingdom road hauliers are among the most competitive in Europe and have much experience of operating in a deregulated market.

Motorway Construction

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current cost per mile of motorway construction.

Mr. Atkins: Costs vary so much—because of differences in factors such as the location of the road, the number and design of junctions and structures, and ground conditions—that it is impractical to give an average cost per mile. Recent examples of works costs per mile of motorway schemes are, in outturn prices:

	£ million
New motorway	
M40 Warwick North	4·2
M40 Warwick South	4·8
M63/M66 Portwood-Denton	10·0
Widening	
M25 Junctions 11-13	4·5
M63 Stages 1 and 2 (with Barton Bridge)	12·0

Vehicle Speeds Experiment

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department's experiment to ascertain the effect on vehicle speeds of substituting 70 mph road signs for white circles with a black diagonal stripe took place; what the result of the experiment has been; and if he will place the data collected in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: An experiment to test the effect of 70 mph repeater signs has been carried out on a stretch of the M1 and the results are now being assessed. Initial indications are that these signs had no effect on the speed of the majority of vehicles. When a report has been prepared I shall place a copy in the Library.

A6 Bypass

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the 1989 prices of the modified brown, purple, brown as a public consultation and blue routes on the proposed A6 Disley-High lane bypass.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

	£ million
Preferred Route (modified Brown)	49
Brown	69
Purple	52
Blue	74

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he received from British Coal concerning the line of route of the proposed A6 Disley-High lane bypass.

Mr. Atkins: British Coal mentioned the existence of shafts and shallow mine workings in the areas. It referred to potential opencast coal reserves along the purple, blue and orange routes and asked to be kept informed of progress on the scheme.

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he received from the National Trust concerning the line of route of the proposed A6 Disley-High lane bypass.

Mr. Atkins: The National Trust supported the Department's preferred brown route in so far as it avoided the trust's property at Lyme park. It agreed with the Department's reasons for rejecting the purple route.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action under the control of industrial major accident hazard regulations which came into effect in 1986, his Department has considered with respect to toxic waste and dangerous chemicals that travel through south Yorkshire by road and rail.

Mr. Portillo: The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984, as amended in 1988, apply only to fixed industrial installations. The transport of dangerous substances, including toxic waste, by road and rail is fully regulated to ensure maximum safety and the regulations are kept under review.

Black Cabs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many London black cab taxis are on the road or licensed on any given day.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 15,792 licensed taxis are currently available for use in London. Given the flexible nature of taxi operations, it is not possible to estimate the percentage of black cabs which might be operating on any given day.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average income of the London black cab taxi drivers.

Mr. Portillo: No figures are available. London taxi drivers are private, often one-man operations and their income derives directly from the number of hours worked which varies considerably from driver to driver.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many copies of the abbreviated report on each of the London assessment studies have been produced and distributed; what languages they have been translated into; and what interpreters have been sent to public consultations.

Mr. Atkins: Each of the study consultants have produced some 50,000 copies of their stage 2 report summaries. Of these, between 30,000 and 35,000 have been distributed for each study. The east London assessment study summary has been translated into Bengali. No interpreters have been required to date.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many copies of the full report of each of the

London assessment studies issued on 14 December 1989 have been made available to hon. Members, local authorities, press and community organisations; and at what cost.

Mr. Atkins: Over 1,500 copies of the London assessment studies stage 2 reports have been issued free of charge at a total cost to the Department of approximately £43,000.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters have been received by his Department *(a)* directly and *(b)* via consultants acting for him in response to each of the London assessment studies that he announced on 14 December 1989.

Mr. Atkins: Many letters on the assessment studies are received every day by the Department and the study consultants. Results of the consultations will not be available until after 28 February. Interim counts would involve disproportionate cost.

Electrically Powered Vehicles

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1980 the total number of electrically powered road vehicles in the categories of *(a)* delivery vehicles and *(b)* passenger vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: The total numbers of electric goods vehicles and passenger vehicles for each year since 1980 are:

Licensed at end of	*Passenger vehicles*	*'Goods' vehicles*
1980	124	[1]
1981	138	[1]
1982	156	[1]
1983	175	[1]
1984	189	[1]
1985	202	27,905
1986	208	27,401
1987	225	26,792
1988	170	26,110
1989[2]	155	25,138

[1] Figures for goods vehicles are not given for 1984 and before because changes in the way the figures are compiled prevent comparison with post 1984 figures.
[2] At September 1989.

Note:
No separate figures exist for delivery vehicles as such it is likely that the large majority of goods vehicles are 'delivery' vehicles.

The market has not shown any preference for electric passenger vehicles despite the exemption of electric vehicles from vehicle excise duty.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), *Official Report*, 8 February, column *782*, any high level waste as a constituent component of spent nuclear fuel has been transported by train since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: All irradiated nuclear fuel contains a small non-reusable component. This does not arise as waste until after the fuel has been reprocessed.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), *Official Report*, 8 February, column *782*, what is the basis of his calculation of the date 2005 as the definitive year before which there are no plans to transport nuclear waste through London.

Mr. Portillo: UK Nirex Limited is planning to develop a deep repository for the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes and is also developing the necessary transport system. Nirex aims to start disposing of wastes in the year 2005.

Travel Information

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet with the Automobile Association to discuss the use of the Automobile Association roadwatch travel information database for the relief of road congestion and the promotion of tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I visited the AA roadwatch headquarters on 24 January. The Department regards the provision of travel information as extremely important, and is considering with interested organisations ways of improving the reliability and availability of information through better arrangements for its collection, co-ordination and dissemination.

Special Constables

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the hon. Member for Uxbridge concerning the swearing in of special constables in accordance with the Harbours Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: On a number of occasions in the past year my hon. Friend has made known to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and his predecessor the views of the Police Federation about the use of these powers by harbour authorities. We shall shortly let my hon. Friend know the Government's views on the matter in connection with his Harbours Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 (Amendment) Bill.

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his letter of 12 February to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on the proposed joint venture agreement between British Rail and Eurorail.

Mr. Portillo: I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library.

Birmingham Airport

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his examination of the question of according gateway status to Birmingham airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The "gateway international airport" was one of four categories of airport conceived in a 1978 White Paper as part of a framework for airports policy; the 1985 airports policy White Paper discontinued the other three categories. In view of the rapid development of international air traffic, including long-haul traffic, since

1985, and the increasing number of more liberal air services arrangements which the United Kingdom has negotiated, I have decided to discontinue the category of gateway international airport as used in the two White Papers.

The United Kingdom will continue to seek a balanced expansion of air services arrangements under which additional services will be able to operate from regional airports.

Roads Report

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the roads report.

Mr. Parkinson: I am publishing the report "Trunk Roads, England—into the 1990s" today. Copies have been placed in the Library and are also available from the Vote Office. The report gives full details of our programme for improving the trunk road network in England. It also outlines new proposals for the enhancement of environmental treatment of schemes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

The Attorney-General: Neither the legal secretariat to the Law Officers nor the Treasury Solicitor's Department has employed private security firms. The Serious Fraud Office currently employs the firm of Rodway Security. This contract provides for two employees and the value of the contract is £39,312 per year. The Serious Fraud Office engaged the firm of Reliance Security Services Limited from March 1988 to October 1988, the total value of this contract being £13,606·80.

The Crown prosecution service currently employs Reliance Security Services Limited and Diamond Security Services, the number of employees for each firm on the contract being four and two respectively. The total value of each contract, and the total value of all contracts since the financial year 1986-87 (when the CPS was created) are as follows:

	Reliance £	*Diamond* £	*Total* £
1986-87	9,000	—	9,000
1987-88	14,360	—	14,360
1988-89	33,459	—	33,459
1989-90	54,458	29,000	83,458
Total	111,277	29,000	140,277

Southwark Crown Court

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of works carried out recently at Southwark Crown court; and if he will describe them.

The Attorney-General: The recent alterations to courtrooms at the Crown court at Southwark were as follows:

Court 2: For a trial which took place between May and August 1989 some fixed furniture was removed and replaced by loose furniture. The fixed furniture was replaced after the trial. In addition storage racks were provided and trunking for electrical cables. The total cost was £7,043. Further alterations which have recently been carried out are expected to cost about £25,000.

Court 4: For a trial which took place between May and December 1989 loose courtroom furniture and storage racks were provided at a cost of £4,216.

Court 1: For a trial which took place in January 1990 loose furniture which had been used in earlier trials was provided. The cost of adapting the courtroom is expected to be about £2,000.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of works carried out recently to court 2 at Southwark Crown court, number 2; and if he will describe them.

The Attorney-General: The cost of the recent alterations to court No. 2 at the Crown court at Southwark is expected to be about £25,000. The work carried out included removal of fixed furniture and its replacement by loose furniture, the supply of storage racking for papers, and the provision of microphones and amplification equipment.

The Crown court at Southwark has been designated by the Lord Chief Justice as one of a number of Crown court centres at which serious fraud cases may be tried. It is expected that more such cases will be tried there in the near future and that further use will be made of the adapted courtrooms.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Forth: The private security firms currently employed by this Department, and the number of guards on each contract, are as follows: Thorn Security Services Limited (38 guards), Chubb Wardens Ltd. (21), Centuryan Security Ltd. (15), Group 4-Welsh Guards Limited (10), Shorrock Guards Ltd. (5), Security Express Guards Ltd. (3) and Sterling Guards Ltd. (1). The value of each contract is commercially confidential information. The total value (excluding VAT) of all contracts placed by DTI since 1984-85 is:

	£
1984-85	657,000
1985-86	778,000
1986-87	993,600
1987-88	1,165,683
1988-89	1,168,813
1989-90	[1]1,318,800

[1] Estimated.

Solvents

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action is being taken to encourage manufacturers to produce safe alternatives to solvents which are open to abuse.

Mr. Forth: The Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act makes it an offence to sell a solvent-based product to a young person if he appears to want it for sniffing. There are already available alternatives to many solvent-based products, which cannot be sniffed.

South Africa

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the percentage of United Kingdom exports going to South Africa in each of the 10 years ended 31 December 1989.

Mr. Redwood: The information is in the table:

United Kingdom exports to South Africa

Year	*Value £ millions*	*Percentage of total United Kingdom exports*
1980	998	2·1
1981	1,217	2·4
1982	1,191	2·2
1983	1,111	1·8
1984	1,204	1·7
1985	1,009	1·3
1986	849	1·2
1987	949	1·2
1988	1,075	1·3
1989	1,038	1·1

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: At present, paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paternity leave.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans he has for protecting consumers involved in home annuity schemes for setting down guidelines for these schemes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has for *(a)* controlling the selling of home income annuity schemes, *(b)* issuing guidance to consumers considering such schemes and *(c)* requiring a period of consultation and cooling off before such schemes are finalised;

(3) what proposals he has for requiring special conditions and consumer protection for controls for the roll-up home loan or investments in home loans to pensioners;

(4) what representations he has received about *(a)* the effects of home income annuity schemes on the elderly, *(b)* the need for consumer protection in this area and *(c)* the dangers of schemes where unpaid interest is rolled up and added to the loan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received only one letter about home income schemes and has no plans for legislation on this matter. Consumers are protected by the Financial Services Act 1986 which applies to the investment element in such schemes and by the Consumer Credit Act 1974 which applies to the connected loan.

Office of Fair Trading

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what proposals he has for reviewing publication of decisions by the Office of Fair Trading that it is minded to revoke licences as moneylenders and for speeding up the procedure of revocation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he asked the Office of Fair Trading to investigate the affairs of Richard Murtagh and Co. and its related companies; when that investigation was completed; when the firms were put out of business and their licences revoked; how many homeowners took out home income schemes with the companies; what interest rates were charged; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Consumer credit licensing is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading and I will ask him to write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in the light of the statement by the Director General of Fair Trading that the practices of Richard Murtagh and Co. and its associated companies were deceitful, oppressive or otherwise unfair or improper but not illegal, he has any proposals for preventing such practices in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no such proposals. Under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 the Director General of Fair Trading has the power to revoke the licence of any trader who engages in business practices which are deceitful, oppressive or otherwise unfair or improper.

Home Income Annuities

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what research he has initiated into the effect of falling house prices on home income annuity schemes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will refer home income annuity schemes to the Office of Fair Trading to investigate the scale of any associated problems or dangers arising from such schemes and whether any controls or legislation are desirable.

Mr. Forth: Under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 it is the duty of the Director General of Fair Trading to keep under review and from time to time to advise my right hon. Friend about social and commercial developments in the United Kingdom relating to the provision of credit and related activities. I will write to the director general to draw his attention to the hon. Gentleman's questions.

Estate Agents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for requiring registration, training qualifications and insurance funds for estate agents.

Mr. Forth: I have no such proposals. The reasons why legislation on these matters would not be appropriate are

set out in the report published in December 1988 of the Director General of Fair Trading's review of the Estate Agents Act 1979 and in the report published in June 1989 of my review of estate agency.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for bringing estate agents within the terms of the Trade Descriptions Act.

Mr. Forth: As I told the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 21 June 1989 at column *333*, I have asked the Director General of Fair Trading to review the arguments for extending the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to misdescriptions of property. His report is expected shortly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what requirements for registration, professional competence tests and licensing exist for estate agents in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* Holland; and what proposals he has for bringing British requirements into line with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Forth: Information on the requirements for estate agents in European Community countries has recently been published by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. I have placed relevant extracts from its publication "1992 A General Practice Guide To the Single European Market" by Michael Treays FRICS in the House of Commons Library. My right hon. Friend has no proposals for introducing such requirements.

Disabled Staff

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of disabled employees in his Department; and what is the applicable statutory quota.

Mr. Forth: The Department employs 128 registered disabled staff (1·1 per cent.). We also employ 73 other disabled staff (0·6 per cent.) who have chosen not to register.

Tampons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has on health warnings carried on tampons sold in the United States to alert women to the dangers of contracting toxic shock syndrome; and if he will consult manufacturers of tampons with a view to introducing a warning on each package of tampons that use of them can cause toxic shock syndrome and that it can be fatal;

(2) whether he will consider requiring manufacturers to print an ingredients list on the packaging of tampons;

(3) whether legislation would be necessary to require manufacturers to carry warnings on tampon packets that the use of tampons can cause toxic shock syndrome.

Mr. Forth: In the United States packets of tampons are required to carry a warning about the danger of toxic shock syndrome. In this country the industry labels packets of tampons with information about their use. The industry has been asked to provide in the safety instructions inside the packet, information about toxic shock syndrome and what to look for. The information given by manufacturers about tampons with these products is kept under review, but I have no present intention to make regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

Birmingham (Overseas Companies)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what interest is being shown by overseas companies in becoming established in Birmingham.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Overseas businesses are currently showing great interest in Birmingham and in the west midlands in general. There are now over 100 overseas companies operating in the Birmingham area and I am pleased to be able to announce that the West German company Keiper Recaro, a leading manufacturer of car seats, is to establish a subsidiary company on the Woodgate business park in my hon. Friend's constituency. This project is forecast to create 96 jobs and an offer of regional selective assistance (of £250,000) has been made towards it.

This follows the recent announcement by another West German automotive components company, Kirsten Automotive of its plans to establish a facility on the same business park. That project is forecast to create a further 58 jobs.

We are in discussion with a number of other overseas companies planning to establish their United Kingdom headquarters in Birmingham. Prospects are very encouraging.

Light Sources

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the potential dangers to health known to his Department from the use of consumer products which can produce flicker or stroboscopic light sources with a flicker rate in excess of five flashes per second; and if he will issue a statement about those potential dangers of such products.

Mr. Forth: It is known that the direct exposure to flicker or stroboscopic light can create a susceptibility in a small proportion of the population—about one in 10,000—to flicker sensitive epilepsy. This can occur within a range of frequencies from five to 65 flashes per second which can be generated by television or amateur cine projection equipment. Additionally, of course, there is a physical danger that rotating equipment under stroboscopic light can be perceived to be stationary when it is in fact moving rapidly.

However, I am not aware of evidence where these effects have become a general threat to safety in the use of consumer products.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those consumer products on sale in the United Kingdom, of which he has knowledge, which are capable of producing a flicker or stroboscopic light source with a flicker rate in excess of five flashes per second.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested but there are two groups of products which are capable of producing regular pulses of light at a frequency greater than five flashes per second. The largest group includes lighting products such as fluorescent tubes or television

screens where flicker is unintended but nonetheless produces flicker rates varying between 30 and 100 pulses per second, arising from the electrical mains frequency or screen scanning frequency. The second group covers products where the stroboscopic effect is intended, as with equipment for adjusting motor engine timing dynamically, where the strobe frequency is variable in a range upwards of about 10 pulses per second.

Any piece of continuous lighting equipment can, of course, be made to flash for effect, as in the case of discotheque lighting. Camera equipment normallly used for single flash operation can also create a stroboscopic effect with a series of flashes when used with a film motor drive.

Eastern Europe (Imports)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which products from *(a)* Poland, *(b)* East Germany, *(c)* Czechoslovakia, *(d)* Romania, *(e)* Bulgaria, *(f)* Hungary and *(g)* Yugoslavia are subject to any form of import restrictions, including quotas, voluntary restraint agreements and tariffs at either European Community or national level; and if he will set out details.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 14 February 1990]*: Details of the products which are subject to such restrictions are too numerous to set out in an answer. Most of them can be found in published sources which are available in the Library as follows:

Quantitative Restrictions

List of quantitative restrictions applied by one or more member states are covered by Annex III of Regulation 3420/83, which was last updated and published as Official Journal L217 of 6 August 1987. However, there are no quantitative restrictions on imports from Yugoslavia and on 1 January 1990, quantitative restrictions on imports to the EC from Poland and Hungary were liberalised or suspended. New arrangements for 1990 quotas are currently being considered by the EC Commission and are expected to be published shortly.

Steel and Textiles

Bilaterally agreed arrangements in limiting steel and textile imports into the Community from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Yugoslavia are in place. Textile products which are specifically affected by these arrangements are set out in EC Regulations 768/88 (as published in EC Official Journal L84 of 29 March 1988) and 669/88 (covered by EC Official Journal L73 of 18 March 1989). Quotas are operated on ECSC steel products for the GDR under Commission Recommendation 77/328/ECSC. Details of product coverage were last published in British Business magazine of 5 May 1989 and in future will be published in Lloyds List International. Voluntary restraint arrangements which are negotiated annually with the other countries cover most ECSC products and are not published because they are commercially confidential.

Leather Footwear

Although there are no formal United Kingdom quantitative restrictions on leather footwear from Eastern Europe, voluntary restraint arrangements have been negotiated by the EC Commission with Romania and Czechoslovakia on our behalf.

Tariffs

The EC's 1990 general tariff rates for all products are set out in EC Official Journal L282/89 published on 2 October 1989. Most Favoured Nation rates apply to each of the countries listed except where special arrangements apply. Poland, Hungary and Romania are beneficiaries of the EC's Generalised Scheme of Preferences and products from these countries which benefit from GSP provisions are set in EC Official Journal L383/89 published on 30 December 1989.

The EC has signed a trade agreement with Yugoslavia which provides for preferential access to the EC market for a range of products from that country. Details of these arrangements for 1990 are covered in EC Official Journal L352 of 4 December 1989.

Anti-Dumping Duties

Other EC anti-dumping measures involve the imposition of anti-dumping duties on the following products:

Product Chemicals	*Country*
Potassium Permanganate	Czechoslovakia
Copper Sulphate	Yugoslavia, Bulgaria
Light Sodium Carbonate	Bulgaria, Romania
Oxalic Acid	Czechoslovakia
Dinoseb	Romania
Welded Tubes of Iron or non-Alloy Steel	Yugoslavia
Sheets of Iron or non-Alloy Steel, Cold Rolled	Yugoslavia
Iron and Steel Sections	Yugoslavia
Iron or Steel Coils	Yugoslavia
Sheets and Plates of Iron or Steel	Yugoslavia
Synthetic Textiles Fibres of Polyester	Romania, Yugoslavia
Acrylic Fibres	Romania
Deep Freezers	GDR, Yugoslavia
Electric Motors	Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, GDR

In addition the EC operates an anti-dumping voluntary restraint on imports of urea from Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

Other Measures

Other customs restrictions are also applied to products from third countries by the United Kingdom and other Member States on health, safety and public policy grounds.

Gas Consumers Council

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total number of complaints and representations dealt with by the Gas Consumers Council and by its predecessors in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: The information is as follows:

	Complaints	*Inquiries*
1979-80	35,300	—
1980-81	28,000	—
1981-82	27,400	—
1982-83	28,200	—
1983-84	27,700	—
1984-85	27,000	—
1985-86	29,000	—
1987	26,400	64,400
1988	27,500	77,000
1989	21,400	66,000

Prior to 1987 and the setting up of the new Gas Consumers Council, statistics on the number of inquiries were not maintained. Moreover the statistics on the number of complaints are not directly comparable due to the different recording basis which took effect when the Gas Consumers Council was established.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total cost of wages and salaries and the total budget in each of the last 10 years for the Gas

Consumers Council and of its predecessors the National Gas Consumers Council and the regional gas consumers councils.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: The information is as follows:

	Salaries £000	*Total budget £000*
1980-81	831	1,207
1981-82	913	1,355
1982-83	1,075	1,535
1983-84	1,088	1,585
1984-85	1,212	1,635
1985-86	1,294	1,710
1986-87	1,130	2,050
1987-88	1,034	1,918
1988-89	1,078	2,215
1989-90	1,129	2,212

The new Gas Consumers Council was set up in August 1986 and additional expenses of £588,000 and £700,000 were incurred in 1986-87 and 1987-88 respectively on setting up costs.

The total budget figures are not comparable: post 1986 the figures include accommodation costs. Prior to this date such costs were borne on the main departmental account and cannot be identified separately.

Meat Products

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the companies in the United Kingdom which have been given leave, or have applied, to manufacture blood gel plasma meat products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to his related question.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards ending apartheid in South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: We constantly assess policy in the light of developments in South Africa. The release of Nelson Mandela and the other steps announced by President de Klerk on 2 February are a vindication of our policy of contact rather than isolation and of a mixture of persuasive pressure and encouragement.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the South African Government about the present situation in that country.

Mr. Waldegrave: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have invited Nelson Mandela to visit the United Kingdom for talks on the present South African situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 14 February a message was delivered to Mr. Mandela inviting him to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to pay an official visit to South Africa over the coming year.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next envisages visiting South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit South Africa before long, perhaps at the time of Namibian independence.

China

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps Her Majesty's Government have taken since the Madrid council to encourage the Chinese authorities to admit independent observers to monitor political trials in China.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Presidency, on behalf of the Twelve, made representations on this subject to the Chinese authorities on 20 July 1989.

Human Rights

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will make a statement on initiatives taken by the Government and their European Community partners in the current session of the United Nations human rights commission.

Mr. Sainsbury: I outlined our priorities at the Commission on Human Rights on 13 February. Mr. Gerard Collins, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, made a statement on behalf of the EC on 2 February. Copies of these statements are being placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to use the opportunity of the current session of the United Nations human rights commission to condemn human rights abuses in China.

Mr. Sainsbury: Together with our European partners, we raised our concerns about human rights in China in the opening week of the commission's current session. We intend to do so again under the item of the agenda which concerns situations in specific countries.

Immigration

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet arrived at a decision on entry clearance for the children of Mr. A. Hussein of Southend-on-Sea, reference GV100/6751.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in

immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. My hon. Friend will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

East Timor

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which years since the adoption by the United Nations of a resolution on the right to self-determination of the East Timorese in 1975 the United Nations General Assembly has discussed the situation in East Timor; and how Her Majesty's Government voted on each occasion.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Nations General Assembly discussed East Timor at every General Assembly session between 1975 and 1982. We abstained on each occasion.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the number and fate of people arrested, detained or tortured in East Timor since the visit there of Pope John Paul II in October 1989.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that 26 people may still be under investigation in connection with various incidents, including the demonstration after the Pope's mass on 12 October. A number of trials may follow. None was detained following the demonstration on 17 January during the United States ambassador's visit. There have been accusations of torture, but we are not in a position to substantiate them.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the number of East Timorese who have disappeared or died through violence since the Indonesian occupation in East Timor in 1975; and what sources of information Her Majesty's Government have on this area.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have access to a range of sources which provide conflicting assessments. Estimates vary from 60,000 to 100,000 fatalities.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement the right to self-determination for the people of East Timor *(a)* in direct contact with the Indonesian Government, *(b)* through the European Community, *(c)* in contact with the Association of South East Asia Nations, *(d)* at the United Nations and *(e)* in the inter government group on Indonesia.

Mr. Sainsbury: We consider that the conditions required for a definitive exercise of self-determination can be created only through co-operation between the two Governments directly concerned, those of Portugal and Indonesia. We and our EC partners have therefore sought to encourage such a settlement in contacts with the Indonesians and the United Nations. We are sure that the United Nations Secretary-General, Portugal and Indonesia will be concerned to find a settlement which fully protects the interests of the people of East Timor. We have not raised the issue in the intergovernmental group on Indonesia. ASEAN countries do not regard East Timor as a regional issue for discussion with Her Majesty's Government.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the inter government group on Indonesia has considered the request of parliamentarians for East Timor that the group discusses the occupation of East Timor by Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The intergovernmental group on Indonesia has not considered this request.

Turkey (Kurdish People)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Turkey concerning their treatment of the Kurdish people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are in regular touch with the Turkish Government about the human rights of all groups in Turkey, including Kurds. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs most recently raised the issue with the Turkish deputy Prime Minister, Professor Ali Bozer on 22 January.

Polisario Front

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held by officials of his Department of Ministers with the Polisario Front.

Mr. Waldegrave: No Foreign Office Minister has met a Polisario representative. But there have been occasional informal meetings between Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials and Polisario representatives.

Nuclear Arms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to Canada, he raised the issues of *(a)* the 1970 nuclear proliferation treaty and its forthcoming fourth review conference, *(b)* prospects for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and *(c)* the flight testing of missile and aircraft systems.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

ENERGY

Electricity Imports

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of electricity is now imported from French power stations via the Channel cable.

Mr. Baldry: In 1989 net imports of electricity from France accounted for 4 per cent. of total electricity available from the United Kingdom public supply system.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has been sent a copy of the dossier "Why We Need Nuclear Electricity", produced by the British Nuclear Forum this year.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Global Warming

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of Wordwatch paper 91 "Slowing Global Warming: A Worldwide Strategy" by Christopher Flavin, published in 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: A copy of this paper is already held in the Department of Energy library.

Heat Pumps

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department will *(a)* be represented at and *(b)* present any paper to the International Energy Agency conference "Heat Pumps—Solving Energy and Environmental Challenges" to be held in Tokyo on 12 to 15 March.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department's views on heat pumps have been expressed at the two previous IEA Conferences in 1984 and 1987 and have not changed since.

Hinkley B Power Station

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) for how long both reactors at Hinkley B were without any means of cooling on Sunday 11 February;

(2) for how many minutes the nuclear reactor at Hinkley B was operating at full load on Sunday 11 February in the absence of any means of cooling;

(3) if he will instigate a full public inquiry into the incident at Hinkley B power station on 11 February;

(4) if he will make a statement on the incident which took place at Hinkley B on Sunday 11 February;

(5) what is the maximum estimated time an advanced gas-cooled nuclear reactor on full load can function without going into melt down in the absence of any means of cooling;

(6) when he commissioned a report from the nuclear installations inspectorate into the incident at Hinkley B power station on 11 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The matter in question concerned a loss of grid supplies at Hinkley Point B as a result of storms that night. The reactors, however, had already been shut down and were in a totally safe state when disconnection from the grid system occurred. The possibility of such loss of grid supplies was anticipated during the design of the station, which has more than adequate safety systems and back up generation facilities to ensure its safe operation. All station safety equipment functioned correctly. Station staff are trained to deal with this type of eventuality and did so successfully. The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate will follow up the matter as part of its normal inspection duties in order to confirm details.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many people live within *(a)* 3 miles and *(b)* 15 miles of Hinkley B power station.

Mr. Baldry: There are 1,700 people living within 5 km (3·1 miles) and 286,000 living within 25 km (15·5 miles) of Hinkley B power station.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will detail the emergency procedures which exist in the event of a serious incident at Hinkley B power station.

Mr. Baldry: Operators of nuclear installations in the United Kingdom are required by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate (NII) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), as a condition of their licences, to prepare emergency plans which are also subject to approval by the inspectorate. These plans, on which local authorities, police and other bodies must be consulted, are kept under continuous review and are tested regularly in exercises monitored by the NII. They cover both emergency procedures at the site and off-site arrangements to protect the public.

Detailed emergency plans cover an area determined by the reference accident—that is, the accident which, although very unlikely, has the greatest off-site consequences that can reasonably be predicted, given the design of the plant, its protective systems and its operating limits. The emergency plans can be extended to deal with more serious and therefore, more improbable accidents. In such cases the police, emergency services and local authorities would make use of their general emergency planning arrangments for other accidents. This approach was endorsed by the Layfield report on the Sizewell inquiry.

In a statement on 12 December 1988, the Prime Minister said that extensive consultations with the emergency services and local authorities have

"confirmed the availability of contingency plans which would permit an effective response to be made to any nuclear accident, including those with more widespread effects than the specific site and off-site plans are designed to cater for". —[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143. *c. 391.*]

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the effect of sea spray on the insulators in the Hinkley B substation close to the shore.

Mr. Baldry: Excessive salt deposition in the 400 KW substation, at Hinkley Point B, can occasionally cause separation from the grid, but in such instances reactors are automatically shut down.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the safety procedures at Hinkley B power station.

Mr. Baldry: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate advises me that it is fully satisfied with the safety procedures at Hinkley Point B.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy under what circumstances generators in advanced gas-cooled reactor nuclear power plants are switched on to manual overdrive; and under what circumstances they are switched back.

Mr. Baldry: Depending on the situation, there is a variety of procedures for switching electrical supplies available to the operators of advanced gas-cooled reactors.

IAEA Safety Review Team

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency's operational safety review team's visit to Oldbury on Severn will be deposited in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to issue the consultation paper on the proposed new scheme of grants for the improvement of energy efficiency in low-income households.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has today issued a consultation paper on a scheme which, subject to the approval of Parliament, I propose to introduce under regulations under clause 10 of the Social Security Bill. Copies of the paper are being placed in the Library.

The paper outlines the type of scheme it is hoped will be introduced, and invites comments from interested parties. Copies are available from the Energy Efficiency Office of the Department of Energy.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Targeting

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are made in the targeting of overseas aid to ensure that the benefits are obtained by the poorest citizens of those countries selected to receive aid.

Mrs. Chalker: The long-term alleviation of poverty requires sustained economic growth. But much can be done directly to help the poor participate in and benefit from the process of development. We therefore consider within all our bilateral country aid programmes the scope for targeting assistance on the poorest groups, as well as supporting the growth of the economy generally. We are channelling increasing amounts of aid through non-governmental organisations which are often best equipped to tackle poverty at grass roots level. In 1988-89 £63 million of aid was provided through non-governmental organisations.

Poorest Nations

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the 20 poorest nations measured by gross domestic product per head, indicating which of these received regular United Kingdom bilateral aid in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Gross bilateral aid to poorest 20 countries[1]

£ thousand

1979-88 *Country*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Mozambique	6,369	4,629	5,379	1,924	1,805	4,182	8,366	7,424	22,798	30,512
Ethiopia	2,877	1,946	563	5,645	3,433	7,004	28,058	9,627	8,554	19,174
Bhutan	24	63	93	74	136	175	165	187	270	412
Chad	45	26	35	360	156	31	1,448	89	179	252
Malawi	24,941	16,543	15,999	16,984	14,620	12,959	22,356	15,346	24,865	46,494
Tanzania	24,076	32,119	30,040	27,328	30,384	33,033	17,967	12,715	28,798	33,502
Guinea-Bissau	173	56	739	244	105	16	—	62	30	51
Bangladesh	33,821	66,190	33,383	23,537	24,728	35,656	41,173	38,321	34,842	41,968
Somalia	1,311	2,806	2,441	2,528	2,486	2,058	1,737	3,941	7,292	6,675
Nepal	11,235	6,834	8,035	9,596	7,398	8,580	9,675	9,946	10,044	10,826
Zaire	2,315	548	1,685	317	2,203	1,253	738	285	3,112	595
Madagascar	100	542	300	561	199	363	469	514	551	434
Laos	29	13	80	—	1	4	—	6	64	104
Gambia	2,796	2,270	2,321	2,480	2,400	3,638	3,613	9,897	7,197	6,530
Mali	489	232	281	110	190	533	744	1,188	982	1,195
Burundi	17	23	21	25	50	75	81	95	90	116
Burkina Faso	24	96	35	25	82	120	276	131	155	314
Sierra Leone	3,283	2,843	3,165	3,833	3,199	2,858	3,626	3,845	2,652	3,677
Uganda	2,212	2,875	15,078	10,647	6,109	7,081	9,171	8,576	12,180	28,589
Zambia	5,070	20,696	24,119	14,237	15,485	32,901	25,552	35,351	25,349	16,683

[1] Poorest 20 countries in 1988 obtained from 1989 World Bank Atlas. Cambodia and Vietnam not included in this table since no precise figures available on GNP per capita.
Source: British Aid Statistics.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom bilateral aid has been specifically targeted towards the poorest nations, as measured by gross domestic product per head, during each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for 1989 are not yet available. The information for the 50 poorest countries during the period 1979-88 is as follows:

Percentage of total gross bilateral aid

Year	*Percentage*
1979	72·4
1980	64·9
1981	62·7
1982	58·1
1983	62·9
1984	63·7
1985	62·7
1986	63·1
1987	68·1
1988	69·5

Source: British Aid Statistics.

East Timor

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of British economic and technical assistance to Indonesia since 1975; how much of this aid can be identified as having been used for projects in East Timor; and whether any efforts have been made to exclude aid from being used in East Timor.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain's gross bilateral aid to Indonesia from 1975 to 1988 (the most recent year for which records are available) totals £193,303,000. None of this aid has been used for projects in East Timor.

Primary Education Aid

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Overseas Development Agency plans to increase the proportion of overall project aid allocated to primary education in developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall first wish to discuss with overseas Governments at the forthcoming world conference on education for all the proportion of our assistance they wish to commit to primary education. We shall pursue these discussions in respect of developing Commonwealth countries at the conference of

Commonwealth Education Ministers in Barbados later this year and with non-Commonwealth countries as opportunities arise.

Education Conference

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department will be represented at the world conference on education for all in Thailand in March; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 13 February at column *132*.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to raise the need for increased expenditure on primary education by developing nations at the world conference on education for all.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall discuss with representatives of developing countries at the world conference on education for all the priority which should be given to increased expenditure on primary education. We shall pursue this discussion with Ministers of Education from developing Commonwealth countries at the conference of Education Ministers which is to be held in Barbados later this year and with non-Commonwealth countries as opportunities arise.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Reorganisation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the extent of his powers to modify secondary school reorganisation proposals put to him by local education authorities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is empowered by section 12(6) of the Education Act 1980, after consultation with the local education authority, to approve proposals with such modifications as he thinks desirable. He is not, however, empowered to modify proposals to such an extent as to change them in substance or alter them in such a way as to deprive potential objectors of the opportunity of full and informed consideration of the proposals as a whole.

Medical Research

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the need for a better balance between medical research facilities in the north and south of England.

Mr. Jackson: None.

South African Students

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students from South Africa received tuition in Britain in 1989.

Mr. Jackson: In the academic year 1988-89 there were 619 full-time students on higher education courses in British universities, polytechnics and colleges whose country of domicile was recorded as South Africa.

"Industry Links"

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to which organisation or company public funds have been granted for the making of the video "Industry Links"; how much money was involved; what information he has on which local authorities intend to use it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department of Education and Science has paid £12,000 to the company Dialogue to support the making of the video "Industry Links", slightly less than half the total cost of production. The balance is being met by contributions from Walsall local education authority, local and national businesses, and by sales of the video.

The video has been very well received. The Department intends therefore to fund its free distribution to every local education authority in England and Wales. The additional cost of this will be £1,924.

I am informed that the video has been in demand by chambers of commerce, compacts and businesses, and that copies have been bought by officers and advisers in some 30 local education authorities, and by some 70 individual schools and teachers' centres.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to propose limits to numbers in schools *(a)* to prevent schools maximising numbers and financial support under LMS and *(b)* to ensure equality between numbers in schools in difficult educational districts.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. What the hon. Member proposes would run counter to the Government's policy of increasing parental choice through more open enrolment. There is no justification for keeping places empty in popular schools: if the demand is there, a school should be allowed to admit pupils up to its physical capacity.

Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the amount of total local authority expenditure on education other than higher education in each year since 1979-80 in cash and in 1989-90 prices under the budget heads published in table 11.2 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93", chapter 11, page 3, Cm. 1011.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is shown in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Local authority expenditure

£ million cash

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
CURRENT SPENDING											
Schools											
Under-fives	177	222	241	274	296	331	350	397	447	510	561
Primary schools	1,706	2,086	2,258	2,349	2,416	2,485	2,612	2,952	3,331	3,694	3,988
Secondary schools	2,354	2,952	3,304	3,544	3,735	3,858	3,949	4,360	4,694	5,013	5,261
Special schools	249	309	347	382	412	432	462	513	555	619	666
Meals and milk	422	397	396	411	426	428	436	457	443	403	404
Transport	136	160	174	184	195	199	208	215	222	235	254
Non-maintained school fees			107	114	118	121	117	131	145	153	158
Teachers' centres	137	157	21	23	24	28	32	48	56	59	64
Child guidance			26	28	28	31	35	37	57	64	72
Pupil support			24	26	27	32	35	39	42	44	47
Further and continuing education											
Further education	546	688	790	878	931	998	979	1,054	1,148	1,250	1,349
Adult education	56	61	67	77	86	93	102	112	116	129	138
Discretionary student awards and support	84	95	107	121	132	142	152	170	187	180	203
Miscellaneous services, research and administration											
Youth service	64	76	86	97	109	117	125	140	165	176	190
Recreational services and research	33	36	41	46	54	58	58	65	63	65	72
Administration and inspection costs	298	367	405	435	477	503	537	608	665	746	862
Technical and vocational initiative (TVEI)	—	—	—	—	6	22	33	61	51	76	100
Work-related further education (WRFE)	—	—	—	—	—	—	61	104	106	104	96
Mandatory student awards	534	663	770	669	734	744	710	703	761	808	897
Total current spending	6,795	8,268	9,163	9,658	10,206	10,622	10,993	12,166	13,255	14,329	15,381
CAPITAL SPENDING											
Schools	286	347	257	266	284	273	276	278	283	283	527
Higher and further education	75	107	85	117	116	125	136	144	109	110	93
Miscellaneous education services											
Youth service	7	6	6	12	10	12	11	11	12	10	17
Other education services	5	12	13	18	15	13	9	9	23	20	26
Total capital spending	373	472	361	413	424	423	432	442	427	423	662
Total local authority expenditure	7,168	8,740	9,524	10,071	10,630	11,045	11,425	12,608	13,682	14,752	16,043

Table 2
Local authority expenditure
Repriced to 1989-90 prices

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
CURRENT SPENDING											
Schools											
Under-fives	357	378	374	396	409	436	437	480	513	546	561
Primary schools	3,437	3,551	3,501	3,397	3,338	3,271	3,263	3,567	3,823	3,953	3,988
Secondary schools	4,743	5,026	5,123	5,125	5,161	5,078	4,933	5,269	5,387	5,364	5,261
Special schools	502	526	538	552	569	569	577	620	637	662	666
Meals and milk	850	676	614	594	589	563	545	552	508	431	404
Transport	274	272	270	266	269	262	260	260	255	251	254
Non-maintained school fees			166	165	163	159	146	158	166	164	158
Teachers' centres	276	267	33	33	33	37	40	58	64	63	64
Child guidance			40	40	39	41	44	45	65	68	72
Pupil support			37	38	37	42	44	47	48	47	47
Further and continuing education											
Further education	1,100	1,171	1,225	1,270	1,286	1,314	1,223	1,274	1,317	1,338	1,349
Adult education	113	104	104	111	119	122	127	135	133	138	138
Discretionary student awards and support	169	162	166	175	182	187	190	205	215	193	203
Miscellaneous services, research and administration											

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Youth service	129	129	133	140	151	154	156	169	189	188	190
Recreational services and research	66	61	64	67	75	76	72	79	72	70	72
Administration and inspection costs	600	625	628	629	659	662	671	735	763	798	862
Technical and vocational initiative (TVEI)	—	—	—	—	8	29	41	74	59	81	100
Work-related further education (WRFE)	—	—	—	—	—	—	76	126	122	111	96
Mandatory student awards	1,076	1,129	1,194	967	1,014	979	887	850	873	865	897
Total current spending	13,690	14,076	14,208	13,967	14,102	13,982	13,733	14,702	15,212	15,332	15,381
CAPITAL SPENDING											
Schools	576	591	399	385	392	359	345	336	325	303	527
Higher and further education	151	182	132	169	160	165	170	174	125	118	93
Miscellaneous education services											
Youth service	14	10	9	17	14	16	14	13	14	11	17
Other education services	10	20	20	26	21	17	11	11	26	21	26
Total capital spending	752	804	560	597	586	557	540	534	490	453	662
Total local authority expenditure	14,442	14,879	14,768	14,564	14,687	14,539	14,272	15,236	15,702	15,785	16,043

Notes to tables:

1. The data in table 1 are those shown in table 11.2 of Cm. 1011 and the equivalent tables from previous public expenditure White Papers. Recurrent spending on higher education has been excluded, as has the "polytechnics (repayment of loans)" line from Cm. 1011 and the previous year's White Paper; a single sum is given for capital spending on further and higher education because the higher education element is not easily identifiable during the period in question.

2. The figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are provisional. Those for 1988-89 incorporate a distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their provisional outturn expenditure on education. The 1989-90 figures incorporate a provisional distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their budgets.

3. Figures for the breakdown of spending between non-maintained school fees, teachers' centres, child guidance and pupils support are not available for 1979-80 and 1980-81.

4. The data in table 2 reprice the data in table 1 to 1989-90 prices, using the current gross domestic product deflators.

5. Some of the columns may not sum due to rounding.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures for the amount of central Government-funded current expenditure on schools for each financial year from 1978-79 to date, in cash, and constant prices, and with a real terms index where 1978-79 = 100.

Mr. MacGregor: Central Government support local authority current expenditure on schools through specific grants and through general rate support grant (from April 1990, revenue support grant) which is not hypothecated to individual services. The amounts of expenditure local authorities in England have spent on schools between 1978-79 and 1989-90 in the light of the resources available to them are shown in table 1. The figures take no account of the significant fall in pupil numbers over the period. The Government have also directly funded since 1987-88 expenditure on city technology colleges and since 1989-90 expenditure on grant-maintained schools. The current element of this expenditure is shown in table 2.

Table 1
Local authority expenditure on schools

Year	Cash terms £ million	Real terms (1988-89 prices) £ million	Index (1978-79 = 100)
1978-79	4,547	9,999	100
1979-80	5,181	9,756	98
1980-81	6,283	9,997	100
1981-82	6,898	9,996	100
1982-83	7,335	9,914	99
1983-84	7,677	9,913	99
1984-85	7,945	9,774	98
1985-86	8,236	9,615	96
1986-87	9,149	10,333	103
1987-88	9,992	10,717	107
1988-89	10,794	10,794	108
1989-90	11,475	10,724	107

Notes:

1. The figure for 1978-79 contains small elements of central Government current expenditure. It is not possible separately to identify this element.

2. The cash terms figures are those shown in the Department of Education and Science chapters of successive public expenditure White Papers under the local authority schools heading, including expenditure on items such as pupil support and meals as well as direct institutional expenditure. The figures exclude grants paid by the Training Agency to local authorities in respect of the technical and vocational education initiative.

3. The figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are provisional. Those for 1988-89 reflect a distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their provisional outturn expenditure on education. The 1989-90 figures reflect a provisional distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their budgets.

4. The cash terms data have been repriced to real terms using the current gross domestic product deflators.

Table 2
Central Government direct current expenditure on CTCS and GM schools

Year	Cash terms £ million	Real terms (1988-89 prices) £ million	Index (1988-89 = 100)
1988-89	2	2	100
1989-90	15	14	700

Note: The cash terms data have been repriced to constant terms using the current Gross Domestic Product deflators.

Student Grants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a chart or table showing for each academic year since 1979 the maximum available student grant in cash figures, tabulated alongside the annual inflation rate for each academic year and the percentage increase of the grant for each academic year.

Mr. Jackson: The maximum available grant in any given year depends on the individual student's circumstances. The following table shows the information requested for the basic rate of maintenance grant appropriate to students studying outside London.

Academic year	Maintenance grant £	Increase on previous year per cent.	Inflation (R.P.I.) per cent.
1979-80	1,245	13·1	15·9
1980-81	1,430	14·9	11·4
1981-82	1,535	7·3	7·3
1982-83	1,595	3·9	5·1
1983-84	1,660	4·1	4·7
1984-85	1,775	6·9	5·9
1985-86	1,830	3·1	3·0
1986-87	1,901	3·9	4·2
1987-88	1,972	3·7	5·9
1988-89	2,050	4·0	7·6
1989-90	2,155	5·1	n/a

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a chart or table showing for each academic year since 1979 *(a)* the numbers of higher education students and *(b)* the percentage of the total number of students in higher education receiving (i) no grant, (ii) 1 to 25 per cent., (iii) 26 to 50 per cent., (iv) 51 to 75 per cent. and (v) 76 to 100 per cent. of the maximum grant allowance for that year.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the format requested. The available data are as follows:

Mandatory award holders 1979-80 to 1987-88[1]

England and Wales

	Full maintenance award (no assessed parental or other contribution)		Reduced maintenance award		Nil or minimum[2] maintenance award		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Total
1979-80	143,902	39	197,049	53	28,402	8	269,353
1980-81	151,877	40	196,882	52	30,648	8	379,407
1981-82	159,195	40	200,730	50	39,391	10	399,316
1982-83	152,394	37	216,053	52	47,520	11	415,967
1983-84	137,470	36	198,420	52	48,731	12	384,621
1984-85	134,768	35	181,580	47	71,013	18	387,361
1985-86	137,751	35	167,914	43	84,614	22	390,279
1986-87	145,307	37	160,771	41	88,188	22	394,266
1987-88	150,978	37	153,273	38	100,064	25	404,315

[1] The years 1979-80 to 1982-83 include all full-value awards, some of which are local education authority discretionary awards.
[2] Between 1979-80 and 1984-85 all students received a minimum maintenance award. The mimimum award has halved in 1984-85 and abolished from 1985-86. All award holders have their fees paid by the local authority.

Tampon Education

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the tampon industry's schools education programme; and whether he will consider incorporating information for new tampon users about the danger of contracting toxic shock syndrome into schools' curricula.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Teaching about the use of sanitary protection would normally be covered within a school's programme of sex education. Under section 18(2) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 responsibility for determining an individual school's policy on the content and organisation of sex education rests with the school governors.

Independent Schools

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report*, specifying in each case the local authorities concerned, those schools which, from 1980 to the latest date for which information is available, have changed from *(a)* independent to voluntary status and *(b)* voluntary to independent.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information held by his Department will be available to community charge registration offices.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Community charge registration officers have no powers to seek information from the Department of Education and Science.

Welfare Officers

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the number of education welfare officers engaged by local education authorities since 1978-79.

Mr. MacGregor: This information is not collected centrally by my Department.

Graduate Demand

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received the study on graduate demand undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute; what are its conclusions; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. MacGregor: I received this report of some commissioned research recently. I expect to make an announcement about publication and the implications of the report as soon as possible after I have completed my study of it.

School Buildings

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department received a copy of the recent NFER survey of school buildings carried out under the auspices of the National Audit Office; if he will now publish the results of the survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department does not have a copy of the NFER survey. It is for the Comptroller and Auditor General to decide what use to make of any survey commissioned by the National Audit Office.

Student Unions

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he takes to ensure that the accounts of student unions are properly audited; and what legislation governs the auditing and publication of such accounts.

Mr. Jackson: None. Auditing and publication of accounts are matters for the relevant university, polytechnic or college. The Department's survey of student unions, published in September 1989, found that in over three quarters of the 71 unions surveyed, union accounts were subject to the approval of the institution involved.

Grant-maintained Status

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many objections were submitted to him in respect of each of the grant-maintained proposals that have subsequently been *(a)* approved and *(b)* rejected; and in each case how many people in total were signatories to such objections.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: The number of statutory objections received in respect of proposals for each of the grant-maintained proposals that were subsequently *(a)* approved and *(b)* rejected is as follows:

	Number of statutory objections
Approved	
Audenshaw County High, Tameside	21
Bacup and Rawtenstall, Lancashire	4
Bankfield County High, Cheshire	1
Baverstock School, Birmingham	3
Beechen Cliff, Avon	38
Bishopshalt, Hillingdon	15
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial, ILEA	11
Castle Hall Middle, Kirklees	9
Claremont High, Brent	2
Colyton Grammar, Devon	2
Guildford County, Surrey	2
Heckmondwike Grammar, Kirklees	5
Hendon School Barnet	6
Kings School, Lincolnshire	0
Lancaster Royal Grammar School, Lancashire	1
London Nautical School, ILEA	6
London Oratory School, ILEA	0
Long Field High, Leicestershire	22
Marling, Gloucestershire	0
Netherthorpe School, Derbyshire	14
Old Swinford Hospital, Dudley	0
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Lincolnshire	6
Queen Elizabeth's Boys, Barnet	4
Queensbury School, Bedfordshire	7
Ribston Hall High, Gloucestershire	22
St. Francis Xavier's, Liverpool	3
St. James' CE, Bolton	30
Skegness Grammar, Lincolnshire	1
Small Heath School, Birmingham	1
Southfield School, Northamptonshire	8
Southlands, Berkshire	4
Stroud Girls' High, Gloucestershire	0
Watford Boys Grammar, Hertfordshire	5
Wilmington Grammar, Kent	2
Wilson's School, Sutton	6
Rejected	
Blessed Hugh Moor RC, Lincolnshire	1
Castlemount High, Kent	1
Hindley Park, Wigan	0
Kettering Boys, Northamptonshire	5
Longlands, Dudley	1
Ramsden School for Girls, Bromley	12
Simon Digby, Solihull	1
Sir James Altham, Hertfordshire	2
South Park High, Lincolnshire	1

The total number of signatories in each case could not be established without disproportionate expense.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial support his Department is giving this year towards the teaching of Welsh to adults in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the current financial year, Welsh Office support for the teaching of Welsh to adults is £305,000.

Community Charge

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will take steps to ensure that all district, borough and city councils distribute information leaflets on poll tax rebates to all individuals.

Mr. Peter Walker: Following consultations with the Welsh local authority associations, arrangements were made for all households in Wales to receive, in November 1989, a bilingual Welsh Office leaflet on community charge benefit. Local authorities are free to supplement these leaflets with their own information. Regulations which I

shall shortly lay before the House will require Welsh charging authorities to include, in the material accompanying community charge demands, information about the availability of community charge benefit and how it may be claimed.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been confirmed to date *(a)* in the Carmarthen area, *(b)* in Dyfed and *(c)* in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Total number of confirmed cases as at 9 February 1990.

	Number
(a) Old county of Carmarthen	101
(b) Dyfed	330
(c) Wales	690

Uniform Business Rates

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of uniform business rate set for each *(a)* university college, *(b)* college of further education, *(c)* college of higher education, *(d)* technical college and *(e)* tertiary college in Wales; and what are the current amounts paid in rates by each college.

Mr. Peter Walker: The uniform business rate for 1990-91 for each hereditament in the category listed is 36·8p in the pound. Information about the rates currently paid in respect of individual hereditaments is not held centrally.

Family Law

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representatives his Department has on the family law administration working party; and when those representatives last attended a meeting of the working party.

Mr. Grist: The Department is represented on the group of officials currently reviewing adoption law, an important aspect of the work of the family law administration working party. This group last met on Tuesday, 5 December 1989 and is due to meet again on Friday 2 March. Although not represented on the working party itself, we are kept in touch with developments.

A487

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve the A487 at Dyffryn Goodwick, Pembrokeshire, during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This road is the responsibility of Dyfed county council.

Acid Rain

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the publication by the Natural Environment Research Council on acid rain in Snowdonia.

Mr. Grist: The scientists carrying out research for the Welsh Office on the effects of acid rain in Wales work closely with the Natural Environment Research Council and have noted the findings publicised by the council at their recent seminar.

Local Authority Budgets

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those Welsh local authorities *(a)* with an annual budget of £35 million or less and *(b)* those with budgets of over £35 million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The latest budget information available relates to 1989-90. Based on this, all Welsh districts had annual budgets of less than £35 million and all Welsh counties had annual budgets of greater than £35 million.

Teachers' Pay

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish a table similar to appendix A of Cm. 973 showing the teachers' pay baseline 1990-91 for Wales; and if he will give a breakdown in similar form showing the cost of implementing the recommendations of the interim advisory committee in 1990-91 and in a full year thereafter;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Pontypridd of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *811*, what amount and proportion of the difference between the full £600 million remit given to the interim advisory committee and the £563 million English element of that remit has been included in the education component of total standard spending for authorities in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh component of the total shown in appendix A of Cm. 973 is estimated at £485 million. The breakdown of the pay baseline in the categories set out in Cm. 973 is only available on an England and Wales basis. The cost for Wales of staging the interim advisory committee's recommendation in the way accepted by the Government would be around £37 million in 1990-91 and £44 million in a full year. The remit given to the IAC was allowed for in full in the Welsh local authority revenue settlement for 1990-91. Standard spending assessments are not hypothecated to particular services.

Community Care

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial support he intends to make available to organisations concerned with the needs of *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* people with physical, sensory or mental disability and *(c)* carers in the coming financial year to enable them to participate fully in the planning for, and implementation of, increased care in the community.

Mr. Grist: In addition to the sums made available to health and social services authorities for main programme expenditure, Welsh Office support is provided through a number of funding mechanisms including our mental illness and mental handicap strategies and the elderly initiative, the urban programme and grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968. Figures relating to elderly people, people with a physical and or sensory disability and carers are as follows:

	[1] 1990-91
Elderly people	3,200,000
People with a physical or sensory disability	744,000
Carers	87,000

[1] Provisional.

We expect also to allocate, in addition to core funding of voluntary organisations, up to some £2·2 million in 1990-91 towards initiatives proposed both by voluntary and statutory agencies under the mental illness strategy. The strategy was specifically designed to promote the development of appropriate services in the community for those suffering from mental illness and for their carers.

An announcement will be made shortly in respect of the financial support available under the mental handicap strategy for 1990-91.

We also intend that voluntary organisations will be given every opportunity to participate in the planning of the new community care framework as outlined in our draft planning guidance issues on 26 January, of which the hon. Gentleman has been sent a copy.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current status of his Department's circular 51/89, also referred to as WO health (89)58 and FP (89)15, regarding services for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The circular is a draft issued for consultation. It is intended to publish the final version next month.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to reply to the application of the Alzheimer's Disease Society for funding for the work of the development officer for south Wales.

Mr. Grist: We expect to make a decision within the next fortnight upon all those bids for funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 that are related to mental illness services; replies will be sent to applicants, including the Alzheimer's Disease Society, shortly thereafter.

Sports Council

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money he has made available to governing bodies of sports in Wales, via the Sports Council for Wales in each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; what information he has on how much of the money in each of those years was allocated to assist *(a)* administration, *(b)* coaching and *(c)* international representation; what figures he will make available in the 1990-91 financial year; and what conditions or guidelines govern the proportion which may be allocated to administration, coaching and international representation, respectively.

Mr. Grist: The figures for the relevant years are as follows:

	£
1987-88	[1]531,026
1988-89	[1]687,745
1989-90	[2]667,000
1990-91	[2]680,000

[1] from the council's annual reports.
[2] estimated

The grants to governing bodies are not allocated by the Sports Council for Wales in the terms requested.

Hospitals

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales over what period the £10 million cash boost for health care in the valleys is to be spent; and how much has been allocated to each hospital.

Mr. Grist: I refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 12 February 1990.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra money he is allocating to the proposed new hospital for Neath/Port Talbot.

Mr. Grist: The responsibility for funding the proposed hospital to serve the Neath/Port Talbot area rests with the West Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he now proposes to reach a decision as to whether to go ahead with a new hospital for Neath/Port Talbot; how much slippage there has been since his last announced date for commencement; and what is the reason for the delay in the progress of this proposal.

Mr. Grist: Discussions on technical details of the health authority's submission on this proposal are still proceeding between officials. We shall come to a decision on the scheme once the outstanding issues have been resolved. The health authority will review the projected start date at that time.

Local Government and Housing Act

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that the time scale for implementation of part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in respect of companies with which Welsh local authorities have an involvement is such as to allow the orderly rearrangement of the companies' structures and other arrangements to comply with the Act and achieve the continuation of their functions.

Mr. Grist: The timetable for implementation will facilitate an orderly transition.

EMPLOYMENT

Gateshead Central Training Unit for the Disabled

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for the future of the Gateshead central training unit for the disabled.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that my hon. Friend is referring to the support under the sheltered placement scheme. The scheme is currently supporting 33 jobs for people with severe disabilities in Gateshead. Nine of these are sponsored by Gateshead metropolitan borough council and 24 by voluntary organisations. I shall be informing sponsors shortly about the level of resource for the sheltered placement scheme in 1990-91.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number, and the relevant percentages, of young people aged 16 and 17 years who are currently *(a)* on YTS and *(b)* employed or unemployed.

Mr. Nicholls: The table sets out the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds training under YTS, broken down by employed and non-employed status on 31 December 1989.

	Total employed	*Per cent. of total*	*Total non-employed*	*Per cent. of total*	*Total*
16-year-olds	29,500	25·0	88,300	75·0	117,800
17-year-olds	54,700	30·5	124,500	69·5	179,200
TOTALS	84,200	28·4	212,800	71·6	297,000

There are also 88,600 trainees in YTS who are over 18 of whom 34 per cent. have employed status.

Factories (Registration)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many informations were laid against employers for failure to register factory premises with the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years and in each Health and Safety Executive area.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the number of informations laid by Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorates alleging contravention of section 137 of the Factories Act 1961 (which deals with the requirement to register factory premises with the Health and Safety Executive). Information about the informations laid by other Health and Safety Executive inspectorates could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Informations laid by factory and agricultural inspectorates under section 137 of the Factories Act 1961

Area	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
01 South West	—	—	1	—	—
02 South	2	—	—	1	—
03 South East	1	2	1	2	3
04-06 Greater London	2	1	2	2	—
07 East Anglia	—	—	—	1	—
08 Northern Home Counties	—	—	—	—	1
09 East Midlands	1	7	2	2	8
10 West Midlands	2	2	2	1	1
11 Wales	—	—	1	—	—
12 Marches	2	13	2	3	3
13 North Midlands	3	—	3	1	—
14 South Yorkshire and Humberside	3	3	2	—	1
15 West and North Yorkshire	2	2	4	6	2
16 Greater Manchester	—	3	—	1	3
17 Merseyside	—	—	1	—	—
18 North West	—	—	—	—	—
19 North East	3	—	—	—	1
20 Scotland East	—	—	—	—	—
21 Scotland West	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	21	33	21	20	23

Notes:
1983-1985 Calendar years.
1986-87 onwards Financial years.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what internal research the Health and Safety Executive has done in the last two years into the proportion of factory premises which are not registered with the factory inspectorate; and if he will summarise the findings of that research in relation to the proportion of premises which are unregistered and the proportion of factory employees who work in unregistered premises.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to state the proportion of premises which are not registered or the proportion of factory employees who work in unregistered premises and there are no current research projects into non-registration. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is aware that some firms have failed to register their manufacturing premises with it as required under section 137 of the Factories Act 1961. HSE's factory inspectorate plans to spend a fixed proportion of its resources each year on the identification and inspection of unregistered fixed workplaces as part of its programme of preventive inspection. HSE also encourages registration through publicity campaigns and publications such as "500 Dead".

Improvement and Prohibition Notices

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many improvement and prohibition notices have been issued in each of the Health and Safety Executive's areas for the last four quarters for which information is available; and how many of these have been identified as warranting public disclosure.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives details of the enforcement notices issued by each area of Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorates for the four quarters of 1987-88. Information about the enforcement notices issued by other Health and Safety Executive inspectorates could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Environment and Safety Information Act 1988 requires enforcing authorities to maintain public registers of details of improvement and prohibition notices which have public safety implications. The Act came into force on 1 April 1989 and was not retrospective. Prior to that date, no separate register of the minority of enforcement notices warranting public disclosure was kept.

Table 1

Enforcement notices issued by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate and Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate

HSE area code	HSE area	1 April 1987 to 30 June 1987			1 July 1987 to 30 September 1987			1 October 1987 to 31 December 1987			1 January 1988 to 31 March 1988		
		Improvement	Deferred prohibition	Immediate prohibition[1]	Improvement	Deferred prohibition	Immediate prohibition[1]	Improvement	Deferred prohibition	Immediate prohibition[1]	Improvement	Deferred prohibition	Immediate prohibition[1]
01	South West	138	3	14	111	2	19	162	—	62	137	3	20
02	South	92	3	31	36	1	35	84	—	50	67	—	42
03	South East	65	—	24	65	1	47	70	2	53	79	5	51
04-06	Greater London	55	1	29	130	3	66	117	4	142	149	11	60
07	East Anglia	78	1	31	84	2	34	86	—	130	87	2	61
08	Northern Home Counties	56	—	66	64	2	99	62	—	60	67	3	50
09	East Midlands	159	1	33	74	1	46	88	4	92	117	1	42
10	West Midlands	31	—	32	36	—	39	28	1	35	44	—	31
11	Wales	206	6	28	98	12	43	181	5	43	212	2	39
12	Marches	102	2	30	122	2	60	133	3	76	134	—	56
13	North Midlands	81	—	38	78	6	45	74	12	55	82	1	29
14	South Yorkshire and Humberside	75	11	74	83	—	62	100	5	38	51	2	25
15	West and North Yorkshire	68	19	42	75	8	44	75	4	50	90	2	49
16	Greater Manchester	51	—	35	107	3	84	124	1	33	91	5	64
17	Merseyside	10	1	10	35	0	50	37	1	16	54	—	46
18	North West	74	1	28	71	—	28	47	—	125	99	—	187
19	North East	50	2	35	54	11	55	69	7	51	76	7	56
20	Scotland East	144	2	58	100	5	66	81	—	37	159	—	222
21	Scotland West	51	2	109	59	2	109	60	1	137	71	1	84
	Total	1,586	55	747	1,482	61	1,031	1,678	50	1,285	1,866	45	1,214

[1] Reflects the major enforcement initiatives aimed at small construction sites.

Health and Safety

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to empower magistrates to refer for sentencing to the Crown court cases brought by the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act and any of the relevant statutory provisions within the meaning of section 53 of the Act.

Mr. Nicholls: Magistrates have existing powers under the Magistrates Court Act 1980 to refer individuals to a higher court for sentencing. This power does not extend to corporations. Any amendment to include corporations would be a matter for the Home Office. However, for serious health and safety cases, health and safety executive inspectors are increasingly seeking to persuade magistrates that such cases should be dealt with in the Crown court.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* improvement and *(b)* prohibition notices were issued by the Health and Safety Executive in the years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989; to whom they were served; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The table summarises the number of improvement and prohibition notices issued for the calendar year 1985 and the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88, and their outcome. The figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. The names of those on whom the notices were served could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Enforcement notices issued by health and safety executive inspectorates[1]

	Number issued	Result of notice							
		Full compliance	Compliance with extension	Withdrawn	Prosecution	No further action	Continuing requirement	Other result	Result not known
1985									
Improvement	5,584	4,703	508	48	39	96	13	1	176
Prohibition:									
Deferred	248	203	10	4	1	2	16	—	12
Immediate	2,193	1,948	8	1	11	8	181	5	31
1986-87[2]									
Improvement	6,575	5,514	509	64	73	86	8	5	316
Prohibition:									
Deferred	195	147	5	1	—	—	21	1	20
Immediate	2,707	2,353	10	8	11	20	231	—	84
1987-88[2]									
Improvement	6,629	5,401	501	60	46	91	8	1	521
Prohibition:									
Deferred	231	178	4	—	—	—	35	—	14
Immediate[3]	4,296	3,903	15	5	14	14	217	1	127

[1] Her Majesty's Factory, Agricultural, Mines and Quarries, Explosives and Nuclear Installations inspectorates.
[2] Years commencing 1 April.
[3] Reflects the major enforcement initiatives aimed at small construction sites.

Skill Centres

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any undertaking to provide employment training courses has been given by skill centres under the privatisation arrangements.

Mr. Nicholls: Astra Training Services Ltd. has announced that it intends to consolidate the STA's present position as a major provider of employment training. The other successful bidder for a skill centre, Metel, is already a training manager for ET.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the differences between YTS and youth training which will replace it.

Mr. Nicholls: The youth training arrangements build upon the successes of YTS and incorporate major new flexibilities designed to meet a wide range of local needs both economic and individual.

The key differences are:

(a) an emphasis on outputs rather than training processes.
(b) flexible design of individual schemes to achieve outputs instead of a fixed national design structure.
(c) the two year and one year entitlements of YTS give way to programmes of varying duration suitable for particular types of courses and the types of trainee need involved.
(d) the promise of courses at a standard of at least level 2 as laid down by the National Council of Vocational Qualifications or at equivalent occupational training or educational standards. In addition, more purchase of training at levels 3 and 4.
(e) allowances for unemployed trainees based upon age rather than cumulative time in training.
(f) improved assessment and endorsement procedures for special training needs.
(g) enhanced training opportunities to help unemployed trainees nearing the end of training to secure jobs.
(h) extension of the guarantee to include certain groups whose entry into training has been unavoidably delayed.
(i) more scope for discretionary entry for people not covered by the guarantee.
(j) greater financial discretion to use YT funds to build up local training arrangements, improve local marketing, and to give specific support for individual young people on assessment, action plans and similar matters.

Contracts of Employment

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will now take steps to transfer the jurisdiction of courts to industrial tribunals, in respect of claims by dismissed employees against employers arising out of alleged breaches of contracts of employment.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend will be making a statement shortly.

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many filled employment training places there are in the Greater Manchester area; and what percentage this represents of the original departmental projections.

Mr. Nicholls: On 9 February 1990, the latest date for which information is available, there were 9,719 people on employment training in Greater Manchester. Departmental projections are for internal management information purposes only.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places were filled on the Greater Manchester archaeological unit employment training scheme at the time of closure; and what percentage this represented of the original and revised contracted places.

Mr. Nicholls: The Greater Manchester archaeological unit employment training scheme has not closed. On 26 January 1990, a total of 241 places were filled on the scheme. This represents 80 per cent. of its current contracted capacity and 48 per cent. of its original contracted level.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much public money from the Training Agency has been given to the Greater Manchester archaeological unit employment training scheme; and on what dates.

Mr. Nicholls: Money advanced by the Training Agency to the Greater Manchester archaeological unit under employment training was in accordance with the terms of the university of Manchester's contract with the Training Agency. The precise terms of this contract are confidential to the parties involved.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the closure of the Greater Manchester archaeological unit employment training scheme; and what is his assessment of the implications of the closure for other employment training schemes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: The Greater Manchester archaeological unit of the university of Manchester is still operating in employment training. The university's council of government is to meet on 27 February to consider the unit's future under ET. This has no implications for other ET training managers.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the total number of employment training trainees who have *(a)* successfully completed more than three months' training, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification or credit towards one and *(c)* received a training bonus between December 1988 and December 1989 and the figures for each of the standard regions, Wales, Scotland and Great Britain;

(2) what was the average length of time a trainee spent at an employment training place in the period December 1988 to December 1989 for Great Britain;

(3) what was the total number of employment training trainees who have received qualifications in the period between September 1988 to December 1989 for Great Britain;

(4) what was the total number of positive outcome from employment training leavers who go into *(a)* further education and training, *(b)* self-employment and *(c)* jobs between December 1988 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]*: The information requested is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on the £10 employment training trainee allowance in December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]*: Expenditure on the £10 premium part of employment training (ET) trainee allowances in December 1989 is estimated to be over £8 million.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of unemployed receiving enterprise training within employment training between September 1988 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 February 1990]*: A total of 547,000 people entered employment training between September 1988 and December 1989. Of these about 7 per cent. joined the programme to receive enterprise training.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on health and safety issues arising out of the construction of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for health and safety during the construction of the Channel tunnel rests with the employers involved. The Health and Safety Executive will continue to enforce vigorously the health and safety regulations which apply to the construction of the tunnel.

Radiation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in the nuclear industry have received, over the past year, exposures to radiation in excess of the new radiation safety thresholds introduced on 5 February; and if he will publish a table showing the source of the radiation, the number of dose units received and the location of the exposure for each case.

Mr. Nicholls: No new threshold dose was introduced on 5 February.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve co-operation in bringing about the comprehensive framework for national vocational qualifications.

Mr. Nicholls: The NCVQ will be building on the good progress made so far in reforming the vocational qualifications system and accrediting national vocational qualifications. There is still much to do. The Government will be looking to the NCVQ to carry forward purposefully and harmoniously the reform of qualifications and the need for a more and better qualified work force. There is good will for reform which I want to see skilfully harnessed to this vital work.

THE ARTS

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days paid paternity leave.

The Three Graces

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether all the moneys raised by the Victoria and Albert museum in its efforts to keep in the United Kingdom the statues by Canova, "The Three Graces", will go directly towards paying the purchase price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Victoria and Albert museum has advised me that, in the event that it proves possible to make an offer to purchase "The Three Graces" by 12 March, all the money subscribed by the public will be used for the purchase. The cash costs of the appeal have been underwritten by an anonymous and separate donation; there have also been many contributions in kind to the organisation of the appeal. In the event that the appeal does not reach its target, all money subscribed in an identifiable and returnable form will be offered back. Money deposited in cash in collecting boxes will, as a notice beside the boxes clearly states, be put in the V and A central purchase fund and used to support the purchase of other major heritage objects.

CIVIL SERVICE

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days paid paternity leave. In my Department we have made full use of the flexibilities which already exist in the rules on special leave for this purpose.

House of Commons Disqualification Act

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements are to be made to provide hon. Members with information about the amendments contained in the resolution tabled on 19 February updating schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act.

Mr. Luce: A detailed explanatory note is available from the Vote Office.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bed and Breakfast

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest figures for the number of people living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand from the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that at 8 February 106 households were living in bed and breakfast accommodation secured for them under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Local Government Staff Commission

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used to select members to serve on the Local Government Staff Commission.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Local Government Staff Commission is established under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972

"for the purposes of exercising general oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers of councils and of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of making recommendations to councils and to the Executive on such matters".

Membership of the commission is comprised of a chairman and up to 12 other members appointed by the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland after consultation with associations representative of councils or their staffs and any other appropriate association or public body.

The members of the commission are appointed on the basis that they reflect the interests of local government and that they can contribute to the work of the commission. In view of its wide remit it is also essential to appoint members who can assist the commission because of their skills and knowledge in particular areas. The criteria for selection are members who will represent

"employee interests, drawn from nominations from trade unions, staff associations etc.;

employer interests, drawn from nominations from district councils; and

other interests i.e. those who have a knowledge of local government or whose expertise on such matters as training, personnel, finance etc. will be of help to the commission."

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current composition of the Local Government Staff Commission by name, address and interests represented.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Chairman

Professor D. Rea MSc (Econ) MBA PLD, Dip. Soc. Studies—Belfast

Members representing employee interests

Mr. W. E. Andrews ACIS—Coleraine:
—nominated by SOLACE.
Mr. J. Cooper—Bangor:
nominated by NIC/ICTU
Mr. J. Donaghy—Ballymoney
nominated by NIC/ICTU

Members representing employer interests

Councillor J. H. Allen OBE—Antrim
nominated by Antrim BC
Councillor P. Brannigan—Armagh
nominated by Armagh DC
Councillor F. Cobain—Belfast
nominated by Belfast CC
Councillor W. J. Thompson—Beragh
nominated by Omagh DC

Members with knowledge/expertise on employment matters

Mr. D. Clement—Antrim
financial background
Mr. T. H. N. Jackson—Belfast
member of Public Service Training Council with personnel experience
Councillor Mrs. M. McSorley MBE—Draperstown
local government background
Mr. P. O. Neill OBE—Belfast
Assistant Director of Personnel in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Mrs. M. S. V. Young BA Hons.—Holywood
Lecturer with management, industrial relations and personnel background.

Coleraine Council (Employment Practices)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what steps are being taken by Coleraine borough council to ensure that the current imbalances in employment practices are being rectified;

(2) what steps are being taken by the Fair Employment Commission to ensure that the current imbalances in employment practices in Coleraine borough council are being rectified.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under Section 12 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976 the Fair Employment Agency (now the commission) investigated Coleraine borough council in 1987. The report of the findings of this investigation is still unpublished but the commission has advised that the council accepted all its recommendations for action to ensure that equality of opportunity in employment is afforded, except for signing the declaration of principle and intent and the introduction of work force monitoring.

The council is specified as a public authority by the Fair Employment (Specification of Public Authorities) Order (NI) 1989 and is therefore deemed to be automatically registered with the Fair Employment Commission to which it will submit annual returns monitoring the religious composition of its work force. The council has indicated that following the introduction of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989 a system of monitoring has been introduced.

Fair Employment

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by Derry city council to ensure that the current imbalances in employment are being rectified.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986 at the request of Derry city council, the Fair Employment Agency (now the commission) investigated the council's employee patterns. A report on this investigation (published in 1987) found that the overall employment pattern derived from the analysis suggested that the council's employment procedures provided equality of opportunity in employment.

Under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, the council has a duty to submit to the Fair Employment Commission annual returns monitoring the religious composition of its workforce. Until the first monitoring return is received, the commission will not hold up-to-date information on this breakdown.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by Down district council to ensure that the current imbalances in employment are being rectified.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In response to a request from the Fair Employment Agency (now the commission) in 1987, Down district council agreed to participate in a voluntary exercise to monitor the religious composition of its workforce and to submit the information obtained to the agency for consideration.

The Fair Employment Commission, in consultation with the council, is currently assessing the council's employment composition. This assessment has not yet been completed nor has a final report been sent to the council.

Under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, the council has a duty to submit to the Fair Employment Commission annual returns monitoring the religious composition of its workforce. Until the first monitoring return is received, the commission will not hold up-to-date information on this breakdown.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by Newry and Mourne district council to ensure that the current imbalances in employment are being rectified.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under section 12 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976 the Fair Employment Agency (now the commission) investigated Newry and Mourne district council in 1987. The report of the investigation has not yet been published but the commission has advised that the council agreed to accept a programme entitled "Future Action" which was included in the report and designed to ensure that equality of opportunity in employment is afforded.

Under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, the council has a duty to submit to the Fair Employment Commission annual returns monitoring the religious composition of its workforce. Until the first monitoring return is received, the commission will not hold up-to-date information on this breakdown.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken by Strabane district council to ensure that the current imbalances in employment at non-management levels are being rectified.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under section 12 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976, the Fair Employment Agency (now the commission) investigated Strabane district council in 1988. The report of this investigation is still unpublished but the commission has advised that the council accepted all its recommendations for action to ensure that equality of opportunity in employment is afforded.

Under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, the council has a duty to submit to the Fair Employment Commission annual returns monitoring the religious composition of its workforce. Until the first monitoring return is received the commission will not hold up-to-date information on the religious breakdown at non-management or other levels of employees.

Residents' Parking Schemes

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects his Department to have completed its consideration of residents' parking schemes; when he expects to take powers to implement such schemes; what representations he has had from people and organisations in Northern Ireland about residents' parking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has been some interest in residential parking schemes in some parts of inner Belfast. There would be problems of financing and policing. Enabling legislation available is not expected before 1993.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his written answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *745*, what information was discovered regarding the activities of Colin Wallace and his section during the detailed study of the relevant Northern Ireland Office files; and whether any files or their contents were missing.

Mr. Brooke: Study of Northern Ireland Office files did not produce any information which would require me to add to the detailed reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 30 January. I am not aware of any missing files or missing contents of files.

DHSS Officers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* administrative assistants, *(b)* administrative officers, *(c)* executive officers grade 2, *(d)* executive officers grade 1, and *(e)* staff officers employed in the Department of Health and Social Services offices in (i) Strabane, (ii) Limavady, (iii) Londonderry, (iv) Lisnakelly, (v) Coleraine, (vi) Omagh and (vii) Magherafelt at the present time; and what was the number five years ago.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The figures requested are:

	Administration assistant	*Administration[1] officer*	*Executive[1] officer 2*	*Executive officer 1*	*Staff officer*
1. February 1990					
Strabane	13	46	15	4	2
Limavady	8	29	10	4	1
Londonderry	31	126	42	10	4
Lisahally (Lisnakelly)	122	13	5	2	2

	Administration assistant	Administration[1] officer	Executive[1] officer 2	Executive officer 1	Staff officer
Coleraine	13	54	20	5	2
Omagh	13	47	15	5	2
Magherafelt	9	42	10	4	2
2. March 1985[2]					
Strabane	13	53	18	3	2
Limavady	7	32	9	3	1
Londonderry	34	140	42	9	4
Lisahally (Lisnakelly)	77	8	3	2	1
Coleraine	11	50	17	4	2
Omagh	12	46	13	4	2
Magherafelt	8	41	11	3	2

[1] The grades of administrative officer and executive officer 2 are not used in social security offices. The equivalent grades in those offices are social security officer II and social security officer I respectively.

[2] March 1985 is the nearest comparable date for which figures are available.

Registration

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to introduce legislation to reform the system for registering births, marriages and deaths in Northern Ireland, along the lines proposed for England and Wales in the White Paper, "Registration: Proposals for Change".

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* Many of the changes recommended for the registration system for England and Wales already apply in Northern Ireland. The Government will consider, in due course, those reforms which may require comparable action here and whether it may be necessary to make changes to the relevant separate Northern Ireland legislation.

PRIME MINISTER

Commonwealth

Q28. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received concerning the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister: I frequently receive representations relating to many Commonwealth issues from hon. Members and from members of the public.

Sunday Newspaper Editors

Q55. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet officially editors of Sunday newspapers.

The Prime Minister: I have no specific plans at present but I do meet editors from time to time.

Eastern Europe

Q89. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she is now in a position to announce details of her proposed visits to east European countries.

The Prime Minister: No firm arrangements have yet been made for further visits to east European countries, though I hope to visit a number during the course of this year.

Q117. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has had any recent discussions with *(a)* Chancellor Kohl and *(b)* other European Community state leaders concerning the provision of invited official observers, drawn from European Community national legislatures, for the general elections which are to be held throughout central and eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have not, though I understand that the IPU is discussing with the east European Governments concerned, the possible provision of observers from this House.

South Africa

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to provide special assistance in the form of environmental protection expertise and environmental clean-up technology to the Republic of South Africa.

The Prime Minister: We have received no requests for such assistance.

Poland

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during the recent visit of the Polish Prime Minister to the United Kingdom either she or other Ministers of Her Majesty's Government discussed with him *(a)* the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, *(b)* technological aid to Poland under article IV of the non-proliferation treaty and *(c)* the availability of pollution abatement and clean-up equipment to assist in the ecological amelioration of Polish industry.

The Prime Minister: None of these subjects was discussed.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagemens for Tuesday 20 February.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Jamie Lloyd Stewart

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the action taken following the inquest into the death of Jamie Lloyd Stewart.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The circumstances of Mr. Stewart's death have been investigated by the Metropolitan police under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority. The investigating officer's report has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Complaints Authority, who will consider whether there are grounds for taking criminal or disciplinary action against any officers involved.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of arrivals from Jamaica for each month since January 1989 who have been *(a)* interviewed on arrival or *(b)* refused entry.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. All Jamaican citizens are interviewed when seeking leave to enter. Figures for those subjected to further examination are not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Jamaican citizens admitted to, and refused leave to enter and removed from, the United Kingdom

1989	*Total admitted*[1]	*Total refused leave to enter and removed*
January	2,600	75
February	1,700	79
March	2,000	82
April	2,200	71
May	2,300	59
June	3,800	65
July	4,500	75
August	3,900	55
September	3,300	72
October	2,400	58
November	1,900	63
December	1,800	49
TOTAL	32,300	803

[1] Provisional figures.

Metropolitan Police Funding

Mr. Ground: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total cost to public funds of the Metropolitan police in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: As police authority for the Metropolis, I have approved estimates which provide for net revenue expenditure of £1,265·075 million in 1990-91. There will be a cash limit on current expenditure of £1,223·389 million. Capital expenditure is subject to separate controls.

I have also approved the issue of a precept of £112·79 per head of relevant population for Metropolitan police purposes. This is not the charge levied on individual community charge payers, but will be levied on local authorities' collection funds which will derive income from revenue support grant, national non-domestic rates and community charges.

I have approved an increase of £10·461 million in the cash limit of £1,082·391 million for the current year, which was announced on 14 February 1989. This increase has been necessitated by the 57·5 per cent. increase in the police rent allowance made during the year, which imposed additional spending of £23 million over and above the provision made in the cash limit. The Metropolitan police have succeeded in absorbing about half this sum, but I am satisfied that they could not meet the whole of it without affecting police recruitment plans, and have therefore approved this increase.

Babies (Abduction)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year and by police authority for the last 10 years, the number of cases of baby abduction that have been investigated.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to children aged under 16 and is published annually, and most recently under offence classification 13 in table S3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, 1988 Vol. 3", a copy of which is available in the Library. More precise information on the age of victims of these offences could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Grendon Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for which period of time Her Majesty's prison Grendon will be closed for refurbishment.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 16 January 1990 at column *176*.

The establishment is likely to remain closed for a further five to eight months while the essential refurbishment work is in hand.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the cost of refurbishing Her Majesty's prison Grendon.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that £1·335 million will be spent on refurbishing the establishment while it is temporarily closed. This work is, however, part of a wider programme of refurbishment which began in 1986 and is likely to extend over the next eight to 10 years. We expect that the total cost of this programme will amount to £9 million—£9·5 million (at current prices) of which £1 million has already been spent.

Wellingborough Institution

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for which period of time the Wellingborough young offenders institution will be used as an adult prison.

Mr. Mellor: Her Majesty's YOI Wellingborough was converted to adult use on 27 January. It will remain as a prison until the repairs at HMP Grendon—whose inmates it is temporarily holding—are completed. This is estimated to be in about five to eight months' time. The use to which

Wellingborough will be put once its current population is returned to HMP Grendon is under consideration as part of a wide-ranging review of the young offender estate.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of modifying Wellingborough young offenders institution to make it suitable for adult prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The latest estimated cost is £230,000.

Everthorpe Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review his plans to build a new prison facility at Everthorpe in Humberside, in the light of his proposals in the criminal justice White Paper Cm. 965.

Mr. Mellor: The need for additional prison places is kept under constant review, in the light of existing or anticipated changes in the level of the prison population.

The new remand centre at Everthorpe, on which work has already begun, will provide much needed relief to the severely overcrowded local prisons in the area when it opens early in 1992. I do not anticipate that the proposals in the criminal justice White Paper, "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public", once enacted, will remove the need for this particular establishment.

London Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the inner London borough authorities who will shortly assume responsibility for education in their area, and have prisons within their boroughs, as to how they propose to develop education facilities for inmates within such local prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Discussions have taken place with the appropriate London boroughs, resulting in agreement regarding the continued provision of teaching staff on secondment to the prison education service in respect of Brixton, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs prisons, and for the new Belmarsh prison at Greenwich. Negotiations with the London borough of Islington regarding education provision at Holloway and Pentonville prisons have yet to be finalised.

It is considered that the proposed abolition of the ILEA and the assumption of responsibility for the provision of education facilities by the London boroughs should not lead to any diminution of these facilities.

Executioners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of qualified executioners at present in the United Kingdom; and how and by whom such people are trained for this work.

Mr. Mellor: No one is now employed or trained for this task, and we do not know how many of those who performed it in the past are still alive.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from police forces concerning the effect of the Crown prosecution service on the police's operations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Association of Chief Police Officers has made representations about the effect of the Crown prosecution service's requirements as to the content and presentation of paperwork. An inter-departmental group has recently been established to examine this and other pre-trial issues.

Data Protection Register

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce costs in running the data protection register, in order to bring forward the date of the break-even point; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The registrar's expenditure proposals are scrutinised carefully as part of the process of public expenditure control; and we shall shortly be considering future registration fee levels in the light of the registrar's costs, the expected numbers of registrations and renewals, the impact of the registration fees on those required to register and the need to reach break-even as soon as this can reasonably be managed. The general operation of the Data Protection Act is also under review, but it is too early to say what impact that might have on the registrar's costs and income.

Independent Broadcasting Authority

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss broadcasting.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 25 January at column *875*.

Drugs

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research information is available to him relating to the elasticity of demand for cocaine and heroin from their users.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the elasticity of demand for class A controlled drugs is included in "Managing Drug Use", a report of a study by Whynes et al, financed by the Home Office, which was published in the *British Journal of Addiction* (BJA (1989) 84, 533-540). The same edition of the journal contains a summary of the report of Home Office research unit study No 95, "Economic Aspects of the Illicit Drug Market and Drug Enforcement Policies in the United Kingdom", by Wagstaff and Maynard (BJA (1989) 84, 461-475), much of which is also relevant. Copies of the Journal and the Home Office research unit study are in the Library.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet fellow European Economic Community interior Ministers to discuss further measures to control drug abuse.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend and I expect to meet a number of interior Ministers at the world ministerial drugs summit, which will be held in London from 9-11 April.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department has commissioned into why individuals take drugs.

Mr. Mellor: Although the Home Office has not commissioned specific studies on this aspect of the drugs problem, information on the factors which lead people to misuse drugs is available from research. In its report on prevention (published 1984), the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs discussed the main theories which had emerged from research about causation, and concluded that no single cause, or consistent pattern of multiple causes, had been identified.

All-seater Stadiums

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial support he plans to make available to football clubs converting to all-seater stadiums.

Mr. John Patten: None. Responsibility for meeting the cost of safety and improvement of football grounds rests with the ground occupiers.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources are provided to police forces to manage neighbourhood watch schemes throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: In England and Wales resources allocated to the police service—which we have increased substantially—are not dedicated to particular police activities. It is for chief constables to decide on the deployment of police officers and other resources and consequently on the extent to which to offer support to neighbourhood watch, which is essentially a community activity. The position in Scotland is similar. There are no neighbourhood watch schemes in Northern Ireland.

Some forces in England and Wales have developed ways of supporting neighbourhood watch, which reduces the demand on police officers, including the use of civilian liaison officers; trainees on Government-sponsored employment training schemes during their periods of practical training; and answerphone facilities to pass information and advice to local volunteer co-ordinators.

Overtime

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the amount of overtime worked in the fire service in each of the last four years for which figures are available; if he will publish such information, in summary form, in the *Official Report;* and if he will make a statement on his proposals to reduce the amounts of overtime worked.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected centrally. However, I understand from the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades that the average amount of overtime per firefighter worked over the past 10 years has been of the order of 16 to 20 minutes per week.

The Government have not proposed a reduction in the amount of overtime worked. The more flexible use of manpower in the fire service, including the use of overtime, is one of a range of issues currently being considered by a joint working party of the national joint council and the Government, chaired by my noble Friend the Minister of State, Earl Ferrers.

Charities

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the staff of the Charity Commission are employed to investigate charity-related fraud including tax evasion.

Mr. John Patten: Forty members of the Charity Commission staff are employed in the monitoring and investigation of charities at risk of abuse, and in dealing with fraud, included tax-related schemes involving charities.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many qualified accountants there are on the staff of the Charity Commission.

Mr. John Patten: There are two qualified accountants on the staff of the Charity Commission. In addition, training is provided for staff who do not have accountancy qualifications in posts calling for it. The charity commissioners can also appoint qualified accountants for specific inquiries.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Secretarial and Research Allowances

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the level of secretarial and research allowance available to a Member of (i) the United Kingdom Parliament, (ii) the United States Congress and (iii) the Federal Republic of Germany Bundestag.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[pursuant to his reply, 31 January 1990, c. 183]:* Subject to detailed regulations of the House of Representatives, Members of the United States House of Representatives receive two allowances:

(a) one for "Clerk Hire" or US$441,120 per annum (£261,219) for staff costs; and

(b) one for office expenses of between US$104,000 (£61,586) and US$302,000 (£178,836) calculated according to the Member's district's distance from Washington. The average is US$146,000 (£86,457).

Each Member is allowed to hire not more than 18 permanent staff, and not more than four non-permanent staff in his Washington and district offices.

Members of the Bundestag in the Federal Republic of Germany are allowed to claim up to DM 11,600 (£4,091) per month (DM 139,200 (£49,088) per annum) for secretarial and research help.

Note: the sterling figures calculated using rates of exchange at the close of business on 13 February 1990.

ENVIRONMENT

Eriswell

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with Forest Heath district council regarding the impact on Eriswell parish of the loss to its local revenues of the rates previously paid by American service men and their dependants living in that community; what share of Eriswell parish's revenues arose last year from the Americans living there; by how much he expects the contributions of Eriswell's British residents to be increased this year to cover the cost of the same services, that last year were paid for by parish rates paid by Americans and

British; what steps he is taking to enable Forest Heath district council to offset Eriswell parish's loss of income from its American community from the moneys that he expects to receive from the United States in lieu of community charge payments by its nationals and their dependants living in that district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has had with Forest Heath district council regarding the impact on Eriswell parish of the loss to its local revenues of the rates previously paid by American service men and their dependants living in that community; what share of Eriswell parish's revenues arose last year from the Americans living there; and by how much he expects the contribution of Eriswell's British residents to be increased this year to cover the cost of services paid for by parish rates;

(2) what steps he is taking to enable Forest Heath district council to offset Eriswell parish's loss of income from its American community from the moneys that he expects to receive from the United States in lieu of community charge payments by its nationals and their dependants living in that district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Taylor Report

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will arrange to meet the football authorities to discuss the implementation of the Taylor report.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans at the present time to meet the football authorities but we are willing to consider any request from them for a meeting.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department currently uses the following firms to guard buildings occupied and managed by the Department's staff:

Royal British Legion Attendance Co Ltd
Yeoman Security Ltd
Centuryan Security Ltd
Initial Contract Services
Reliance Security Services Ltd
Securiguard Services (Northern) Ltd
A-One Guard Services Ltd
County Guards
Compass Security

The total number of employees is 54. More than one employee may be needed to cover a given post if there is part-time working or if the hours are very long. The total value of the contracts in the present financial year is £590,000. The expenditure in previous years includes elements of the costs for DTp. No separate figures are therefore available for DOE.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates of all meetings of his Department's working party to examine the feasibility of compiling a register of contaminated land, referred to in his answer of 10 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *399*; and if he will place a copy of the committee's proceedings in the Library.

Mr. Trippier: Full working party meetings took place on 7 January and 3 March 1988 and on 21 February and 20 March 1989 with related policy discussions between and since those dates. The next meeting is proposed for 28 February 1990. I expect to receive a report from officials shortly and would want to announce my proposals on the subject as soon as possible. However, it is not our practice to supply records of interim discussions by an internal group preparing proposals for my consideration.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available in the Library work completed under the site survey conducted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in conjunction with local authorities as detailed in his answer of 11 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *459*.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, working with the waste disposal authorities, has sought to survey the likely scale of the potential problem posed by landfill gas. The results of the survey have now been agreed with the waste disposal authorities and the report, which will be published shortly, will be placed in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to provide information on the distributional impact of the poll tax on various household sizes in the same manner that such information was made available during the passage of legislation.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr Thompson) on 15 February.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what criteria he proposes to use in deciding which local authorities to charge cap;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to charge cap those local authorities who propose to levy a community charge that, taking account of any adjustment that may need to be made because of the transitional safety net, is over 15 per cent. higher than what would be needed if authorities spent in line with the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 17 January.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce his decisions as to which local authorities he proposes to charge cap.

Mr. Chris Patten: It would not be right for me to speculate on the timetable of any capping scheme we might need to operate for 1990-91.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the economic consequences of the introduction of a roof tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The principal disadvantages of such a tax include its unfair and arbitrary impact on homeowners and tenants, its discouragement of home improvements and the lack of any clear link between the spending of a local authority and the size of an individual's tax bill.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the current community charge publicity campaign that reference to the community charge rather than poll tax will result in confusion among potential rebate applicants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* I have received no such representations.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria for capping that will be applied to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) on 24 January.

Mr. Paul Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the level of community charge proposed by the finance committee of Southend council, he will make it his policy to charge cap the council.

Mr. Chris Patten: Selection of authorities for capping has to be on the basis of general principles and it would not be right for me to speculate on whether Southend-on-Sea borough council or any other authority would be capped if I needed to use my capping powers for 1990-91. But I have made it clear that if authorities do insist on budgeting excessively I shall not hesitate to cap them.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to bring forward regulations to enable let holiday cottages to be subject to business rate rather than standard community charge before the owners become liable to pay standard community charge.

Mr. Chope: Section 66(2B) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, inserted by the Standard Community Charge and Non-Domestic Rating (Definition of Domestic Property) Order 1990 S.I. No. 162, laid before Parliament on 9 February, provides broadly that a building is not domestic property if in the forthcoming year it will be available for letting commercially, as self-catering accommodation, for short periods totalling 140 days or more. In such cases business rates will be payable.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local government housing authority the number of council houses at the latest available date and in 1978, together with the number of adults and children resident therein.

Mr. Chope: Information for April of each year has been reported since 1979 by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1). The number of dwellings owned by the authority and situated in its own area appears in column B11 of "HIP1 All Items Print (1979)" and for 1989 in column A11 of "HIP1 All Items Print (1989)". In 1989 they also reported any stock owned by the authority but situated ouside its area and this appears in column A16 of "HIP1 All Items Print (1989)". Copies of both documents are in the Library. The numbers and ages of residents in local authority dwellings are not held centrally.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contingency plans exist for interim storage of intermediate-level nuclear waste awaiting encapsulation, should the Nirex repository not come on line by 2005.

Mr. Trippier: Intermediate-level radioactive waste can continue to be stored safely at nuclear establishments until a Nirex repository becomes available.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist for the placement of the intermediate-level waste produced during the third stage of power decommissioning.

Mr. Trippier: Intermediate-level radioactive waste arising from the decommissioning of nuclear power plants will be consigned to a deep repository, possible sites for which are currently being investigated by UK Nirex.

Homelessness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics he has about the number of elderly people made homeless after taking out home income annuity schemes in which lenders foreclose, making the purchaser homeless; and if he will make a statement on such schemes and the problems of whether those who lose their homes in this way can be construed as intentionally homeless.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities make quarterly returns of the numbers of households for whom they had accepted responsibility for securing accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. These provide breakdowns of the total number of households accepted as homeless by category of priority need, including "vulnerable due to old age", and by main reason for homelessness, including mortgage arrears, but do not separately identify foreclosure on home income annuity schemes. We have no evidence to suggest that this is a widespread problem but anyone considering such a scheme would be well advised to seek independent financial advice on the scheme most suitable for their needs.

Standard Spending Assessment, Grimsby

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how he reached a scaling factor of 1·00026898014558 for other education in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(2) how he reached a scaling factor of 1·00000302142846 for secondary education in table C of

the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of the scaling factor is on the calculations;

(3) how he reached a scaling factor of 1·00000076166512 for children's personal social services in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(4) how he reached a scaling factor of 1·0000000836736 for police in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(5) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·999210311847682 for fire in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(6) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·999455449128694 for elderly residential personal social services in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessments; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(7) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·999976590394325 for other PSS in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations;

(8) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·999997123020877 for post-16 education in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of the scaling factor is on the calculations;

(9) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·999997693248915 for elderly domiciliary personal social services in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what is the effect of this scaling factor on the calculations;

(10) how he reached a scaling factor of 0·9999993385376896 for under-five education in table C of the calculations for Grimsby's standard spending assessment; what this means; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the calculations.

Mr. Chope: The scaling factors are calculated as described in paragraph 3.3 of section 3 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) approved by the House on 18 January. None of these factors is used in calculating the standard spending assessment for Great Grimsby since they are used in the calculation of elements for services not provided by Great Grimsby as a non-metropolitan district authority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how, with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £1,928·93 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials may check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the SSA arrived at for Grimsby;

(2) how, with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £464·33 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(3) how, with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £7·11 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(4) how, with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £556·93 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(5) how, with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £1·37 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(6) how, with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £4·03 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(7) how, with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £0·29 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(8) how, with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £13·05 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The amounts referred to in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) were arrived at by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority representatives. They have no effect on the SSA for Great Grimsby since, as a non-metropolitan district, Great Grimsby is not responsible for the services to which these indicator weights relate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £145·23 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(2) how, with reference to paragraph 3.23 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figures of *(a)* £22·86 and *(b)* £184 are aimed at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of the figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby;

(3) how, with reference to paragraph 3.26 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), the figure of £33,771 is arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The amounts referred to in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) were arrived at by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority representatives. They have no effect

on the SSA for Great Grimsby, since, as a non-metropolitan district, Great Grimsby is not responsible for the services to which these indicator weights relate.

Subterranean Fires

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations and types of subterranean fires in England in the period 1985 to 1988 which are referred to in paragraph 5.9 of the memorandum submitted by his Department to the Environment Select Committee on 22 May 1989 during its investigations into contaminated land.

Mr. Trippier: Building Research Establishment information paper IP 3/89 set out the distribution of fires by region. I will write to the hon. Member about location. The types of fire were classified as follows:

Site material	*Number of incidents*
Domestic waste	27
Coal or colliery waste	16
Peat	13
Industrial waste	6
Sewage beds	2
TOTAL	64

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the entertainment budgets of *(a)* the Property Services Agency chief executive and *(b)* each Property Services Agency regional director for the last three financial years and for the current financial year to date; and if he will itemise the spending of those individual budgets by date, amount, purpose of expenditure, name and organisation of those present.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The budgets for entertainment are:

	1987-88 (outturn)	*1988-89 (outturn)*	*1989-90 (allocations)*
Chief Executive	1,777	2,824	2,250
Regional Directors:			
London	—	7,220	4,500
Wales	—	1,287	2,500
Scotland	—	6,220	7,000
Midlands	—	1,658	2,500
North West	—	910	2,500
North East	—	1,415	2,500
Southern	—	1,506	2,500
South East	—	3,325	4,000
South West	—	2,126	2,500
Eastern	—	2,668	4,000

Figures for the earlier years are not readily available. The money is spent on a wide range of activities, including working lunches, light refreshments and the occasional reception for visitors and officials, including clients and those from overseas Governments.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to guarantee a minimum level of Ministry of Defence or Property Services Agency work to the privatised Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* Departments including the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency are free to enter into agreements with the Crown Suppliers on a commercial basis. These may contain certain undertakings about future business levels for a period where it is consistent with EC and GATT rules and to the mutual advantage of customer and supplier.

Solid Waste Management

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will be represented at the conference on solid waste management in Toronto on 25 to 27 April.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* The Department will not be represented at this conference.

Landfill Gas

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will be represented at the international landfill gas symposium, to be held in Chicago on 27 to 29 March.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 February 1990]:* My Department will not be represented although I understand that the Department of Energy is considering possible representation.

Grove Farm, Goring

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what types of *(a)* toxic wastes and *(b)* radioactive wastes are deposited at Grove farm in Goring.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Information concerning the disposal of toxic wastes is not held centrally and the responsible waste disposal authority should be consulted. The Department of the Environment has not issued any authorisation for the disposal of radioactive waste at Grove farm, Goring.

American Forces

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what progress he has made in agreeing with the United States Government the contributions to be made on behalf of the United States to local authorities where United States airbases are located, in lieu of the loss of revenue that results from American airmen and their adult dependants no longer contributing to local revenues via the rates;

(2) what sums received from the United States are being made available in the financial year 1990-91 to Suffolk county council and Forest Heath district council; and when the cash in question will be received;

(3) which Suffolk parish councils have indicated to him that they intend to cease providing certain local services on the grounds that the revenues they expect to receive from their British charge payers, following the cessation of rates from American service men, are insufficient.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many landfill waste sites visited under duties provided by section 91 of the Public Health Act 1936 in each of the last three years were found to constitute a statutory nuisance; what action was taken; what action is still outstanding; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has on the number of sites visited in each of the last five years in respect of section 91 of the Public Health Act 1936.

Mr. Trippier: Information on the number of landfill or other sites visited and on subsequent action taken, under section 91 of the 1936 Act, is not available centrally.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will detail the programme, by date, function, and staff numbers, for transferring work out of the Property Services Agency, Hastings;

(2) what plans he has to avoid redundancies amongst Property Services Agency staff in Hastings.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* The PSA will do its utmost to avoid compulsory redundancies in Hastings. Principal establishment officers of other Government Departments were invited last October to consider whether they have work which could be transferred to Hastings. We are also considering whether other PSA work might be transferred there and I am writing to other Departments to consider whether any part of their Departments' organisations might be relocated there. Until we have the responses to these invitations we shall not be able finally to work out our own plans for activities now done in Hastings, which will remain the prime focus of PSA's accounting and IT work. Should there eventually be a surplus of staff, the agency's redundancy arrangements, which include the transfer of staff to other Departments wherever possible, will apply.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of the use of waste disposal units in kitchen sinks in *(a)* reducing problems for waste disposal authorities and *(b)* increasing problems for water companies in respect of both volumes of water used and type of sewage to be treated.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has in the past assessed the effect of sink grinders both in reducing the weight of domestic waste requiring disposal and in increasing water usage and sludge production. The benefits and drawbacks of grinders are being kept under review.

Dog Whelk

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last commissioned a study into the dog whelk population; what signs there are that the TBT ban has led to a recovery of the dog whelk; and if he will list those areas where the dog whelk population is showing a substantial increase.

Mr. Trippier: The Government currently fund three studies of dog whelk populations and their response to TBT contamination. These are carried out by the Plymouth Marine Laboratory, by the Marine Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and by the Institute of Biology and Marine Conservation Society. They indicate that populations of the dog whelks, which is the most sensitive species to TBT, have been affected to varying degrees in different parts of the British Isles by past exposure. In extreme cases, particularly in sheltered localities, populations can no longer reproduce. The species has only limited capacity to recolonise such areas and it will take some time before the studies are able unequivocally to demonstrate any recovery since the ban.

DEFENCE

Air Misses

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses were recorded in the airspace over and in the vicinity of the Western Isles in each year from 1985 to 1989; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into air misses between *(a)* two civil aircraft, *(b)* two military aircraft and *(c)* a civil and a military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: There were no air misses reported in the airspace over and in the vicinity of the Western Isles between 1985 and 1989.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses were recorded within a 10-mile radius of Stornoway airport in each year from 1985 to 1989; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into air misses between *(a)* two civil aircraft, *(b)* two military aircraft and *(c)* a civil and a military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: No air misses were reported within a 10-mile radius of Stornoway airport between 1985 and 1989.

Military Aircraft (Stornoway)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many practice approaches and overshoots were carried out by military aircraft at Stornoway during 1989.

Mr. Neubert: A total of 186 practice approaches and overshoots were carried out by military aircraft at Stornoway during 1989.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the use made of Stornoway airport for military exercises during 1989, providing details of the numbers and types of aircraft, durations of their deployments to Stornoway, the titles of the exercises or deployments in each case and the number of aircraft movements carried out during each deployment.

Mr. Neubert: Stornoway airport was activated on two occasions for military exercises during 1989. Six RAF Tornado F3 aircraft and one RAF Sea King helicopter were deployed to Stornoway from 22 June to 30 June as part of a joint maritime course exercise (JMC 89/2); and six RAF Tornado F3 aircraft and one RAF Sea King helicopter were deployed there from 7 to 15 September

1989 as part of Exercise SHARP SPEAR. If takeoffs, landings, practice approaches and overshoots are counted as separate movements, there were 198 movements by aircraft deployed to Stornoway during JMC 89/2, and 167 during Exercise SHARP SPEAR.

Low Flying

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Western Isles are included in the revised night low flying system introduced in 1989; and what regulations are in force concerning carrying out of mock attacks or practice approaches at airfields in the Western Isles by military aircraft conducting night low flying in the area.

Mr. Neubert: The area of the Western Isles constituency is not specifically allocated for use in the structure of the revised night low flying system but night low flying activity may take place in the area under the same general regulations as apply elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Pilots wishing to carry out simulated airfield attacks or practice approaches at civil aerodromes, including Stornoway and Benbecula in the Western Isles, must obtain any necessary clearance from the relevant controlling authorities.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the numbers and types of aircraft which will be operating in and around the Highlands restricted area as part of Exercise JMC 90/1 on Wednesday 21 February; what minimum height has been authorised for fixed-wing aircraft taking part in this activity; and how many low-level sorties are planned as part of this activity.

Mr. Neubert: On Wednesday 21 February, the highland restricted area (HRA) will be activated as is usual for the purpose of terrain following radar training. Buccaneer, Hunter, Canberra, Falcon, Tornado, F-111, and some air defence and maritime patrol aircraft are expected to participate in Exercise JMC 90/1 in and around the HRA; the exact numbers of aircraft will depend on prevailing weather conditions and operational considerations. Some helicopter activity is also planned. Use of the HRA itself will be allocated as necessary to meet exercise requirements. The minimum height authorised for fixed-wing aircraft over land during the exercise will be 250 feet and some 75 fixed-wing low level sorties are anticipated in the area concerned.

Aircraft Separation

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum authorised separation *(a)* vertically and *(b)* horizontally between civil and military aircraft under the "Military Assumes Responsibility for Separation of Aircraft" provisions.

Mr. Neubert: The term military assumes responsibility for separation of aircraft (MARSA) relates solely to the separation of aircraft within a military formation operating under air traffic control. Under MARSA, the formation leader assumes responsibility for maintaining separation between the individual aircraft comprising the formation.

In regulated airspace, the normal United Kingdom criteria for separation between aircraft apply between the formation and any civil aircraft. These are a minimum of 1,000 ft vertical separation when the aircraft are flying below 29,000 ft, and a minimum of 2,000 ft vertical separation when they are flying above 29,000 ft. In the absence of vertical separation, the minimum horizontal separation is normally never less than five nautical miles. The responsibility for ensuring that these criteria are met remains with air traffic control.

Exercise JMC 90/1

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use will be made of Stornoway airport during Exercise JMC 90/1.

Mr. Neubert: Stornoway airport has not been activated for military use during Exercise JMC 90/1, although very occasionally aircraft involved in the exercise may land there to refuel.

RAF Buccaneer (Emergency Landing)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the extent of the damage to the RAF Buccaneer which made an emergency landing at Stornoway airport on 26 June 1989 following a birdstrike; where the birdstrike occurred and at what height the aircraft was flying at the time; which unit repaired the aircraft; and on what date the aircraft was flown out from Stornoway after repair.

Mr. Neubert: The Buccaneer XW 543 was struck by a single fulmar bird while flying at 100 ft above sea level, 100 nautical miles north west of Stornoway, on 26 June 1989. The aircraft landed at Stornoway airport following a satisfactory handling check by the pilot. Ground personnel from RAF Lossiemouth assessed the damage and found a crack in the windscreen quarter-light, a dented right engine intake and skin damage to the fairing between the intake and the fuselage. The aircraft was considered in a serviceable condition to fly back to RAF Lossiemouth for repair, and left Stornoway on 27 June 1989. At RAF Lossiemouth, the aircraft servicing flight replaced the damaged quarter-light and engine intake and repaired the fuselage skin and its supporting frames.

RAF Tornados (Stornoway)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the visits to Stornoway airport by RAF Tornado GR 1 aircraft on 10, 22, 27, 28 and 29 November 1989.

Mr. Neubert: On 10 November 1989, an RAF Tornado GR 1 on a routine training sortie landed at Stornoway airport to refuel. During a routine safety check it was found to be unserviceable. The four subsequent visits by Tornado GR 1 aircraft during November 1989 were for the purpose of bringing in spares for the unserviceable aircraft and changing aircrews.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the historic buildings at the royal arsenal, Woolwich, indicating when each became vacant or its current use.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is as follows:

Building	Date of construction	Category of listing	Use of date of vacation
1. Royal laboratory pavilions	1696	Grade II	Last used c1960 as workshops
2. Royal brass foundry	1717	Grade I	In use as archive store
3. Academy building	1719	Grade II	In use as mess
4. Dial square block	1717	Grade II	Last used c1964 as workshops
5. Verbruggen's house	1772	Grade II	Last used c1975 as offices
6. Grand store	1806-1813	Grade II	A proportion in use for offices and stores. Other offices last used in 1986. Remainder last used as stores c1960.
7. Middle gate house	1810	Grade II	In use as offices.
8. Riverside guard rooms	1814-15	Grade II	Last used for storage c1978.
9. New carriage store	1778	Grade II	In use as forms store.
10. Main guard house	1788	Grade II	In use as pedestrian access and offices
11. Rifle shell factory gate house	1856	Grade II	Last used c1964 for foundry offices.
12. Middle gate	c1850	Grade II	Last used as access c1970.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress of his plans to redevelop the area of the royal arsenal, Woolwich, declared surplus to defence requirements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A presentation has now been given to the London borough of Greenwich outlining our proposals for the development of the royal arsenal west site, which we intend to vacate during the period 1993 to 1995.

This is part of a continuing process leading to disposal of the site. We await the council's response to our ideas.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects his Department to *(a)* start and *(b)* complete the vacation of the royal arsenal Woolwich.

Mr. Neubert: In the spring of 1990 about 50 staff employed on Army publications will move from the royal arsenal to Woolwich common. The major occupier of the royal arsenal, the directorate general of defence quality assurance (DGDQA), is currently scheduled to be transferred progressively to Teesside between mid-1993 and the end of 1994. A number of other branches and organisations also accommodated on the site will need to vacate before DGDQA leaves.

Classified Documents

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in the Adjournment debate of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 116, to whose discretion and at what level the release of classified documents in Northern Ireland is left.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Management of classified documents in Army units in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the general officer commanding, who exercises that responsibility in accordance with the manual of army security and Queen's regulations for the Army.

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of Defence if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following private security firms are employed by the Ministry of Defence.

	Number of Contracts
Airwork Ltd.[1]	1
C. J. Bell	1
Bells (Group Services) Ltd.	1
Burns International Security Services (UK) Ltd.	6
Centuryan Security Ltd.	5
Custodian Security Guards Ltd.	1
Chubb Wardens Ltd.	1
CSE Aviation Ltd.[1]	
Grampian Specialist Dogs	1
Medway (Chatham) Dock Company Ltd.	1
Plessey Assessment Services Ltd.[1]	1
Reliance Security Services Ltd.	6
RCO Contract Services Ltd.	1
Securiguard Services Ltd.	9
Securiguard Services (Southern) Ltd.	3
Securi-Guard (South West) Ltd.	4
Securicor Ltd.	2
Serco Ltd.[1]	3
Shorrocks Guards Ltd.	2

[1] Multiactivity contracts where security is only one element.

The total value of contracts for each financial year since 1984-85 is as follows:

	£000
1984-85	350
1985-86	600
1986-87	1,100
1987-88	1,350
1988-89	1,900
1989-90	4,418

We would not wish to give information on the numbers of people employed on each contract, on security grounds. We would regard the value of each contract as commercially-in-confidence.

Pursuant to my answer to the hon. Member of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *311*, I am afraid that, owing to an element of double counting that was not previously identified, the figure given for the number of private security firms employed at present was incorrect. The true number of firms is 19, not 21. Figures for earlier years may also be affected.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: At present, paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days paid paternity leave.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing (Greenland)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amount and proportion of European Community quotas in Greenland waters was taken by *(a)* Scottish and *(b)* English vessels in each year going back to 1976.

Mr. Curry: As catches of species other than cod such as Greenland halibut and redfish are minimal, being essentially by catches, the information in the following tables is for cod catches only.

United Kingdom catches of cod at West Greenland

Year	Catches by English/Welsh registered vessels		Catches by Scottish registered vessels	
	Tonnes (live weight)	Percentage of EC quota[1]	Tonnes (live weight)	Percentage of EC quota
1976	155	n/a	—	n/a
1977	—	n/a	—	n/a
1978	—	n/a	—	n/a
1979	—	n/a	—	n/a
1980	—	n/a	—	n/a
1981	—	n/a	—	n/a
1982	—	—	—	—
1983	1,174	1·7	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—
1985	—	[2]—	—	[2]—
1986	—	[2]—	—	[2]—
1987	—	[2]—	—	[2]—
1988	858	12·3	130	1·9
1989	3,624	22·7	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Prior to 1982 there was no EC quota.
[2] 1985 to 1987 there was no EC quota because of the poor state of the stock.
[3] Not yet available.
n/a = Not applicable.
Source: MAFF, Eurostat.

United Kingdom catches of cod at East Greenland

Year	Catches by English/Welsh registered vessels		Catches by Scottish registered vessels	
	Tonnes (live weight)	Percentage of EC quota[1]	Tonnes (live weight)	Percentage of EC quota
1976	1,514	n/a	—	n/a
1977	1,393	n/a	—	n/a
1978	45	n/a	—	n/a
1979	—	n/a	—	n/a
1980	—	n/a	—	n/a
1981	—	n/a	—	n/a
1982	—	—	—	—
1983	66	0·4	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—
1985	—	—	—	—
1986	—	—	—	—
1987	—	—	—	—
1988	—	—	—	—
1989	1,295	11·3	[2]—	[2]—

[1] Prior to 1982 there was no EC quota.
[2] Not yet available.
n/a = not applicable.
Source: MAFF
Eurostat

Meat Products

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what legislation his Department is considering to ensure that blood gel plasma meat products are adequately labelled before being purchased by the consumer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Should a company decide to use this technique for the preparation of meat products it would need to ensure that the product was safe and labelled in accordance with the Food Labelling Regulations 1984. This would apply equally to home-produced and imported products. In particular, those regulations require that food labels carry details of any process which the product has undergone where the omission of such detail would mislead the consumer, details of any ingredients used in the product which would include blood enzymes, and a name for the food which would distinguish it from any other foodstuff with which it might be confused.

Misleading labelling of food is an offence under the Food Act 1984. It is not for me to suggest particular forms of words for labels. A company would need to decide what description of this or any similar process would adequately explain to its intended customers the exact nature of the foodstuff. Trading standards officers are responsible for enforcing the law; I expect that they are already aware of the development of this process but I am drawing the matter specifically to their attention.

The labelling rules apply equally to catering supplies as they do to retail sales. As part of its current labelling review I have already asked the Food Advisory Committee to look at the difficult matter of information provided to customers in restaurants, cafés or other catering outlets.

I am not aware of any British company that has decided to use this technique; nor is it my understanding that any such products are currently being marketed in the United Kingdom.

However, the Department is monitoring developments closely and I will take any further action that seems appropriate in the interest of either food safety or consumer protection.

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep farmers in each of the northern counties of England have flocks of 1,000 or more ewes.

Mr. Curry: Information on flock sizes is not available in the form requested.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish his report into the investigation of suspected poisoning of animals by pesticides in respect of 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Maclean: The 1988 report of the environmental panel of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides will be published during the second quarter of this year, while that for 1989 is scheduled for publication during the autumn.

Departmental Expenditure

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 13 February, if he will list the amount spent by his Ministry in each category given.

Mr. Gummer: The table sets out figures showing the expenditure by my Department on food R and D over the last 10 years. Data on expenditure on food quality, safety and processing are not readily available before 1984-85. Figures for research and development separately are not available.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food spending on food R and D (at current prices)

	Total food R and D Expenditure £ million	*of which primary aim*		
		Safety	*Quality*	*Processing*
		£ million		
1980-81	6·5	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	9·7	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	11·8	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983-84	12·0	n/a	n/a	n/a
1984-85	13·5	4·3	3·1	6·1
1985-86	15·1	4·5	4·0	6·7
1986-87	15·0	4·3	3·4	7·3
1987-88	15·0	[1]7·2	—	[2]7·8
1988-89	15·5	[1]8·0	—	[2]7·5
1989-90[3]	16·5	[1]8·6	—	[2]7·9

n/a Figures not readily available.
[1] change of definition. in 1987-88: aimed primarily at food safety and applied nutrition.
[2] change of definition in 1987-88: aimed primarily at food quality and technology.
[3] Provisional.

Fungicides

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for the last 10 years what research has been carried out by his Department in respect of crop fungicides alar, mancozeb, maneb and zineb; what results were obtained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department does not generally conduct research into individual pesticides. Stringent evaluations are carried out before products are approved for use, based on criteria laid down by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP). The safety in use of pesticides once approved is ensured by a wide ranging surveillance of pesticide residues in food, and monitoring of incidents involving wildlife, the results of which are published. The ACP reviews approved products causing concern; the substances listed were reviewed by the committee within the last 12 months but found to present no danger to health. The detailed evaluations supporting these findings have been made public.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation his Department has had with the United States Environmental Protection Agency in respect of crop fungicides alar, mancozeb, maneb and zineb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department maintains liaison with overseas regulatory authorities including the United States Environmental Protection Agency. In the case of daminozide (Alar) and the ethylene bisdithiocarbamates (mancozeb, maneb, and zineb) all the data which the EPA had studied together with its evaluations were made available for assessment to my Department.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation his Department has had with the World Health Organisation in respect of crop fungicides alar, mancozeb, maneb and zineb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is represented on the FAO/WHO Codex committee on pesticide residues which meets annually. This committee considers recommendations for maximum residue levels and acceptable daily intakes, and has discussed the active ingredients daminozide (used in the product Alar) mancozeb, maneb and zineb.

Helicopters

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department issues on the use of helicopters near horses and other animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of any particular problems caused by helicopters near horses or farm animals and the Department has not issued specific advice on this issue.

Pressure Stock Licences

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has had any representations about claims by official receivers that pressure stock licences given to individuals under entitlement are company rather than individual assets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have not received any representations in these terms. Fisheries Departments issue licences both to individuals and to companies in respect of named vessels. Most licences are transferable between vessels and between owners, provided that conditions attached to licence transfer are met. Transferable licences thus acquire a financial value and can be either company or individual assets, depending on the particular circumstances.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to review the scope and wording of pressure stock licences.

Mr. Curry: The scope and wording of pressure stock licences are kept under constant review.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the legal status of all pressure stock licences; and if he has any further plans to review the future of the licensing regime.

Mr. Curry: Pressure stock licences are granted at the discretion of Fisheries Ministers, and within an announced framework of rules, using powers from section 4 of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967, as amended, and the Sea Fish (Licensing) Order 1989, as amended. The licensing scheme is kept under constant review.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the monetary value of pressure stock licences that his Department assumes when licences are given to or acquired by individuals under entitlement.

Mr. Curry: Pressure stock licences acquire monetary value in so far as they are transferable between vessels and between owners. These values are matters for the buyers and sellers concerned and my Department makes no assumptions about them.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what distinction his Department draws between the monetary values of pressure stock licences held by individuals and those by companies; and what assessment he has made of the level of trading in licences which takes place.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to his separate question on the value of licences. Under the current rules, licences can only be transferred between owners upon application to the Fisheries Departments when the vessel to which the licence applies is sold. Vessels are regularly traded both by companies and individuals, and the prices set are matters for negotiation between the individuals or companies concerned.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of the farm woodland scheme; and if he will indicate the area taken into the scheme; expenditure *(a)* incurred to date and *(b)* committed for the future; and what is his estimate of common agricultural policy savings resulting from the scheme.

Mr. Curry: In the first 16 months of the farm woodland scheme applications to plant a total of 9,740 hectares throughout the United Kingdom have been received. United Kingdom expenditure incurred as at the end of January 1990 amounted to £1,378,000 for planting grants and £240,347 in annual payments. United Kingdom future expenditure commitments in respect of approvals to plant as at the end of January 1990 amount to £6,519,097 for planting grants and annual payments of £1,112,004 per year. An estimate of common agricultural policy savings resulting from the scheme will be made as part of the review of the scheme in 1991.

Catering Facilities

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of installing *(a)* a ministerial dining room in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* a new kitchen as part of that installation; what company manufactured the kitchen units; and what was their country of origin.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: During refurbishment of the building, one room is being furnished to serve mainly as a conference room and to double as a dining room when necessary. The cost of works and furnishings is approximately £8,500. The kitchen replaces a wholly inadequate kitchen facility. The cost of units, appliances and works is approximately £9,800. The work was carried out by a British firm following competitive tender. All the kitchen units are of British manufacture and mainly of British wood.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Residential Care

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the basic weekly costs of care in a nursing home for (a) the elderly, *(b)* Alzheimer's disease sufferers and *(c)* the physically disabled; and what levels of income support are available to people in each of these categories.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that figures are not available in the form requested. The levels of fees charged are a matter between proprietors and residents or their relatives and will depend upon various factors, including the facilities available and the degree of care provided.

The levels of income support available are dependent on the type of care a person receives and are subject to national limits. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 25 October at column 841 the limits to be introduced in April.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received calling for extra Government assistance to be available to income support dependent elderly persons, Alzheimer's disease sufferers and the physically disabled in residential homes where charges are in excess of income support levels.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have received a number of representations from a variety of interested organisations and individuals.

National Insurance Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each change in national insurance benefit entitlement since 1979 and the number of claimants affected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 26 January 1989 to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) at columns *712-14*, which listed the main changes to national insurance benefits since 1979. The numbers affected by each of these changes could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Further changes occurring since that reply are given in the table.

	Financial year change introduced	*Number affected*
UB abatement for occupational/personal pension reduced from age 60 to 55	1988-89 and 1989-90	45,000 in a full year
Weekly earnings rule introduced for UB	1989-90	5,000 at any one time
UB "full extent normal" rule—de minimis provision	1989-90	1,000 at any one time
"Actively seeking work" test for UB	1989-90	[1] 50,000
Abolition of pensioners earnings rule	1989-90	400,000 approx.
Widows: revised entitlement conditions for women widowed before April 1988	1989-90	20,000 approx.

[1] Includes unemployed people receiving Income Support only.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each change since 1979 in the Exchequer subsidy to the national insurance fund and the annual savings made by each change; and what is the cumulative saving to the Exchequer since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated reduction in payments from the Consolidated Fund to the national insurance fund as a result of changes in the Treasury supplement for the financial years from 1979-80 to 1988-89 is shown in the table.

Year	*Per cent.*	*Amount (£ million)*	*Notional amount*[1] *(£ million)*	*Reduction (£ million)*
1979-80	18	2,343	—	—
1980-81	18	2,848	—	—
1981-82	14·5	2,433	3,020	587
1982-83	13	2,591	2,890	299
1983-84	13	2,807	—	—
1984-85	11	2,597	3,069	472
1985-86	9	2,163	2,644	481
1986-87	9	2,412	—	—
1987-88	7	2,135	2,745	610
1988-89	5	1,653	2,314	661

[1] This is an assumed figure, had the Treasury supplement remained at the level for the previous year.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Paternity leave is not available to civil servants at present. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Greater Manchester area will be eligible for the community charge rebate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that reliable estimates of numbers of recipients cannot be provided on a detailed regional basis. The models used by this Department produce estimates of the numbers of people expected to receive community charge benefit, not of numbers who may be eligible.

Pensioners (Incomes)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures on pensioners' incomes; and what were the comparable figures in 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Newton: Detailed analysis, recently completed, of data from the 1987 family expenditure survey shows that the average pensioners' total net income increased by over 31 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1987. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the individual components which contributed towards this increase.

Table 1—Pensioners' Incomes

	1974	*1979*	*1987*	*real terms increase 1979-87 Per cent.*	*real terms increase 1974-79*
Total social security benefits	45·00	50·50	59·20	17	12
Occupational pensions	11·80	13·20	23·30	77	12
Savings income	10·70	9·10	20·90	130	−16
Earnings	13·60	9·90	7·90	−20	−27
Total gross income	81·10	82·80	111·20	34	2
Total net income	73·80	75·90	99·90	31	3

Notes:
1. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
2. £s per week at 1987 prices.

The analysis also shows that the proportion of pensioners in the lowest quintile of income distribution fell from 38 per cent. in 1979 to 24 per cent. in 1987. Pensioners who receive all of their income from state benefits have experienced a real increase of more than 27 per cent. over the same period. The figures also show that the average pensioners' gross income represented 61 per cent. of the average earnings of all manual workers.

In 1987 a total of 73 per cent. of all pensioners received income from savings and the average amount that they received was £28·40. Also, 52 per cent. of all pensioners had an occupational pension and the average amount received was £44·80. Table 2 shows the comparable figures for 1974 and 1979.

Table 2—Pensioners' Income from Savings and Occupational Pensions 1974, 1979 and 1987

	1974	*1979*	*1987*
Percentage of pensioners with savings income	53·0	62·0	73·0
Average amount received from Savings Income (£ per week)	20·50	14·60	28·40
Percentage of pensioners with Occupational Pensions	35·0	41·0	52·0
Average amount received from Occupational Pension (£ per week)	33·70	32·10	44·80

Notes:
1. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
2. £s per week at 1987 prices.
3. Averages are for those who actually received savings income/occupational pensions.

Computers

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the date on which the invitation to tender to run the social security computer operation at Norcross, Lancashire was published in the Official Journal of the European Commission;

(2) what was the date on which the invitation to tender to run the social security computer operations at Livingston was published in the Official Journal of the European Commission.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not the practice to publish in the Official Journal of the European Commission invitations to tender for service contracts such as those for the area computer centres at Norcross and Livingston.

Rents

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has about the difference between rent officer determination and market rents since the implementation of new restrictions under the housing benefit regulations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information supplied by rent officers is being collected by the Department of the Environment and will be published in due course.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision exists to ensure that if rents are increased as a result of inclusive private sector rents becoming net rents after the abolition of the rating system such increases are not caught by subsidy restrictions imposed by rent officer determination.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We intend to introduce arrangements in the 1990-91 subsidy order to allow authorities to receive full subsidy on housing benefit paid in respect of any element of rent which, prior to 1990, was treated as rates. When the rent is next referred to the rent officer in the normal way (after a maximum of 12 months), the rent officer will look at the full charge, and the subsequent position will depend on the new determination.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the income tax yield would be were all incomes below £100 zero rated, and incomes at £100 per week rated at 1 per cent., with each £4 rise in income incurring a further 1 per cent. increase in tax up to a limit of 40 per cent. tax rate for incomes of £260 per week and above.

Mr. Lilley: At 1990-91 levels of income, the yield in a full year under the proposed rate schedule would be some £10 billion less than under the 1989-90 income tax rates and allowances indexed by 7·7 per cent. to 1990-91.

The estimate allows for the start of independent taxation in April 1990. It is based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and is therefore provisional.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children are estimated to have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold; and what proportion this represents of all families with children.

Mr. Lilley: In 1989-90 it is estimated that some 1·6 million families with children have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold. These represent about 23 per cent. of all families with children. The estimates are based on a projection of the 1987 family expenditure survey and are therefore provisional.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of income tax collected from people resident in Wales during 1988-89, or the latest year for which figures are available; and how much of this arose from payments made at *(a)* the standard rate and *(b)* the higher rate of tax.

Mr. Lilley: The latest available information covers residents of Wales in 1987-88 and is in terms of liabilities rather than tax collected. Total income tax was about £1·5 billion of which some £65 million was in respect of tax in excess of the basic rate.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the review into the relocation of Customs and Excise activities will be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At the moment I have nothing to add to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 15 November (*Official Report*, column *316*) but I hope to be able to make a statement shortly.

Interest Rates

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families *(a)* with children and *(b)* without have lost more as a result of increased interest

rates since the Budget of 1988 than they have gained as a result of Budget changes made in 1988 and 1989; and what are the amounts by which they are worse or better off at various total income levels.

Mr. Lilley: Families will have benefited from many Budget measures since 1988, with the size of the gain depending on a range of other factors as well as total income levels. Many families will also have seen other changes in their circumstances since March 1988. There is thus no satisfactory basis on which to answer the hon. Member's question.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax relief has gone to the BES on residential property; and what his estimate is of the BES tax relief on residential property in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Lilley: The cost of BES tax relief on residential property in 1988-89 is provisionally estimated as £110 million. Costs in 1989-90 and 1990-91 will depend on take-up.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what areas of activity have been outlawed from BES investments over the last three years; and how much tax was forgone for ongoing BES investment made in these areas in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Nearly all trades qualify under the business expansion scheme. A trade does not qualify if it consists to a substantial extent of non-qualifying activities; these are set out in section 297 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. No activities have been added to this list in the past three years.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has for each of the years of the existence of BES on the percentage and amount of BES money invested in residential and assured tenancy schemes.

Mr. Lilley: The business expansion scheme was extended to include investment in private rented housing in 1988-89 and £350 million was invested. This comprises about 85 per cent. of total BES investment in the year. Information is not available for 1989-90.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has for each of the years of the existence of BES of *(a)* the cost of BES to the Exchequer, *(b)* the percentage of investments made by high rate taxpayers, *(c)* the cost to the Exchequer divided into top rate and other taxpayers and *(d)* the number of net new jobs created as a result of BES.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated cost of BES tax relief for 1983-84 to 1989-90 is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	50
1984-85	75
1985-86	85
1986-87	95
1987-88	110
[1]1988-89	130

[1] Provisional.

A forecast of £60 million for the cost of relief for the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 was published in the Government's expenditure plans, 1990-91 to 1992-93 (chapter 21, reference CM1021, appendix F), but no information is yet available centrally from official sources to provide a reliable estimate of the outturn.

Information is not available on the percentage of investments made by higher rate taxpayers, the cost to the Exchequer divided into top rate and other taxpayers, and the number of net new jobs created as a result of BES.

Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in current prices, *(b)* in 1988-89 prices and *(c)* in 1990-91 prices to those earning £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £25,000, £30,000, £40,000, £50,000, £60,000, and £70,000 as a result of changes in taxation and national insurance since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of the annual change in liability resulting from the changes in income tax rates, allowances, and thresholds and national insurance contribution rates and limits are in the table. All estimates are based on a provisional 1989-90 income base projected from the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1989-90 levels by reference to the statutory formula and national insurance contribution limits have been indexed by the change in the RPI between October 1977 and October 1988. The post-October 1989 NIC rates are used for 1989-90.

For the purposes of these calculations, the indexed regimes of 1978-79 are directly applied to the income base of 1989-90. In practice, retention of these regimes, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Average reduction in income tax and National Insurance contributions per tax unit[1] in 1989-90 compared with 1978-79 indexed regimes

£ per annum

Range of total income in 1989-90 (£)	*At 1988-89 prices*	*At 1989-90 prices*	*At 1990-91 prices*
Under 5,000	140	150	160
5,000 to 10,000	290	310	320
10,000 to 15,000	510	550	590
15,000 to 20,000	680	730	780
20,000 to 25,000	960	1,030	1,090
25,000 to 30,000	1,360	1,470	1,550
30,000 to 40,000	2,070	2,220	2,360
40,000 to 50,000	3,860	4,150	4,400
50,000 to 60,000	6,390	6,870	7,280
60,000 to 70,000	9,540	10,260	10,870
Over 70,000	29,970	32,220	34,150
Total all incomes	870	930	990

[1] Married couples and single people paying either income tax or NIC under the 1978-79 indexed regimes.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the reduction in annual liability to *(a)* capital gains tax and *(b)* capital transfer tax in 1989-90 and 1990-91 as against the 1979-80 indexed regime, specifying in each case the total and average reduction per taxpayer as well as the number of taxpayers in each year;

(2) what is the reduction in annual liability to *(a)* capital gains tax and *(b)* capital transfer tax in

1989-90 and 1990-91 as against the 1978-79 indexed regime specifying in each case the total and average reduction per taxpayer as well as the number of taxpayers in each year.

Mr. Lilley: Latest available estimates for 1989-90 and for 1990-91, based on the 1989-90 regime with statutory indexation, are as follows:

	Head of tax and regime for comparison			
	Capital gains tax		*Capital transfer tax/Inheritance tax*	
	Indexed 1978-79	*Indexed 1979-80*	*Indexed 1978-79*	*Indexed 1979-80*
Reduction under present regime in:				
Total liability (£ million):				
1989-90	1,400	1,450	680	820
1990-91	1,350	1,400	650	780
Average liability[1] (£):				
1989-90	2,100	1,950	8,900	10,100
1990-91	2,450	2,300	9,400	10,400
Taxpayer numbers (thousands)				
Indexed regime:				
1989-90	670	730	77	81
1990-91	550	600	68	75

[1] The reduction in the average liability is calculated using estimated numbers of taxpayers under the indexed 1978-79 or 1979-80 regime.

The numbers of taxpayers based on the tax regimes in force in 1989-90 and in 1990-91, assuming statutory indexation of the 1989-90 regimes, are:

thousands

	Capital gains tax	*Inheritance tax*
1989-90	180	26
1990-91	150	22

The figures for capital gains tax exclude capital gains realised by companies and taxed within corporation tax. For each tax, the 1989-90 and 1990-91 tax bases are taken as given. It is not possible to determine to what extent changes to the taxes between 1978-79 or 1979-80 and the present may have affected the levels of transfers and disposals. The above comparisons can therefore be regarded as no more than indicative of the orders of magnitude involved.

Incomes

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the investment income and earned income in 1988-89 and 1989-90 of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 20 per cent., *(d)* the top 30 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates are given in the table. They are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. All estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty since some investment income on which tax is deducted at source is not reflected in the survey.

Total investment income and earned income

(£ billion)

Group of income taxpayers	*1988-89*		*1989-90*	
	Investment Income	*Earned Income*	*Investment Income*	*Earned Income*
Top 1 per cent.	4·5	14·7	5·8	16·2
Top 5 per cent.	9·1	43·2	11·6	47·7
Top 10 per cent.	11·9	68·6	15·6	75·5
Top 20 per cent.	15·8	107·6	20·8	118·5
Top 25 per cent.	17·2	124·2	22·7	136·8
Bottom 70 per cent.	9·8	119·4	12·6	131·9
Bottom 50 per cent.	6·2	69·9	7·9	77·1
All taxpayers	28·1	259·0	36·9	285·2

Privatisations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the maximum number of individuals who have owned shares in each of the privatised companies; and how many individuals currently hold shares in those companies.

Mr. Lilley: The information the hon. Member requested is as follows. Information for the 10 water companies is not yet available. The latest Treasury/stock exchange survey showed that in 1989 there were 9 million individual shareholders in the United Kingdom, three times as many as in 1979.

Company	*Date of Privatisation*	*Size of share register*		
		Initial	*Highest since Privatisation*	*Current*[1]
British Petroleum	[2]December 1977	67,750	6,212,000 (December 1988)	
British Aerospace	[3]February 1981	155,000	120,200 (December 1986)	105,800 (December 1988)
Cable and Wireless	[4]October 1981	26,000	211,000 (March 1986)	170,146 (March 1989)
Amersham International	February 1982	63,760	8,601 (January 1982)	5,584 (January 1989)
Britoil	[5]November 1982	37,257	241,000	—

Company	Date of Privatisation	Size of share register Initial	Highest since Privatisation	Current[1]
Associated British Ports	[6]February 1983	37,205	12,321 (July 1989)	
Enterprise Oil	June 1984	13,700	14,166 (January 1985)	9,553 (December 1988)
Jaguar	July 1984	125,000	64,126 (November 1984)	42,000 (March 1989)
British Telecom	November 1984	2,051,373	1,649,722 (November 1985)	1,203,243 (March 1989)
British Gas	December 1986	4,407,100	3,100,000 (July 1987)	2,661,018 (January 1989)
British Airways	February 1987	1,100,000	450,000 (July 1987)	338,350 (May 1989)
Rolls Royce	May 1987	2,000,000	925,000 (December 1987)	846,950 (December 1988)
BAA	July 1987	2,187,500	1,064,815 (January 1988)	889,067 (January 1989)
British Steel	December 1988	650,000	400,000 (January 1989)	

[1] Figures taken from the latest available reports and accounts.
[2] Three further sales in November 1979, September 1983 and October 1987.
[3] There was a second issue in May 1985 with 260,000 successful applications.
[4] Two further issues took place in November 1983 and December 1988.
[5] Second issue in August 1985 with 241,000 successful applicants. Became a BP subsidiary in 1988.
[6] A sale of the residual shareholding took place in April 1984.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much corporation tax was collected between 1984 and 1988 as a result of major public companies selling their leasing subsidiaries; and how many of these arrangements are monitored by the special investigations section.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of energy costs allowed against United Kingdom companies' liability to corporation tax in each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are currently taken by the Inland Revenue to check that company expenditure offset against corporation tax as general company expenses is not being used to fund donations to political parties or organisations.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue takes the same action in relation to political donations as to any other expenditure not allowable for tax purposes.

Companies (Leasing Subsidiaries)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax has been *(a)* assessed and *(b)* collected from those financial institutions that funded the purchase of major public companies' leasing subsidiaries between 1984-88, in respect of these arrangements.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Inland Revenue towards the sale by public companies of their leasing subsidiaries between 1984-88 and towards the scope for tax avoidance afforded the purchaser; and what assessment, in these circumstances, the Inland Revenue makes of the true value of the transaction.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue examines such transactions to ensure that they are dealt with properly for tax purposes.

Leasing Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Inland Revenue, in assessing leasing schemes for tax relief, in respect of establishing that the taxpayer has, in fact, completed meetings and signed documents on the dates claimed; and what are the Inland Revenue manpower considerations involved.

Mr. Lilley: As in other areas of investigation, whatever steps seem appropriate in individual cases are taken to verify the facts where there are doubts about the true sequence of events. It is not possible to isolate the manpower costs associated with such verifications.

Personal Data

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many members of staff in the Inland Revenue have been disciplined for breaching internal regulations on the disclosure of personal data within the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: During the years 1985 to 1989 inclusive, nine Inland Revenue officers have been formally disciplined for improperly disclosing confidential taxpayer information.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the procedure within the Inland Revenue for authorising transfers of personal data to other Government Departments; and at what level such decisions are authorised.

Mr. Lilley: The Revenue's procedure is to refer all requests for disclosure of personal data to a nominated officer at not less than grade 7 in the Revenue's head office. As regards the arrangements for local exchanges of information between the Revenue and Customs and Excise, I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, then Financial Secretary, gave on 8 March 1988, (*Official Report*, column *128*), to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what grounds decisions are taken to transfer personal data held by the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments;

(2) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(3) what kind of personal data held by the Inland Revenue, whether on computer or manually, are transferred to other Government Departments;

(4) what records are kept of transfers of personal data from the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments; and whether the Data Protection Registrar has access to the relevant records.

Mr. Lilley: Personal data held by the Inland Revenue are not disclosed to other Government Departments except as required by statute. Many routine exchanges of information under statute are made on a day-to-day basis and not recorded for statistical purposes. The legislation under which disclosures to other Government Departments are made is as follows:

Statute	*Recipient*	*Nature of disclosure*
Section 129 Land Registration Act 1925	Land Registry	Particulars of land and changes.
Section 9 Charities Act 1960 as amended by Section 33 Finance Act 1986	Charity Commissioners	*(a)* Information to establish charitable status; purpose of the institution and details of the trusts under which it is regulated. *(b)* Information on non-charitable activities and non-charitable applications of funds.
Section 58 Finance Act 1959	Department of Employment (which is authorised to pass information also to other Departments and various local bodies)	Names and addresses of employers operating PAYE schemes. Number of employees in each scheme.
Section 816 Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988	Foreign treaty partners	Details required under dual taxation agreements.
Section 127 Finance Act 1972	Customs and Excise	Anything required to assist in performance of Customs and Excise duties.
Section 77 Finance Act 1978	EEC tax authorities	Information required by treaty.
Section 1 Tenants' Rights, etc. (Scotland) Act 1980	Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Housing Corporation	*(a)* Information to determine status of housing associations. *(b)* Whether charitable exemptions under Section 505(1), Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 have been refused.
Section 25 Social Security and Housing Benefit Act 1987	Department of Social Security	Information under Schedule E (as for Section 59 Social Security Act 1986).
Section 26 and Schedule 7, Paragraph 12, Finance Act 1982	Department of Environment	Information regarding option mortgages.
Section 62 Housing Associations Act 1985	Department of Environment	Information to determine whether housing associations qualify for DOE grant in respect of certain tax liabilities.
Section 59 Social Security Act 1986	Department of Social Security (and Department of Employment as their agent for Unemployment Benefits)	*(a)* Information on Schedule E Income Tax and Class 1 National Insurance Contributions paid. *(b)* Dates of start and cessation of businesses chargeable to tax under Case I or II of Schedule D.
Section 8 Parliamentary Commissioner 1967	Parliamentary Commissioner (Administration)	Any information required by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the purposes of his investigations.
Section 8 National Audit Act 1983	National Audit Office	Any information required for the purposes of National Audit Office's examinations.

Statute	Recipient	Nature of disclosure
Section 17 Protection Act 1984	Data Protection Registrar or Data Protection Tribunal	Any information Data necessary for discharge of their functions under the Act.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what statutory basis transfers of personal data take place from the Inland Revenue to the police; and how many such transfers take place each year;

(2) what kinds of personal data held by the Inland Revenue are transferred to the police; and whether records are kept of such transfers.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue discloses personal information to the police under the following sections:

Section 27, Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986—Information relevant to investigation of an offence under the Act (by order of Circuit Judge/Sheriff).

Section 17, and Schedule 7, Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989—Information relevant to investigation of offence under the Act (by order of Circuit Judge/Sheriff or Secretary of State for Northern Ireland).

There were 107 disclosures in 1988-89 under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act has only recently come into operation.

In all other cases the Revenue claims immunity from disclosure on grounds of public interest unless the police are acting on the Revenue's behalf or the police inquiries are directly relevant to the investigation of the serious crimes of murder or treason. There is no record of the number of such disclosures.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what internal guidelines covering the transfer of personal data to other Government Departments are available to staff in the Inland Revenue; and whether he will place a copy of any such guidelines in the Library.

Mr. Lilley: Detailed instructions are incorporated in numerous manuals dealing with each of the Revenue's areas of work. A notice reminding all staff of their personal responsibility was issued recently. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans exist in the Inland Revenue for the transfer of personal data via the Government data network; and what new procedures have been adopted to prevent unauthorised transfers of such data.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue at present transfers large quantities of personal data over a private network of lines leased from British Telecom. These transfers take place solely between Inland Revenue offices. There are plans to absorb the whole of this existing network into the Government data network and to validate these plans a pilot operation is currently running in the Greater Manchester region. The stringent controls which already exist in the Revenue network to prevent the unauthorised transfer of personal data will remain in force when the network becomes part of the Government data network and no new procedures are envisaged or thought necessary.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether records will be kept of all personal data, transferred from the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments via the Government data network.

Mr. Lilley: There are no plans to transfer any personal data from the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments via the Government data network.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the rules governing the transfer of personal data from the Inland Revenue to other Government Departments are the same for data held manually as for data held on computer.

Mr. Lilley: Yes.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts would be payable each month at today's interest rates and at the lowest interest rate in the last three months on a standard repayment mortgage which was adjusted in line with the change of interest rate and repayable over 25 years of *(a)* £10,000, *(b)* £20,000, *(c)* £30,000, *(d)* £40,000 and *(e)* £50,000.

Mr. Lilley: The monthly mortgage interest payments after deduction of basic rate tax relief for an endowment mortgage are given in the table, based on a 14·5 per cent. mortgage interest rate and on the 13·5 per cent. rate which existed until November:

Mortgage (£)	*Monthly payment (£)*	
	13·5 per cent. interest rate	*14·5 per cent. interest rate*
10,000	84·38	90·63
20,000	168·75	181·25
30,000	253·13	271·88
40,000	365·63	392·71
50,000	478·13	513·54

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount payable in mortgage interest each year since 1979 as a percentage of *(a)* disposable incomes and *(b)* consumer expenditure.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimates are as follows:

	Mortgage interest payable as a percentage of	
	Personal disposable income (a)	*Consumer's expenditure (b)*
1979	3·5	4·0
1980	4·4	5·1
1981	4·4	5·1
1982	4·9	5·5
1983	4·5	5·0
1984	5·3	5·9
1985	6·7	7·4
1986	6·6	7·1
1987	7·0	7·4
1988	7·3	7·6

Energy Management

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the cost in 1988-89 of increasing the investment allowance on contract energy management schemes from 25 to 40 per cent. per annum;

(2) what was the investment level in, and value of tax allowances given on investment by business in energy-saving equipment and schemes during 1988-89.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information needed to answer these questions is not available.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the Inland Revenue has *(a)* assessed, *(b)* collected, *(c)* written off following settlement or other reasons and *(d)* still to collect from taxpayers who engaged in corporate tax avoidance schemes involving section 64(11) type leases where banks claim allowances on assets leased to local authorities.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the Inland Revenue has *(a)* assessed, *(b)* collected, *(c)* written off following settlement or other reasons and *(d)* still to collect from taxpayers who engaged in corporate tax avoidance schemes known as film schemes and structured in such a way as to exploit capital allowance legislation by enabling companies to buy in tax losses artificially.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the Inland Revenue has *(a)* assessed, *(b)* collected, *(c)* written off following settlement or other reasons and *(d)* still to collect from taxpayers who engaged in corporate tax avoidance schemes known as funded lease schemes involving hire purchase and leaseback, and other schemes along similar lines.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the Inland Revenue has *(a)* assessed, *(b)* collected, *(c)* written off following settlement or other reasons and *(d)* still to collect from taxpayers who engaged in corporate tax avoidance schemes along the lines of film schemes.

Mr. Lilley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will extend section 20 of the Taxes Management Act to cover those who are actively promoting tax avoidance schemes.

Mr. Lilley: Amendments to section 20 made in the Finance Acts 1988 and 1989 already cover this matter.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to prevent tax avoidance promoters from exporting key documents required by the Inland Revenue to the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands or other offshore tax havens.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to section 145 of last year's Finance Act.

Advisers and Banks

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to extend section 20 of the Taxes Management Act to cover professional advisers and banks located in the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Gibraltar.

Mr. Lilley: No. Those territories have their own tax administrations.

Mr. Patrick Taylor

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider amending section 20 of the Taxes Management Act in the light of the Revenue's legal cases with Mr. Patrick Taylor.

Mr. Lilley: An appeal is pending in this matter and comment would be inappropriate.

Overseas Trusts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation requiring the trustees and settlers of overseas trusts to appear before the appropriate tax authorities and the courts.

Mr. Lilley: There are existing powers enabling the general and special commissioners to summon any person (other than the appellant) to appear before them and give evidence.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to enable the Inland Revenue to freeze the activities of overseas trusts pending the trustees and settlers' co-operation with the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lilley: It is not clear what activities the hon. Member wishes to freeze.

Residential Property

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the average ratio of capital values to rateable values of freehold residential property in each region in 1988.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide a breakdown on a regional basis for the 1988 public sector figures in table 15.3 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989", distinguishing: *(a)* freehold and *(b)* leasehold residential properties sold to (i) individuals and (ii) others.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that reliable information is not available at the level of detail requested. Available information is in the tables:

Property sales in 1988 by the public sector

	Number (000)	*Value (£ million)*
A. By Region		
North	11	189
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	216

	Number (000)	Value (£ million)
East Midlands	12	306
East Anglia	7	259
South East	40	1,643
Greater London	29	1,763
South West	17	449
West Midlands	19	382
North West	15	337
Wales	10	158
England and Wales	171	5,703
B. By type of property		
Residential freehold	130	2,501
Residential leasehold	31	619
Land	6	1,311
Other freehold	2	759
Other leasehold	3	511
All types of property	171	5,703
C. By type of buyer		
Individuals	164	3,080
Property companies	3	1,518
Public Sector	1	109
Financial Institutions	[1]—	243
Others	3	754
All buyers	171	5,703

[1]— = less than 500.
Source: Survey of Conveyancing 1988.

Housing (Essex)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide for the districts of Basildon, Harlow and Thurrock the number and rateable value of houses and so on, with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Age Allowances

Mr Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes there have been in policy on the award of age allowances.

Mr. Lilley: Under independent taxation, which starts on 6 April 1990, the present single and married age allowances will be replaced by age-related levels of the new personal and married couple's allowances. A wife aged 65 or over will be entitled to an age-related personal allowance in her own right, if her own income is below the income limit for the higher allowance levels. She will be able to set her personal allowance against any kind of income. As a result of this and other changes introduced with independent taxation some three quarters of all elderly married couples who currently pay tax will pay less tax, and some 180,000 will be taken out of tax altogether.

Retail Sales

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the basis upon which the Central Statistical Office calculates the monthly retail sales figures; upon how many returns from retailers these statistics are based; and what types and sizes of retailers are represented in the sample to ensure that the sample is a true reflection of the overall structure of the retailing industry.

Mr. Lilley: The monthly retail sales figures are based on a voluntary inquiry which collects figures of turnover from a sample of 3,500 retailers covering about 60 per cent. of total retail sales. Provisional estimates of the monthly index are based on nearly 2,000 returns; the final index incorporates about 2,800 replies. All types and sizes of retailers are included in the sample. The method of calculation of the index uses information on the overall structure of retailing and is designed to ensure that the index is a good measure of changes in total retail sales.

Further details of the survey are given in "Monthly Retail Sales Inquiry: Summary of Principles and Procedures", a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Third-world Debts

Miss Hoey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount of tax relief banks receive when setting aside money as a provision for non-payment of Third-world debts; what is the time limit on this tax relief; and whether banks can retain this relief indefinitely or use this money for purposes other than writing off debt payments.

Mr. Lilley: Banks are entitled to make a deduction from their profits for tax for provisions they make against non-payment of loans, including loans to sovereign debtors, to the extent that the loan is estimated to be irrecoverable. The amount estimated to be irrecoverable has to be agreed with the Inland Revenue. Once a deduction has been agreed, there is no limit on the time a bank may retain the provision, but if the debt is repaid, or if prospects for recovery improve, the tax relief is clawed back. The making of provisions reduces a bank's profit or creates a loss, it does not provide money for other purposes.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Hong Kong (United Kingdom Assets)

Mr. Heseltine: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what calculations he has made of the value of United Kingdom assets in Hong Kong.

Mr. Major: Information is available only for certain categories. The latest information for direct investment is for end-1987 when the book value of United Kingdom direct investment in Hong Kong was £1,924 million. There is no information on United Kingdom portfolio investment by country. Information is available on external assets and claims on Hong Kong by banks and other financial institutions in the United Kingdom. (See table 14 of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin.*) At end-September 1989 United Kingdom liabilities to Hong Kong were £18,781 million whilst United Kingdom claims on Hong Kong were £18,446 million.

Import Duties (Brize Norton)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the sum collected at RAF Brize Norton by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in import duties for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: Revenue collected at RAF Brize Norton for the financial year ended 31 March 1989 totalled £62,300. Separate figures for VAT, Customs and Excise duties are not available. No anti-dumping duties or agricultural levies were collected.

Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount collected in tax and national insurance contributions by central Government as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1977-78; and what is his estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: From 1977-78 to 1988-89 available information is included on the CSO database in the following series (identified by their database codes):

Total CG taxes and NICs	(GTEA-ADAB)
GDP(A)	(CAOB)

On the basis of the Autumn Statement forecast, the percentage for 1989-90 is 33·2.

Rateable Values, South-West

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide for the districts of Plymouth, Bristol and Kingswood, the number and rateable value of houses etc. with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800-£1,000, *(d)* £1,000-£1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Poultry Statistics

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds 10-day import/export figures have ceased to be made available to the poultry industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The 10-day information contained provisional, unverified data which could be misleading and it was therefore decided that as from February 1990 only verified monthly statistics would be published.

HEALTH

City and Hackney District Health Authority

14. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to visit City and Hackney district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: I hope to visit St. Bartholomew's and Homerton hospitals in the next few months.

Abortion

15. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the selective reductions undertaken at Humana hospital have been registered as abortions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This hospital is approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967. The abortion notification forms completed by operating practitioners cover the method used to secure termination but do not require the practitioner to specify whether the termination has been a selective reduction.

Hospital Medical Staff

16. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the contents of the interim report on patterns of hospital medical staffing.

53. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the contents of the interim report on patterns of hospital medical staffing.

71. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the contents of the interim report on patterns of hospital medical staffing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report contains some useful information, but it covers the period before we launched two initiatives on junior doctors' hours of work in 1988 and 1989. It cannot, therefore, be expected to reflect the considerable progress made since then. That is not to say that I am complacent about some of the issues contained in the report and I have called all the interested parties together to discuss what solutions can be found jointly to reduce the hours our junior doctors have to work.

Income Generation Schemes

17. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has as to the amount likely to be raised in income generation schemes by the National Health Service in 1989-90.

Mr. Roger Freeman: A total of £28 million.

Social Workers

18. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received regarding the implications of shortages of local authority social workers.

58. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received regarding the implications of shortages of local authority social workers.

64. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received regarding the implications of shortages of local authority social workers.

105. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received regarding the implications of shortages of local authority social workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have had a number of representations about the problems faced by some local authorities, particularly in London, in attracting and retaining suitably qualified social workers.

Resource Management Initiative

19. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether further progress will be made with the resource management initiative in the coming financial year.

Mr. Freeman: The National Health Service Management Executive has been discussing with the National Health Service details of the programme for the coming financial year for which the Government have made available an additional £78 million. Fifty more hospitals in England have been chosen to prepare and implement the main resource management programme in 1990-91. Since my announcement last March about the extension of the programme a total of 100 hospitals have been selected to implement the main resource management process. We are proceeding at a pace that the service can sustain in setting up project management teams and purchasing computer equipment. This is backed-up with guidance from the Management Executive on the best way to proceed.

Medical Audit

20. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give further details of the recently announced £31 million allocation for medical audit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Most of this money—£24 million—is being allocated to regional health authorities to help doctors in hospital and community health services set up new systems of quality control of clinical services known as medical audit. In addition, about £5 million will be used by family practitioner committees to further the development of medical audit in general practice and £2 million will be used to fund audit initiatives proposed by the medical royal colleges and other professional bodies.

Drug Budgets

21. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the Health Reform Group to discuss the proposals relating to the management of indicative drug budgets.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met the Health Reform Group formally on 9 January 1990 and had a wide-ranging discussion on our proposed National Health Service reforms which it warmly supports.

106. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the proposed indicative drug budgets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received 766 representations specifically referring to the proposals on indicative prescribing budgets. In addition we have received some 14,000 representations about the White Paper proposals in general, many of which have raised questions about, amongst other things, indicative prescribing budgets. Many of the letters concern the availability of medicines under the new system. As representations of the profession accept general practitioners will be able to continue to prescribe all the medicines which individual patients might need.

Stone House Hospital

22. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding proposals to change the status of the Stone House hospital at Bishop's Castle.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware of only five inquiries, in the form of letters received direct from members of the public.

British Medical Association

23. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the British Medical Association; and what subjects were discussed.

29. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the British Medical Association; and what subjects were discussed.

43. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the British Medical Association; and what subjects were discussed.

76. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met members of the general medical services committee on 14 February when the report of the doctors and dentists review body and the pay of doctors and dentists were discussed.

Carers

24. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the need for carers to be able to request an assessment under the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In practice requests for local authority services will often, as at present, come from carers rather than from people who are being cared for. We want carers to play an active part in the assessment process and have already made clear that assessments should take account of their own needs, their preferences and their ability to go on providing care.

Primary Health Care

25. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the report on primary health care in Wolverhampton.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report on primary health care in Wolverhampton contains, for the most part recommendations which are for the local FPC and DHA, in collaboration, to implement. I have asked both authorities to proceed with implementing them and I have now written in more detail to my hon. Friend. We are most grateful to Sir Michael Drury, professor of general practice at Birmingham university, for his report.

Community Care

26. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development within the community of alternatives to the use of institutional care for elderly and disabled people.

79. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development within the community of alternatives to the use of institutional care for elderly and disabled people.

85. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development within the community of alternatives to the use of institutional care for elderly and disabled people.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development within the community of alternatives to the use of institutional care for elderly and disabled people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's White Paper "Caring For People" published in November 1989 included as a key proposal that domiciliary, day and respite services should be developed to enable people to live in their own homes for as long as possible. Existing funding structures have worked against the development of home based services. The Government seek to establish the right financial and managerial framework to help local authorities to provide the services that are needed. That objective is central to the new community care arrangements in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill currently before the House.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision he is making to take back into psychiatric hospitals those patients released into the community who have not succeeded in establishing themselves there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Where it seems likely to a consultation psychiatrist that a patient discharged from hospital would benefit therapeutically from readmission, it is open to the consultant to propose, and if the patient agrees, seek to arrange, readmission.

87. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to visit Birmingham to discuss community care.

97. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to make an official visit to Bromley to discuss community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I recently visited both Bromley and Birmingham as part of a series of visits planned to see how community care services are being developed and improved at a local level. The visits are proving highly informative and have provided valuable insights into how the Government's proposals for the future organisation and management of community care can be implemented successfully.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the Government's proposals for community care.

60. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the Government's proposals for community care.

110. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the Government's proposals for community care.

118. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the Government's proposals for community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to my replies on 23 January at column *663*. We have received further representations from voluntary organisations and others on the Government's proposals for community care and will be taking careful note of them as part of our preparations for implementation of the main proposals in the White Paper "Caring for People".

42. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is being made to provide community facilities for the mentally ill and handicapped.

Mr. Freeman: It has long been policy for health and social services to collaborate to provide such facilities as resources allow. As a consequence there has been substantial growth in places in local authority, voluntary and private homes; day centres, day hospitals; mental health centres and in the number of community psychiatric nurses.

I refer my hon. Friend, for statistics on the growth of community facilities, to statistical bulletin 3(2)90 "Personal Social Services Provision for Mentally Handicapped People in England 1978-88" and statistical bulletin 3(4)89 "Personal Social Services Provision for Mentally Ill People in England 1977-87". Copies are available in the Library.

Family Planning

27. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the family planning services.

73. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the family planning services.

133. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) earlier today.

52. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the current number of patients is who annually seek doctors' advice on family planning matters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available in precisely the form requested.

Figures are recorded on the number of patients in respect of whom a fee is payable to a general practitioner for providing contraceptive services, and the number of people attending family planning clinics. For 1987-88, the latest year available, the information is shown in the table.

Family Planning Services (1987-88—England)

	Thousands
Patients seen by GPs	2,554·9
Persons attending Family Planning Clinics	1,352·0

Hospices

28. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on funding for the hospice movement.

96. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will give more details of the £8 million funding for the voluntary hospice movement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We shall shortly be notifying health authorities of the allocation they will receive for this purpose, and giving guidance on its distribution.

125. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospice projects have now been assisted directly with resources provided by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Two projects for people with AIDS, the London Lighthouse and the Mildmay Mission, currently receive direct assistance from the Department, and from health authorities. The funding of individual projects is otherwise a matter for discussion between the health authorities and the organisations concerned. Authorities will receive an additional allocation of £8 million for 1990-91 to enable them to increase their existing contributions to the voluntary hospice movement.

NHS (Patient Involvement)

30. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to increase the involvement of patients in the running of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie), for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and for Wigan (Mr. Stott) on 23 January at column *662*.

NHS Trusts

31. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to specify the core services provided by National Health Service trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans for the core or "designated services" provided by an NHS trust to be specified routinely by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Designated services are simply those which need to be pro ided locally and can be provided only to a defined population by a particular hospital, which has become an NHS trust. Designation becomes relevant if the trust does not wish to provide those services. The NHS and Community Care Bill provides for powers of direction by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to achieve provision of designated services by NHS trusts as a last resort. The responsibility for identifying services which need to be designated for a particular population will rest with the DHA concerned.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about feasibility studies being carried out by hospitals considering opting out of health authority control.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 18 January at column *402*.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was his Department's total expenditure on the meetings on National Health Service trusts held on 23 and 24 October 1989, 14 and 15 December 1989 and 22 and 23 January.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These were internal management meetings with senior NHS managers. It is not our practice to disclose such costs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health up until what stage a potential self-governing trust's application for self-governing hospital status may be withdrawn; up to what date new applications may be submitted; and if he will list those which have been withdrawn to date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Formal application for NHS trust status may be made only after Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. Applications may, thereafter, be submitted at any time. They may be withdrawn at any time before the order establishing a particular trust is laid.

84. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the need for a ballot to take place before hospitals opt out of the existing National Health Service management structure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One letter has been received since the beginning of the year.

59. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have now shown an interest in self-government; and what is the precise method for doing this.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 191 units have, to date, expressed an interest in NHS trust status, including a number with more than one hospital. For the precedure for registering an interest in NHS trust status, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 January at column *277*.

56. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from district health authorities on his proposals for self-governing hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received representations from a wide range of individuals and representative bodies, including district health authorities, on the NHS review proposals over the past year. These have included representations on our proposals for NHS trusts.

Regional Health Authorities

32. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the new system of distributing resources to regional health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 23 January at columns *673-74*.

Nurses and Midwives

33. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes have been made in the provision of training for nurses and midwives since 1978-79.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. There have been important and far-reaching changes over this period.

The Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979, in setting up the United Kingdom Central Council and four national boards, one for each country in the United Kingdom, introduced a unified statutory structure for the nursing, midwifery and health professions. Under this Act, the council is responsible for establishing and improving standards of training for the nursing professions.

In January 1987 the council presented to the four Health Departments proposals, known as Project 2000, for a major reform of nurse education and training. These proposals, designed to secure a more appropriately prepared profession better able to meet future health

needs, have been largely accepted by the Government. By April 1990, a total of 13 Project 2000 schemes will have started in England. We hope to announce further sites shortly.

The past decade has also seen the development of a variety of links between schools and colleges of nursing and further/higher education establishments. There has been a growth in the number of degree courses in nursing and associated degree courses combined with registered nurse training. Several chairs of nursing have been established within universities, to enhance developments in nurse education and practice.

Curricula for pre-registration nurse education have developed to ensure that all nursing staff are able to meet changing demands in health care. In particular there has been a growth in post-registration courses in high technology areas to meet advances in medical technology.

Waiting Lists

34. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes to make any additional resources available to reduce hospital waiting lists in the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have made £31 million available through the waiting list fund in 1989-90. This will enable health authorities to treat over 100,000 additional in-patients and day cases and 90,000 out-patients from the waiting lists. A further £33 million is being allocated in 1990-91. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Sir N. Macfarlane) on 6 December 1989 at columns *280-81*.

Ambulance Dispute

35. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now meet representatives of ambulance staff.

38. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now meet representatives of ambulance staff.

83. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now meet representatives of ambulance staff.

100. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now meet representatives of ambulance staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 23 January at columns *655-56*.

140. **Mrs. Rosie Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Health Service management board has any plans to meet representatives of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel to discuss the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The board would not expect to have meetings with any trades union on disputes about pay and conditions for any group of staff. Negotiations of pay of Whitley council groups is for the relevant Whitley council.

132. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his current estimate of the costs arising out of the ambulance dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is too soon to form a clear estimate of the costs arising out of the dispute. The cost of military involvement to the end of December 1989 was £1·8 million, although there will of course be offsetting savings on salaries and fuel costs from the normal service. Figures for assistance provided by the police have not yet been assessed by all the authorities concerned.

98. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received concerning the ambulance workers' dispute.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received numerous recent representations concerning the ambulance workers' dispute.

57. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the ambulance workers' dispute.

114. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the present situation concerning the ambulance dispute; and if he will make a statement.

123. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the dispute in the ambulance service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: NHS management has always wanted to have further talks with the unions on the basis of its final offer, provided the unions changed their position and did not simply repeat their demands for a high pay increase and a pay formula. I am pleased that the two sides are meeting this afternoon at ACAS. I hope that today's talks will bring about a swift resolution of this dispute.

NHS Administrators

36. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions are placed on administrators in the National Health Service from working part time for any form of private trust to facilitate opting out by National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are responsible for determining the detailed terms and conditions of employment of NHS administrators. Any decision to place restrictions on outside activities by administrators would be a matter for the health authority concerned.

Drug Misusers

37. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many injecting drug misusers are known to have been infected by HIV; and how many of them are known to be still alive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table shows the cumulative totals of HIV anti-body positive reports, up to the end of December 1989, and AIDS cases, up to the end of January 1990.

	AIDS cases (United Kingdom figures)			HIV anti-body positive (United Kingdom figures)		
	Men	Women	Total[1]	Men	Women	Total[2]
TOTAL	2,803	117	2,920 (1,660)	10,204	1,251	11,676
Injecting drug misusers	66	20	86 (38)	1,145	551	1,727
Injecting drug user/homo/bisexual	39	—	39 (19)	92	—	92

[1] Deaths shown in brackets.
[2] Includes small numbers where sex not specified.

Day Nurseries

39. **Sir Gerard Vaughan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from the Royal Berkshire hospital concerning day nursery provision in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since opening the rainbow nursery at the Royal Berkshire hospital on 22 January I have received no representations.

Emergency Calls

40. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of people who have died where there was delay in response to an emergency call by the ambulance service; and if there has been any monitoring of the recent position in regard to response times.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No reasonable estimate can be made on the effect that industrial action is having on patient care, but plainly the unions are organising activities which are designed to reduce and delay the service to patients. I have no evidence yet that the unions' industrial action has definitely caused the death of anyone.

Ambulance services continue to monitor their own response times, even where the service is disrupted by industrial action, though the data may then be less reliable.

Health Authority Expenditure

41. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much will be spent on the health authority capital programme in the next financial year.

Mr. Freeman: Total gross spending on the hospital and community health services capital programme in 1990-91 is planned at £1,377 million.

NHS, Cornwall

44. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the proposed reorganisation of the National Health Service in Cornwall.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no proposals to reorganise the National Health Service in Cornwall. Four units have expressed an interest in becoming NHS trusts. Subject to parliamentary approval, applications for formal NHS trust status will be invited later this year and it remains to be seen whether the expressions of interest already received will be taken further.

Social Work Training

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of social work training.

45. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of social work training.

46. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of social work training.

127. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of social work training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 16 January at column *195*.

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

47. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far by his Department, by district health authorities and family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

72. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far by his Department, by district health authorities and family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

120. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent so far by his Department, by district health authorities and family practitioner committees to prepare for the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) earlier today.

141. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the need to ensure good quality service provision under the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The need to provide good quality services was a primary consideration in drawing up the proposals to improve services contained in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Our proposals will ensure high-quality, value-for-money services.

South East Thames Regional Health Authority

48. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the South East Thames regional health authority; and what was discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairmen of

regional health authorities, including Sir Peter Baldwin, on 17 January. The main topics discussed were implementation of "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People", and the ambulace dispute.

Disabled People

49. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state those local authorities that presently make payments direct to disabled people to make their own care arrangements; and if he has considered proposals for ensuring such arrangements are made more widespread.

108. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to enabling local authorities to make payments directly to disabled people to make their own care arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 15 January at column *83*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on making arrangements for local authorities to make payments direct to disabled people to make their own care arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None other than parliamentary questions and an amendment to the NHS and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

54. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

67. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on when implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is likely to be fully implemented.

99. **Mr. Bell** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on when the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is likely to be fully implemented.

Mr. Freeman: Since the beginning of this year hon. Members have addressed five parliamentary questions on this issue to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. In addition an amendment to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill was put down in Committee, the effect of which would be to implement remaining sections of the Act. The Department has received no letters on this subject in this period.

Corneal Transplants

50. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many corneal transplants took place in each of the last five years in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Accurate statistics are not available on the number of corneal transplants performed in the National Health Service. The United Kingdom transplant service estimates that the United Kingdom total is in the region of 2,000 transplants per annum.

Eye Tests

51. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for eyesight checks.

91. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for eyesight checks.

107. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for eyesight checks.

124. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for eyesight checks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) on 23 January at columns *654-55*.

Psychiatric Care

55. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy towards the long-term development of psychiatric services and care.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's position is set out in chapter 7 of our White Paper "Caring for People".

General Practitioners

61. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners are employed in the National Health Service at present; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) on 23 January at column *678*.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will outline the mechanism by which family practitioner committees will be allocated moneys to pay general practitioners for conducting health screening and promotion clinics under the new general practitioner contract; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the moneys allocated for family practitioner committees to pay general practitioners for conducting health screening and promotion clinics under the new general practitioner contract will be sufficient to cover clinics in addition to those specifically mentioned in the contract;

(3) if the moneys allocated for family practitioner committees to pay general practitioners for conducting health screening and promotion clinics under the new general practitioner contract will be a separately devoted budget.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: General medical practitioners will from 1 April 1990 be able to claim fees under the statement of fees and allowances (a copy is in the Library) for providing health promotion clinics. Family practitioner committees have discretion under paragraph 30.2 of the statement to decide which clinics qualify for payment. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supply estimates, claims which are accepted for payment will be met from a non-cash limited vote incorporating provision for the general medical services. Individual FPCs will not be allocated separate budgets for such fees.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the benefits of the new general practitioner contract for elderly people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The new GPs' contract to be introduced with effect from 1 April, is to be more performance-related than the present arrangements. GPs are encouraged to meet the needs of particular patient groups. Elderly patients will benefit from these new arrangements. The annual payment to a doctor for each patient over 75 on his list will increase from 1 January 1991 to £31·45. This illustrates the importance the Government attach to the care of these patients. This compares with a payment of £12·40 for those under 65. Family doctors will offer an annual check-up and a home visit to those over 75 with a view to maintaining the quality of life as far as possible.

77. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to make it easier for elderly people to be accepted on to a general practitioner's list.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The procedure for registering with a family doctor is unchanged; it involves the individual patient asking if the doctor will accept him or her as a patient. We have, however, made it easier for people of all ages to change doctors if they wish. In recognition of the additional care and attention that elderly patients sometimes require, the capitation fee for patients aged 65 and over and aged 75 and over are higher than the standard fee for those aged under 65. Under the new contract the capitation fee for the over-75s is to be increased considerably and will be some 2·5 times the fee for the under 65s.

From 1 January 1991 the capitation fee for those over 75 will be £31·45. For those under 65 it will be £12·40.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

62. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will next meet the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority to discuss the funding needs of health authorities in the region and the effects of population bias toward the elderly living in rural areas.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has at present no plans to do so.

63. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the West Midlands health authority plan.

Mr. Freeman: Matters that have been discussed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority have included the regional health authority's plans for Birmingham which were the subject of preliminary local consultation last year. Revised proposals were issued for further local consultation on 30 January, and will be carefully considered as and when they are approved by that authority for submission to Ministers.

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

65. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to visit St. George's hospital, Tooting; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit St. George's hospital.

Health Authorities (Maintenance Backlog)

66. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total figure for the estimated maintenance backlog for health authorities.

92. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total figure for the estimated maintenance backlog for health authorities.

94. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total figure for the estimated maintenance backlog for health authorities.

138. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total figure for the estimated maintenance backlog for health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on 23 January at column *656*.

National Health Service Consultants

69. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there has been a change in the number of consultants employed in the National Health Service since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes, the number of consultants has risen from 12,361 in 1979 to 14,950 in 1988; an increase of 21 per cent.

Clinical Research

70. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations or individuals have expressed concern that the reorganisation of the National Health Service will damage clinical research and training; and what replies he has sent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received various representations concerning the effect of our proposals for improving the National Health Service on clinical research and training. In response we have explained the steps we are taking following our commitment in "Working for Patients" to maintain the quality of medical education and research.

GP Contracts

68. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of the new general practitioners' contracts.

130. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of the new general practitioners' contracts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 13 February at column *160*.

74. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the implications of the new general practitioner contract and his proposals for practice and drug budgets for doctors working with AIDS/HIV patients and drug misusing patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The GPs' new contract is intended to raise standards and extend services and will therefore benefit all patients, including those receiving care and treatment for AIDS and drug abuse. Under both the fund holding and indicative drug budgets schemes general practitioners will be able to prescribe for their patients all the medicines they need.

NHS Pay

75. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual percentage increase in each of the past five years for *(a)* staff nurses, *(b)* consultants, *(c)* ambulance men of five years' service, *(d)* hospital administrators and *(e)* regional health officials.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Data are not available for three of the five groups over the period requested. Staff nurses ceased to exist as a separate pay grade on 1 April 1988. Hospital administrators were replaced by general managers from 1984 onwards. Regional health officials is a diverse category of staff with a number of different pay determination arrangements. The table shows settlements of the other two groups.

Percentage settlements in pay years (1 August to 31 July)

Years	*Consultants*	*Ambulancemen*
1984-85	6·2	[1]7·8
1985-86	9·5	6·0
1986-87	8·2	5·0
1987-88	8·1	[2]5·4
1988-89	8·0	[3]—

[1] A salaried pay structure was introduced on 1 March 1986. The level of increase assumed that all productivity increases were achieved.
[2] In addition the standard working week was reduced by one hour from 40 to 39 hours.
[3] The management side has offered 9 per cent. over 18 months. Staff in the London ambulance service would receive increases ranging from 10·9 to 12·1 per cent. and some 2,000 staff with extended training to NHSTA standards and who are required to use paramedical skills would receive an additional £500 per annum.

Prescribing Costs

78. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will clarify how prescribing costs will be monitored.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Prescribing costs will be monitored by means of simple monthly statements sent to general practitioner practices, family practitioner committees and regional health authorities by the Prescription Pricing Authority. These statements will show how much of the budgets have been taken up and project the likely end of year outcome. This will allow practices to monitor their own costs without needing to set up their own information systems and will enable regional health authorities and family practitioner committees to monitor the operation of the scheme.

The monthly statements will be in addition to the more detailed PACT reports which will continue to be issued quarterly as at present.

Women's Health Care

80. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's policies on health care for women.

136. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes have been made in the provision of health care for women in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are proud of our record on women's health. Government policies over the last 10 years have brought enormous improvements to the health and well-being of the women in this country.

We have implemented screening programmes for breast and cervical cancers to reduce the number of women who die each year from these diseases. Between 1978 and 1988 deaths from cervical cancer in England and Wales fell by 10 per cent. to under 2,000 women per annum and the death rate per million women aged 20 to 74 years fell by 16 per cent.

There have been great improvements in maternity care and a range of new services, such as prenatal screening for inherited genetic disorders, is widely available. Between 1979 and 1988 perinatal mortality in England fell from 14·6 to 8·7 per 1,000 births; between 1978 and 1988 the maternal death rate per 1,000 total births in England and Wales fell from 0·11 to 0·06.

Since 1986 one of the Ministers within the Department has taken a special responsibility for women's health. We regularly meet representatives from women's voluntary organisations and this year are helping to support over 30 such organisations by way of the section 64 scheme. The Department also funds research, study days and courses on different aspects of women's health.

Our proposals for the National Health Service of the future will also ensure that the choice of health care services available to women will be extended and that greater attention will be focused on the quality of this care.

Invoice Settlement

81. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has issued any guidelines to local health authorities about the settlement of invoices from suppliers.

Mr. Freeman: Specific formal guidance has not been issued to health authorities, but the Treasury publication "Government Accounting" is published by HMSO and contains guidance of general applicability to all bodies under ministerial control. We continue to expect health authorities to meet their obligations within a reasonable time in accordance with contractual requirements and responsible practice, and have sent the Department of Employment booklet "Prompt Payment Please" to all health authorities.

Dental Charges

82. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effects of the introduction of charging for dental inspections.

111. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effects of the introduction of charging for dental inspections.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) earlier today.

Immunisation

86. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of children aged five years or under who are known to have received some form of immunisation.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available. However, for the year 1987-88, the percentages of children in England who were born in 1985 and had completed their immunisations by the end of March 1988 were;

	Percentage
Whooping Cough	73
Measles	76
Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio	87

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

88. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further funding he will provide for research into Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health has recently commissioned a research project to review the incidence, prevalence and trends of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. There are no plans, at present, for the Department to fund further research into this disease.

Capital Charging

89. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress of the capital charging initiative.

Mr. Freeman: The Inland Revenue is currently undertaking a valuation of the National Health Service estate, and the results of this exercise will be available in the Library from April 1990. Health authorities are making good progress in preparing registers of their capital assets, which will enable them to calculate estimated capital charges during the period of shadow operation in 1990-91 described in the working papers Nos. 5 and 9. These estimates will be reviewed before the scheme is fully implemented in April 1991.

116. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what implications there will be for hospital nationalisation schemes of his proposal for capital charging.

Mr. Freeman: From April 1991, health authorities will be expected to include the effects on capital charges of their proposals for hospital rationalisation schemes in the submissions they make to the Department of Health. This will enable better informed decisions to be taken, as full consideration will be given to the recurring costs of using assets over a future period, and not just to the capital outlay involved.

Handicapped Children

90. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest annual figure for the number of children in the United Kingdom who were born either mentally or physically handicapped.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available centrally.

The third report from the OPCS on disability in Great Britain "The Prevalance of Disability Among Children", published last year following surveys in 1985 and 1988, estimated that there are some 360,000 children in Great Britain under 16 with one or more disability. The definition was wide enough to include most children usually considered to be physically or mentally handicapped. It is not possible to distinguish the number of children who were born either mentally or physically handicapped from those who acquired a disability later since the surveys did not publish information on whether disabilities existed at birth. A copy of this report is in the Library.

NHS (Service Quality)

93. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on action being taken to improve the quality of service being given by the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The White Paper reforms aim to provide a better National Health Service with more attention to quality of care and customer service flowing from greater devolution, the separation of the purchaser and provider functions and introduction of contracts, wider choice and the extension of medical and clinical audit. These proposals are being reinforced by a series of initiatives to make the consumers' interest more central to the management and delivery of health care.

North West Thames RHA

95. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority to discuss the allocation of funds to the region's district health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I met the chairman of North West Thames regional health authority, together with a number of other colleagues, on 17 January to discuss allocations of districts. My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairmen of all the regional health authorities regularly.

Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore

101. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider the creation of a special health authority to supervise the management of the Royal National orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore, Middlesex.

Mr. Freeman: We do not consider the creation of a special health authority for the Royal National orthopaedic hospital is the best way forward.

North East Thames and North West Thames regional health authorities issued proposals last August to transfer the management of the Royal National orthopaedic hospital (Stanmore) from Bloomsbury district health authority to Harrow district health authority as the most effective arrangement for securing the future of the hospital. No definitive proposal has yet been put to Ministers.

I discussed options for the hospital's future management with my hon. Friend when he led a delegation from the hospital to see me last week. I plan to visit the hospital shortly.

Infertility Treatments

102. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve the range and availability of infertility treatments.

128. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve the range and availability of infertility treatments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on 23 January at columns *660-61*.

Northumbria Ambulance Service

103. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expenditure has been incurred in pursuing the opting-out proposals for the Northumbria ambulance service.

Mr. Freeman: Over £85 million has been made available this year for the implementation of the NHS review proposals. Of this, £35 million has been allocated to regional health authorities to enable them to develop the finance and personnel functions, to strengthen the public health function, to prepare for the introduction of capital charges and medical audit, and to create new consultant posts as promised in the White Paper, Northern RHA has been allocated £2,478 million. No additional resources have been made available specifically for the preparation of NHS trusts. However, all authorities including those with units considering this option will benefit from the overall strengthening of key management functions.

NHS Reform

104. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on implementation of the National Health Service reforms.

113. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made on the implementation of the proposed reforms of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are making good progress in putting into action the changes outlined in the White Paper "Working for Patients". We are confident that the NHS will be ready to implement the basic elements of the new and better systems of matching growth and resources with expansion of patient services by April 1991 once Parliament approves the necessary legislation. We have made £85 million available to finance progress towards implementation this financial year and more than £300 million will be available in 1990-91.

We have issued detailed guidance on many subjects including the education and training of non-medical staff. Guidance on the principles of the new contracting system was issued in September and further guidance on additional aspects of the contracting system will be issued shortly.

We have published a GP fund holder programme which gives details about the operation of a GP practice fund. There has been an encouraging level of interest in the proposed scheme in all regions in England.

A new working paper, the 11th in the series, has been published, called "Framework for Information Systems: Overview". This working paper covers two documents issued for consultation, looking at the way ahead for information and information technology and concentrating on action in preparation for April 1991.

We intend to publish a further working paper on indicative prescribing budgets within the next few weeks.

We have launched a project to support district health authorities in detailed work in developing the key role which DHAs will have under the new system of identifying and obtaining the best pattern of services which will most effectively meet all the health needs of the population they serve.

We have received 190 expressions of interest from potential NHS hospital trusts, 80 of them are proceeding towards being the first wave of applicants for trust status within the NHS in April 1991. Subject to progress in Parliament, we expect many more to be ready for later waves of applicants in future years.

We have made £2 million available for implementation of medical audit this financial year, and a further £26 million has been allocated to hospital and community health services for the development of medical audit in 1990-91. A £4·5 million scheme has been launched to develop information technology skills. Demonstration projects, aimed at improving the quality of care and services to patients, have been announced for five out-patient departments. The principles of general management are being introduced into the family practitioner committee system.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has invited the medical and nursing royal colleges and the statutory bodies concerned with clinical issues to early talks on how, if necessary, clinical standards can be reinforced after the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill are implemented.

Good progress is also being made in relation to medical education and research. As my right hon. and learned Friend explained in a speech on 10 July 1989, since sent to all hospital doctors, we intend to take powers to ensure, for example, the continuation of high standards of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education and research in all National Health Service hospitals. We will also ensure that postgraduate training posts are provided in National Health Service hospital trusts in accordance with the national objectives set out in "Achieving a Balance". Medical education and research will be further enhanced by the proposed increase in the service increment for teaching (SIFT) to meet 100 per cent. of the median excess costs of teaching hospitals. This will be distributed by regions in consultation with universities.

The National Health Service and Community Care Bill is now before the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a pamphlet summarising the implications for patients of the Health Service reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A leaflet (reference HSR1) setting out the implications of the proposed reforms for patients was published together with the White Paper "Working for Patients". We will consider further the need for additional public information.

Operating Theatres

109. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any steps are being taken to ensure that operating theatres are utilised effectively.

Mr. Freeman: In December 1989 a report by the Department's value for money unit on the management and utilisation of operating departments was issued to health authorities. This made a number of recommendations concerning the efficient utilisation of operating theatres, and suggested a target planned level of utilisation of 90 per cent. should be achievable. The Department is currently consulting health authorities and others about guidance following the recommendations made in the study report, copies of which are available in the Library.

Model Contracts

112. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate when guidance will be published on model contracts for use in 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: We expect to publish this guidance shortly.

Hospital Services (Islington and Bloomsbury)

115. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he will take to ensure there are no further cuts in hospital services in Islington and Bloomsbury if the health authorities are required to merge.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A consultation document on the proposal to merge Islington and Bloomsbury health authorities was issued at the end of last year. Comments have been requested by 12 April 1990. Until the outcome of the consultation is known it would be inappropriate for Ministers to comment on any aspects of the merger.

Eye Consultants

117. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has regarding the number of referrals by opticians to eye consultants in the periods 1 April to 31 December 1988 and in the same period in 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not collect this information. Opticians normally refer patients to their general practitioner if, as a result of an eye examination, they suspect disease, abnormality or injury. The general practitioner may then refer the patient on to the hospital eye service, if appropriate.

Capital Expenditure (Bury)

119. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for capital expenditure in the Bury health authority in the years 1979-80 and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The capital expenditure figure for Bury health authority is shown in the table:

	Total expenditure (in cash terms)
1979-80	1,539,000
1988-89	1,484,000

These figures do not represent the trend, as expenditure has fluctuated during the intervening years.

Birmingham General Hospital

121. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in respect of the proposed closure of the general hospital, Birmingham.

Mr. Freeman: Since the West Midlands regional health authority first published its preliminary proposals for the reorganisation of Birmingham's health services in April 1989 the Department has received a number of inquiries about the future of the general hospital from right hon. and hon. Members and direct from members of the public.

Voluntary Organisations (Consultations)

22. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from voluntary organisations on the need to ensure service users and providers are consulted as part of an ongoing process under the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill; and if he will ensure local authorities establish an advisory body to do this.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received representations on this from several voluntary organisations. Ministers and officials meet regularly with national organisations to discuss such matters of common concern. The White Paper makes it clear that local authorities, when drawing up plans for community care, should consult interested agencies. We believe that they should determine for themselves the most appropriate way of doing this.

Nurses (Regrading)

126. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the regrading of nurses has now been completed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The new clinical grading structure for nursing and midwifery staff was implemented during 1988, with staff concerned being informed of their new grades by the end of October that year.

Royal College of Nursing

129. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the general secretary

of the Royal College of Nursing on 1 February when he informed representatives of nursing and midwifery staff and the professions allied to medicine of the Government's decision on the 1990 review body reports.

Patient Services

131. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what experience there has been within the National Health Service of using contracts for patient services.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friends the Members for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 12 December at columns *843-44*.

GP Lists

134. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are on the average general practitioner's list at present; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: At 1 October 1988 (the latest year for which figures are available) the average list size in England was 1,999 compared to 2,286 at 1 October 1979—a decrease of about 12·5 per cent.

Rural GPs

135. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the future of general practice in rural areas under his proposed changes and under the new contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Patients living in rural areas will benefit from the changes to the GPs' contract. In particular the new contract encourages more minor surgery and child health surveillance in general practice, extra services for elderly patients, greater cover for childhood immunisation and more screening for cancer of the cervix, more health promotion advice for all adults and more professional staff in the surgery such as nurses, counsellors and chiropodists.

GPs working in rural areas sometimes experience difficulties due to the scattered nature of their practices. In consultation with the BMA's general medical services committee, the Department of Health and the Welsh Office are reviewing the present arrangements (in England and Wales) for paying these GPs a rural practice payment. In doing so, full account will be taken of changes that are taking place in rural practice.

Cornwall Air Ambulance

137. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the 1990-91 financial allocation to the South West regional health authority includes an element for public funding of the Cornwall air ambulance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. The Cornwall air ambulance is a local service and funding is a matter for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority.

Nurses

139. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the nurse in-patient ratio in 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Manpower statistics cover staff working in hospitals and are collected at a particular point in time; they do not show what activities within the hospital the staff are engaged upon—for example, whether they are providing treatment to in-patients, out-patients or accident and emergency patients. By contrast, activity statistics show the number of cases treated during the year in National Health Service hospitals. It is possible, however, to give a ratio in terms of the population being served. At 30 September 1979 the number of qualified nursing and midwifery staff, measured in whole-time equivalents, was 438·6 per 100,000 population for England. At 30 September 1988 the number of qualified nursing and midwifery staff, measured in whole-time equivalents, was 508·9 per 100,000 population. These ratios have been adjusted to take account of the change in nurses' working hours (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week) during 1980-81. The average number of in-patients treated in a week was 103,848 in 1979 and 126,654 in 1988.

Press and Publicity

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each health authority the amount of money spent on press and publicity in each of the past three years.

Mr. Freeman: The information specifically requested is not collected centrally. However, the summarised accounts of health authorities in England record in total the following categories of revenue expenditure:

	Advertising £000 (cash)	*Public relations £000 (cash)*
1986-87	14,089	1,297
1987-88	19,021	2,174
1988-89	22,363	2,690

Notes:

1. Expenditure on advertising relates primarily to staff recruitment while that on public relations includes all pay and other costs incurred on public relations departments.

2. The annual figures for each category are not necessarily mutually exclusive being derived from separate analyses of total revenue expenditure within the accounts.

Preventive Health Care

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners are currently meeting the targets for preventive health care to be brought into effect by the new contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1987-88, over half of all district health authorities (DHAs) had exceeded 90 per cent. coverage levels for diphtheria, tetanus and poliomyelitis. The national average was 87 per cent. in the same year the average for measles was 76 per cent. and for whooping cough 73 per cent. This is above the lower target of 70 per cent. for childhood immunisation.

Data for individual general practitioners are not collected centrally.

St. Catherine's House

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to enable applicants in person for copies of birth certificates and so on at St. Catherine's house to make only one visit both to record the intention and to collect the certificate.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 1 February at columns *354-55* about the publications of a White Paper "Registration proposals for change" (Cm. 939). This includes proposals for changes to the present arrangements for issuing birth, death and marriage certificates at St. Catherine's house, including the introduction of a one-day search and collections service.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures by year and in total for the number of hospital posts notified to his Department in which the job description included a duty to advise, undertake or participate in abortions from 31 December 1983 to the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the total number of such posts vacant in each year and in total for *(a)* psychiatry, *(b)* anaesthetics and *(c)* obstetrics and gynaecology.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Shropshire Health Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the national average and *(b)* the sum for Shropshire of expenditure per patient for family practitioner committees.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 12 February, at columns *28-30*.

Doctors (Training)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current cost of training a doctor; how many doctors have left the National Health Service to join private health organisations; and how many doctors have been trained by private health organisations at their own expenses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Undergraduate education is provided at universities with medical schools and, for the clinical part of the course, in association with the NHS. The public expenditure cost associated with that process is of the order of £130,000. The cost of subsequent postgraduate training varies according to the speciality and may take an additional four to nine years.

Although some data are held centrally on the number of National Health Service leavers, these are not complete, and it is not possible to identify those who have left to join private health organisations.

Postgraduate training of qualified doctors is carried out almost entirely in the NHS and universities.

Electoral Rolls

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of voters for each shire county and former metropolitan county on the electoral rolls effective from 16 February.

Mr. Freeman: The 1990 electorate statistics are still being collected from local authorities. Following the usual timetable, figures will be published in "OPCS Monitor" El 90/1 at the end of April. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the health implications of the recent invasion of the Hertfordshire and Essex hospital in Bishop's Stortford by mink.

Mr. Freeman: This is for the local health authority, which I understand has dealt with the matter.

Homeless People (Storm Shelter)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is making any arrangements to safeguard the health of people sleeping rough in central London in the event of severe weather by providing some form of temporary shelter.

Mr. Freeman: In the event of exceptionally cold weather I have prepared contingency plans for temporary shelters to be provided by certain health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations. The estimated total cost of this service for this winter, if the scheme is activated, is £450,000. Parliamentary approval to expenditure by local authorities on this new service will be sought in a supply estimate for the Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England vote (class XIV vote 3). Pending that approval urgent expenditure estimated at £40,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the currently available figure for the shortage of kidney organs for transplant.

Mr. Freeman: The shortage of cadaveric kidneys available for transplant is conveniently measured by the waiting list held by the United Kingdom transplant service. The United Kingdom waiting list on 8 February 1990 comprised 3,485 patients.

Calderdale Hospital

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the proposed new Calderdale district hospital is subject to the Government's review of new capital projects.

Mr. Freeman: There is no Government review of capital projects in the National Health Service.

Visual Handicap

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions his Department has had with local authority associations on the training of specialist workers with visually handicapped people;

(2) what progress has been made to remedy the deficiency in training of workers with blind and visually handicapped people, identified in paragraph 181 of the social services inspectorate report, "A Wider Vision".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has not discussed this subject specifically with the local authority associations. Following the publication of "A Wider Vision", the social services inspectorate organised a number of seminars aimed at senior managers in social services departments and involving national voluntary

organisations, covering a wide range of issues arising from the report. Discussions are in progress with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and others to consider how developments in social work education can incorporate the training needs of staff working with people in visual handicap.

Airports

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines he is giving to local health authorities with hospitals in the vicinity of, and servicing, airports.

Mr. Freeman: None. When drawing up plans for dealing with major accidents and other contingencies, district health authorities take account of such factors as airports in their locality.

Chipboard Factories

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of any potential health hazards resulting from emissions to the air from chipboard factories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. Environmental pollution is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and I understand that emissions to the air from chipboard factories are controlled by the local authority, under public health legislation. The Department of Health would, on request, provide medical and toxicological advice on specified substances emitted.

General Acute Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the principle of a minimum size for future general acute hospitals, adopted by East Anglian regional health authority, has been accepted by his Department; and if he will be making any observations to the regional health authority on this policy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The appropriate basis on which to plan future general acute hospital provision is a matter for local decision, in the light of judgments about priorities and resources.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received representations from a number of organisations about implementation of the Children Act 1989 for which the target date is October 1991. We will be consulting representatives of practitioners, local authorities, voluntary organisations and court and legal interests on the content of regulations and guidance.

Severn Trent Water Authority

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Burton on 15 February, if he will publish the full indemnity for the Severn Trent water authority in the *Official Report*; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: I am placing in the Library copies of the statutory indemnity provided on 21 November 1989 to Severn Trent Water by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health under the provisions of section 172 of the Water Act 1989, together with copies of the non-statutory indemnity issued on 22 December 1989 in accordance with the minute which was laid before Parliament by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 23 November 1989.

SCOTLAND

Rural General Practitioners

142. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the criteria for eligibility for financial support to general practitioners who practice in less densely populated country areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Financial support for general practitioners who practice in less densely populated country areas is provided through the long-standing and well-targeted Scottish rural practices fund. In addition, on 11 December 1989, my right hon. and learned Friend said that he intended to fulfil the undertaking given in chapter 10 of "Working for Patients" by funding, on a long-term basis, a further scheme to safeguard the position of such doctors. Details of this scheme, which is to be administered by the Scottish rural practices fund committee, will be set out shortly in an amendment to the statement of fees and allowances.

Roof Tax

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake an assessment of the effects on the elderly of a roof tax; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following the introduction of the community charge, it was estimated that 85 per cent. of single pensioners in Scotland would be better off than under domestic rates. The replacement of the community charge with a roof tax would mean a return to the anomalies of domestic rates including those of a single pensioner having to pay as much tax as a pensioner couple or even a family of working adults living in identical housing—anomalies removed by the community charge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake an assessment of the implications of the introduction of a roof tax on the Eastwood constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed roof tax would reintroduce anomalies and unfairness associated with domestic rates and would seriously reduce the democratic accountability of local government both in Eastwood and in the whole of Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the economic consequences of the introduction of a roof tax in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The introduction of such a tax would increase the cost of occupying houses and therefore reduce the effective demand for housing and the value of domestic property. Apart from the effects this would have on individuals it would tend to reduce demand on the construction and related industries.

Mr. Allen Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the effects on the construction industry of the introduction of a roof tax; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed roof tax would increase the costs of occupying property and reduce the effective demand for housing with consequential reduction in demand for investment in housing. This would in turn lead to lower output by the construction industry on housing.

Mr. Allen Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the effects on the do-it-yourself industry of the introduction of a roof tax; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As a roof tax would relate people's tax bills to the value of their property, it would act as a disincentive to people to make improvements to their homes which increased their value and could therefore reduce the demand for do-it-yourself goods and services.

Mr. Allen Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the implications of a roof tax for council tenants who have exercised their right to buy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Council tenants who have exercised their right to buy and been eligible for a discount on their house must be expected to have their liability to pay the roof tax assessed on the full value of the property.

Mr. Allen Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of adults who would be required to pay a roof tax in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The introduction of a roof tax would be a return to a system similar to domestic rates. About 1·8 million people paid domestic rates, compared with 3·9 million who are liable for the community charge. Actual numbers paying would depend on the extent of exemptions or reliefs given but must be expected to be well below half the number of those liable to pay the community charge.

National House Condition Survey

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the nature and content of the sample he proposes to take for the national house condition survey; what methods he will employ to ensure its accuracy; whether it will be compulsory; and what kind of refusal rate he is building into the survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish national house condition survey, which will be conducted by Scottish Homes, is being designed to provide an achieved sample of 15,000 dwellings. Scottish Homes is currently investigating the most effective way to obtain a sample which is representative of all the major Scottish housing tenures and which is statistically significant down to a Scottish Homes's regional level. The survey will not be compulsory, and Scottish Homes will be taking account of likely refusal rates in their sample design.

Community Charge

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland have not paid the poll tax; and how many people are in arrears.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures for the number of people who have paid the community charge are not held centrally but we understand that in most regions 85 per cent., and 95 per cent., of chargepayers have made some community charge payment, with a figure of 98 per cent., in one area. While no overall figure is yet available, it would appear that the proportion of people in arrears with their community charge payments is broadly the same as under the rating system last year.

Rating Reform

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a complete list of subsections of sections and paragraphs of schedules to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987 which have been amended, substituted or inserted by later legislation, including those themselves the subject of further alteration and those which it is proposed to amend; and if he will provide the derivation and the date of the coming into force of each alteration listed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments and repeals which have been made to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987 are as follows:

(1) Schedule 12 Part II, paragraphs 15-38 and schedule 13 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The dates from which these provisions took effect or will take effect are laid down in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 Commencement (Scotland) Order 1988 (SI 1988/1456);

(2) section 140, subsections 1 and 2; section 141, subsections 1-4; sections 142-145 and schedule 6, paragraphs 10-15 and 20-28 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The dates from which most of these provisions took effect or will take effect are laid down in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Commencement No. 1) Order 1989 (SI 1989/2180). Section 141 of the 1989 Act will be the subject of a separate commencement order in due course;

(3) paragraph 4 of schedule 1A to the 1987 Act (which was inserted by the 1988 Act) was amended by regulations 3 and 4 of the Personal Community Charge (Exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/2234) which came into force on 24 December 1989.

There are no immediate plans to make further amendments.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercise due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Rifkind: None.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of decrees of sequestration registered annually by the Accountant of Bankruptcy in the year to 1 April and the total gross payment made under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 to trustees in sequestration from public funds in the financial year 1989-90.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is estimated that during the year ending 31 March 1990 there will be approximately 2,500 awards of sequestration and that the gross payments from public funds will be about £6 million.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what average hourly rate is applied by the Accountant in Bankruptcy for the remuneration of trustees in sequestration in *(a)* small asset cases and *(b)* other cases.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no fixed rates for the remuneration of trustees. The Accountant in Bankruptcy, in discharging his statutory duties to determine the appropriate level of payment, has regard in both types of cases to the rates published by the Law Society of Scotland in respect of charges by the legal profession for similar work.

Free School Milk

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children are receiving free milk in schools within Scotland.

Mr. Lang: From a census undertaken in January each year 67,813 children were receiving free milk in 1989. the figure for 1990 is not yet available.

Fishing Vessels (Licensing)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has received on the DAFS consultative paper studying the United Kingdom licensing system for fishing vessels.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Thirteen replies have been received by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland from organisations based in Scotland in response to the consultation paper issued in November 1989 on changes to the United Kingdom's licensing system for fishing vessels. Representations have also been received by other Fisheries Departments from organisations based in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many full-time jobs have been created in Scotland for *(a)* males and *(b)* females aged 16 years to 25 years in each year from 1980;

(2) how many part-time jobs have been created in Scotland for *(a)* males and *(b)* females aged 16 years to 25 years in each year from 1980.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* There is no information available in the form requested on the number of jobs which have been created in Scotland. The table shows the estimated total number of employees in employment in Scotland in each year since 1980, separately for all men and for women working full-time and part-time.

Employees in employment in Scotland

Thousands

September	*Males*	*Females*	
		Full-time	*Part-time*
1980	1,178·5	558·9	331·5
1981	1,113·3	534·2	337·8
1982	1,083·5	508·1	340·4
1983	1,058·2	503·6	336·8
1984	1,052·8	505·1	346·0
1985	1,043·6	506·9	356·8
1986	1,018·4	503·8	353·7
1987	1,009·6	508·8	362·3
1988	1,026·6	534·0	361·8
1989	1,031·1	547·3	350·7

Source: Department of Employment.

Note: Information on the number of men working part-time is available only from the censuses of employment in 1981, 1984 and 1987. The numbers were 59,600 men working part-time in 1981, 60,800 in 1984 and 70,200 in 1987.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many part-time jobs have been created in Glasgow for males and females aged 16 years to 25 years in each year from 1980.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Information on the number of jobs created is not available in the form requested. The table gives the number of employees in employment of all ages in Glasgow district in 1981, 1984 and 1987 as estimated by the census of employment in each of these years. Separate estimates are provided for men and women and for those working full-time and part-time. The census of employment does not gather information on the ages of employees.

Employees in employment in Glasgow district

Thousands

	September		
	1981	*1984*	*1987*
Male full-time employees	196·3	177·2	171·2
Male part-time employees	8·9	8·7	10·0
Female full-time employees	110·8	101·5	104·8
Female part-time employees	61·9	60·0	62·6

Clothing Factory, Denny

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will intervene to stop the threatened closure of James Seddon's clothing factory in Denny; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* James Seddon (UK) Ltd. went into receivership on 12 February. The future of the Denny factory is a matter for the receiver who is, I understand, exploring the prospects for disposing of the company as a going concern.

House Prices

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will commission research into house price movements in each local authority ward in the Eastwood constituency over the past five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will commission research into movements in house prices in each local authority area over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* I have no plans to commission such research.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on movements in house prices in Scotland over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Average Scottish house prices rose by 53 per cent. between 1984 and the third quarter of 1989.

TVEI

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current plans for the administration of the technical and vocational education initiatives after the implementation of the Scottish Enterprise proposals.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* As my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State, announced on 26 July 1989 the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI) in Scotland will become the responsibility of the Industry Department for Scotland.

Water Supplies

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what date he expects drinking water in Scotland to meet the standards laid down in the water regulations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Programmes for meeting the standards set in the regulations are currently being prepared by the water authorities and will be submitted for approval by the Secretary of State shortly. Target dates by which individual supply zones will be expected to comply with the various standards have yet to be agreed.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will be applying to the European Economic Community for additional article 9 derogations for Scottish water supplies which currently fail to meet the aluminium standard of 200 ug/l but are not the subject of a permitted delay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Derogations under article 9 are granted by member states and require to be notified to the European Commission only if they relate to water supplies of more than 1,000 cu m per day or serving over 5,000 people. A small number of additional derogations for naturally occurring aluminium may have to be notified.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish water supplies which currently fail to meet the aluminium standard of 200 ug/1.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the written answer that I gave to him on 15 November 1989 at columns *363-65* to a similar question.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the supplies by name which have been notified to him by the regional water departments for authorised relaxation of the water regulation standard on aluminium; and whether in each case he proposes to give consent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Water authorities are preparing details of supply zones for which application will be made for authorisation to relax standards set in the regulations. No formal applications have yet been received by the Secretary of State. Authorisations to relax the aluminium standard will be considered only if the aluminium occurs naturally in the source water.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to offer the Scottish water authorities a green dowry similar to that offered to the English and Welsh authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The green dowry for English and Welsh water authorities was part of a financial restructuring necessary prior to privatisation; there are no plans for the privatisation of water services in Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what grounds article 9 derogations for water standards are given; and how these criteria were applied in the case of each derogation for aluminium standards in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Derogations in respect of aluminium were given, on application by water authorities, as permitted by article 9.1(a) of the drinking water directive (80/778/EEC) for situations arising from the nature and structure of the ground, but not constituting a public health hazard. Applications were required to state average and maximum concentrations expected and derogation was conditional on averages not exceeding the value stated.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what budget he has allocated for a phased programme of investment in Scottish water to minimise delays due to the shortage of suitably qualified contractors;

(2) what funds he proposes to make available to assist in bringing Scotland's drinking water into line with the current European and United Kingdom standards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The programming of investment is a matter for the water authorities who have adequate flexibility to phase their capital expenditure to suit varying circumstances. The Government have made increased capital expenditure allocations to authorities for their water and sewerage programmes. These were announced on 15 February 1990. For 1990-91, the allocations have been set at £137·5 million rising provisionally to £159·6 million and £182·0 million in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. The need to comply with EC and United Kingdom standards for drinking water quality, and the ability to undertake works, were factors taken into account in setting the increased capital allocations.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he anticipates that the supplies in Scotland which have delays for aluminium due to expire in 1990 will meet the 200 ug/1 quality standard in the current year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Meeting the standard for aluminium is largely dependent on the water authorities concerned completing the required improvement works by the due date. I have no reason to believe that this will not be achieved.

Schools (Assisted Places)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the schools in Scotland which participate in the assisted places scheme; what is the

number of places and the money paid for each school for each financial year since the scheme began; and what are the dates of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools inspections at each school since the scheme began.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is collected on a school year basis and is set out in the tables. All independent schools are inspected before final registration and are subject to further visits by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools on a continuing basis thereafter. The dates given are for full formal inspections; those carried out after 1983 resulted in a published report.

School	*Date of school inspection*
Albyn	—
Belmont House	—
Craigholme	—
Dollar	—
Edinburgh Academy	—
Fernhill	—
Fettes College	1981
Fort Augustus	—
George Heriots	—
Glasgow Academy	—
Glenalmond College	—
Gordonstoun	—
Hamilton College	—
High School, Dundee	—
High School, Glasgow	1989
Hutchesons Grammar	1981
Keil	—
Kelvinside Academy	—
Kilgraston	1987
Kilquhanity House	—
Lomond	—
Loretto	—
Merchant Company	1988 and 1989
Merchiston Castle	1984
Morrisons Academy	—
Oxenfoord Castle	1984
Rannoch	1989
Robert Gordons College	1983
Rudolf Steiner	—
St. Aloysius College	1984
St. Denis and Cranley	—
St. Georges	—
St. Hilary's	—
St. Leonards	1987
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	—
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	1989
St. Margarets Convent	—
Strathallan	—
Wellington	—
West of Scotland College:	
Laurel Bank	—
Westbourne	1983
Park	1984
St. Columba's	—
Preparatory Schools[1]:	
Aberlour House	—
Ardvreck	1986
Beaconhurst Grange	—
Belhaven Hill	—
Blairmore	—
Butterstone House	—
Cargilfield	1985
Clifton Hall	—
Craigclowan	—
Crawfordton House	—
Croftinloan	—
Drumley House	—
Lathallan	—
New Park	—
Park Lodge	1988
St. Mary's	—

[1] The preparatory schools listed joined the scheme in 1989-90 school session.

School	*1981-82*	
	Number of pupils	*Amount paid*
Albyn	4	4,056
Belmont House	3	4,021
Craigholme	8	8,001
Dollar	22	17,581
Edinburgh Academy	9	14,556
Fernhill	5	5,235
Fettes College	8	19,255
Fort Augustus	9	14,177
George Heriots	48	51,441
Glasgow Academy	11	12,974
Glenalmond College	7	10,222
Gordonstoun	6	12,630
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	63	52,690
High School, Glasgow	17	16,782
Hutchesons Grammar	82	50,880
Keil	11	17,734
Kelvinside Academy	27	25,540
Kilgraston	4	3,950
Kilquhanity House	—	—
Lomond	8	10,184
Loretto	5	8,367
Merchant Company	194	205,911
Merchiston Castle	8	16,630
Morrisons Academy	39	31,744
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	5	6,891
Robert Gordons College	11	5,753
Rudolf Steiner	6	5,068
St. Aloysius College	51	35,978
St. Denis and Cranley	5	6,644
St. Georges	—	—
St. Hilary's	6	4,858
St. Leonards	2	3,198
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	2	2,277
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	10	9,715
St. Margarets Convent	5	5,133
Strathallan	—	—
Wellington	—	—
West of Scotland College:		
Laurel Bank	21	21,649
Westbourne	30	32,243
Park	19	23,226
St. Columba's	19	21,829

School	*1982-83*	
	Number of pupils	*Amount paid*
Albyn	6	6,546
Belmont House	3	4,475
Craigholme	23	17,187
Dollar	30	26,811
Edinburgh Academy	20	34,367
Fernhill	13	14,731
Fettes College	18	39,740
Fort Augustus	14	26,701
George Heriots	95	108,647
Glasgow Academy	20	24,668
Glenalmond College	13	33,046
Gordonstoun	8	20,213
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	106	110,612
High School, Glasgow	30	32,411
Hutchesons Grammar	103	86,933
Keil	18	28,005

School	1982-83 Number of pupils	1982-83 Amount paid
Kelvinside Academy	39	39,209
Kilgraston	10	11,415
Kilquhanity House	7	7,637
Lomond	13	18,600
Loretto	11	22,594
Merchant Company	362	449,158
Merchiston Castle	18	41,492
Morrisons Academy	86	74,684
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	11	16,710
Robert Gordons College	20	17,831
Rudolf Steiner		
22	24,583	
St. Aloysius College	102	87,715
St. Denis and Cranley	7	9,822
St. Georges	—	—
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	6	10,636
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	4	4,788
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	18	23,777
St. Margarets Convent	9	10,282
Strathallan	7	13,371
Wellington	3	2,742
West of Scotland Co:		
Laurel Bank	39	48,347
Westbourne	67	76,135
Park	35	48,159
St. Columba's	34	43,705

School	1983-84 Number of pupils	1983-84 Amount paid
Albyn	9	10,060
Belmont House	2	2,930
Craigholme	27	23,140
Dollar	35	35,032
Edinburgh Academy	22	36,956
Fernhill	22	25,902
Fettes College	20	50,401
Fort Augustus	27	49,720
George Heriots	142	172,549
Glasgow Academy	34	46,380
Glenalmond College	23	60,467
Gordonstoun	12	32,279
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	126	142,685
High School, Glasgow	35	38,621
Hutchesons Grammar	133	117,366
Keil	41	63,646
Kelvinside Academy	36	40,819
Kilgraston	26	34,555
Kilquhanity House	11	13,161
Lomond	20	25,632
Loretto	22	38,676
Merchant Company	390	528,924
Merchiston Castle	25	63,293
Morrisons Academy	120	120,955
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannock	16	29,402
Robert Gordons College	39	35,160
Rudolf Steiner	36	40,980
St. Aloysius College	128	128,323
St. Denis and Cranley	11	14,838
St. Georges	7	9,951
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	14	23,120
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	8	8,037
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	41	50,868
St. Margarets Convent	10	12,584
Strathallan	12	30,188
Wellington	18	19,784
West of Scotland College:		
Laurel Bank	51	71,483
Westbourne	72	93,199

School	1983-84 Number of pupils	1983-84 Amount paid
Park	44	65,359
St. Columba's	33	46,961

School	1984-85 Number of pupils	1984-85 Amount paid
Albyn	10	14,703
Belmont House	5	7,164
Craigholme	24	23,982
Dollar	41	49,500
Edinburgh Academy	30	56,385
Fernhill	30	37,739
Fettes College	20	55,085
Fort Augustus	33	75,730
George Heriots	184	237,383
Glasgow Academy	41	58,644
Glenalmond College	31	92,503
Gordonstoun	18	53,433
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	139	185,286
High School, Glasgow	51	67,565
Hutchesons Grammar	139	145,719
Keil	53	89,564
Kelvinside Academy	45	66,860
Kilgraston	35	45,588
Kilquhanity House	13	19,928
Lomond	35	50,660
Loretto	22	54,650
Merchant Company	455	663,598
Merchiston Castle	33	88,882
Morrisons Academy	139	159,754
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	18	38,132
Robert Gordons College	55	52,979
Rudolf Steiner	51	61,338
St. Aloysius College	133	149,494
St. Denis and Cranley	16	21,663
St. Georges	10	16,935
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	21	39,575
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	14	14,704
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	48	64,389
St. Margarets Convent	13	17,815
Strathallan	21	60,751
Wellington	27	37,419
West of Scotland Co:		
Laurel Bank	47	74 662
Westbourne	84	119,304
Park	47	75,199
St. Columba's	34	53,797

School	1985-86 Number of pupils	1985-86 Amount paid
Albyn	10	14,481
Belmont House	11	16,394
Craigholme	25	27,663
Dollar	52	73,363
Edinburgh Academy	42	82,777
Fernhill	40	51,703
Fettes College	26	75,426
Fort Augustus	39	94,679
George Heriots	221	315,382
Glasgow Academy	44	69,250
Glenamond College	34	104,790
Gordonstoun	20	66,019
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	159	235,525
High School, Glasgow	57	80,585
Hutchesons Grammar	150	166,283
Keil	57	101,903
Kelvinside Academy	50	87,338
Kilgraston	48	73,296

School	1985-86 Number of pupils	1985-86 Amount paid
Kilquhanity House	17	29,537
Lomond	37	63,696
Loretto	22	58,547
Merchant Company	548	853,818
Merchiston Castle	46	131,780
Morrisons Academy	165	209,433
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	25	49,794
Robert Gordons College	52	65,429
Rudolf Steiner	56	80,013
St.Aloysius College	141	176,376
St. Denis and Cranley	18	32,495
St. Georges	13	23,898
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	22	40,532
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	14	18,526
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	54	88,436
St. Margarets Convent	8	9,670
Strathallan	32	93,130
Wellington	39	55,446
West of Scotland Co		
Laurel Bank	52	94,672
Westbourne	88	152,174
Park	44	84,865
St. Columba's	37	68,110

School	1986-87 Number of pupils	1986-87 Amount paid
Albyn	16	23,200
Belmont House	15	22,037
Craigholme	25	34,044
Dollar	52	84,220
Edinburgh Academy	38	92,105
Fernhill	45	61,516
Fettes College	28	83,265
Fort Augustus	43	111,336
George Heriots	224	353,230
Glasgow Academy	38	70,723
Glenalmond College	33	111,574
Gordonstoun	21	73,417
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	165	270,669
High School, Glasgow	61	95,600
Hutchesons Grammar	143	183,088
Keil	56	105,449
Kelvinside Academy	52	99,939
Kilgraston	49	90,430
Kilquhanity House	16	30,091
Lomond	40	80,848
Loretto	23	74,226
Merchant Company	543	1,006,057
Merchiston Castle	47	149,477
Morrisons Academy	154	238,430
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	26	63,169
Robert Gordons College	53	75,857
Rudolf Steiner	56	91,274
St. Aloysius College	139	212,434
St. Denis and Cranley	18	40,677
St. Georges	16	27,446
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	21	49,451
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	14	17,883
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	56	102,787
St. Margarets Convent	—	—
Strathallan	33	113,944
Wellington	40	66,763
West of Scotland Co:		
Laurel Bank	56	113,962
Westbourne	77	154,015
Park	49	94,875
St. Columba's	45	91,642

School	1987-88 Number of pupils	1987-88 Amount paid
Albyn	15	26,852
Belmont House	17	30,926
Craigholme	30	42,158
Dollar	57	99,923
Edinburgh Academy	38	94,858
Fernhill	42	64,669
Fettes College	26	93,060
Fort Augustus	43	110,700
George Heriots	221	397,293
Glasgow Academy	42	79,471
Glenalmond College	35	124,965
Gordonstoun	22	82,204
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	170	309,400
High School, Glasgow	58	100,843
Hutchesons Grammar	148	205,125
Keil	57	117,456
Kelvinside Academy	54	112,809
Kilgraston	51	98,374
Kilquhanity House	17	34,354
Lomond	43	88,898
Loretto	23	81,711
Merchant Company	560	1,054,024
Merchiston Castle	49	167,206
Morrisons Academy	156	267,297
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—
Rannoch	25	68,081
Robert Gordons College	53	79,362
Rudolf Steiner	58	98,283
St. Aloysius College	137	231,765
St. Denis and Cranley	20	41,471
St. Georges	16	31,512
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	22	53,692
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	13	23,404
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	54	107,711
St. Margarets Convent	—	—
Strathallan	34	122,736
Wellington	41	72,949
West of Scotland College:		
Laurel Bank	60	128,202
Westbourne	71	151,647
Park	55	116,530
St. Columba's	47	97,841

School	1988-89[1] Number of pupils	1988-89[1] Amount paid
Albyn	16	31,242
Belmont House	18	36,917
Craigholme	31	51,960
Dollar	64	117,095
Edinburgh Academy	43	109,185
Fernhill	39	62,186
Fettes College	25	102,211
Fort Augustus	38	108,229
George Heriots	228	432,739
Glasgow Academy	38	71,156
Glenalmond College	36	143,777
Gordonstoun	23	92,517
Hamilton College	—	—
High School, Dundee	166	340,000
High School, Glasgow	46	88,849
Hutchesons Grammar	143	223,837
Keil	57	130,246
Kelvinside Academy	53	119,440
Kilgraston	54	112,251
Kilquhanity House	19	38,925
Lomond	42	96,847
Loretto	24	93,451
Merchant Company	536	1,077,155
Merchiston Castle	49	177,432
Morrisons Academy	171	293,972
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—

School	1988-89[1] Number of pupils	Amount paid
Rannoch	26	81,535
Robert Gordons College	60	94,381
Rudolf Steiner	59	110,072
St. Aloysius College	139	258,398
St. Denis and Cranley	25	56,261
St. Georges	18	37,231
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	23	63,587
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	13	24,235
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	58	121,447
St. Margarets Convent	—	—
Strathallan	35	135,607
Wellington	42	87,048
West of Scotland College:		
Laurel Bank	60	148,665
Westbourne	63	151,095
Park	61	142,675
St. Columba's	36	82,836

[1] Provisional figures.

School	1989-90[1] Number of pupils	Amount paid
Albyn	16	34,945
Belmont House	18	40,352
Craigholme	31	60,675
Dollar	63	128,724
Edinburgh Academy	43	126,380
Fernhill	29	47,549
Fettes College	29	117,309
Fort Augustus	31	91,078
George Heriots	231	476,653
Glasgow Academy	41	89,288
Glenalmond College	31	135,432
Gordonstoun	22	102,303
Hamilton College	11	12,591
High School, Dundee	177	379,169
High School, Glasgow	38	67,409
Hutchesons Grammar	139	255,950
Keil	62	148,247
Kelvinside Academy	56	134,977
Kilgraston	50	122,937
Kilquhanity House	18	41,146
Lomond	43	107,455
Loretto	21	103,274
Merchant Company	508	1,106,500
Merchiston Castle	52	205,101
Morrisons Academy	171	331,000
Oxenfoord Castle	5	12,667
Rannoch	25	93,904
Robert Gordons College	51	99,008
Rudolf Steiner	56	120,186
St. Aloysius College	148	282,572
St. Denis and Cranley	26	60,626

School	1989-90[1] Number of pupils	Amount paid
St. Georges	16	38,833
St. Hilary's	—	—
St. Leonards	24	73,764
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	15	30,335
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	59	135,903
St. Margarets Convent	—	—
Strathallan	40	186,000
Wellington	43	96,903
West of Scotland College:		
Laurel Bank	54	149,718
Westbourne	49	120,071
Park	59	151,017
St. Columba's	40	95,020
Preparatory Schools[2]:		
Aberlour House	4	14,344
Ardvreck	1	2,777
Beaconhurst Grange	1	1,668
Belhaven Hill	4	11,989
Blairmore	1	3,726
Butterstone House	1	3,859
Cargilfield	2	6,085
Clifton Hall	4	9,529
Craigclowan	6	10,839
Crawfordton House	5	11,743
Croftinloan	4	13,350
Drumley House	3	7,567
Lathallan	6	16,874
New Park	3	7,888
Park Lodge	1	1,809
St. Mary's	2	6,030

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] The preparatory schools listed joined the scheme in 1989-90 school session.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy on admission to the assisted places scheme of schools which use corporal punishment.

Mr. Lang: Section 48A of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 rules out the use of corporal punishment for assisted places pupils. The use of corporal punishment for other pupils in an independent school is not a criterion for determining participation in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have reported any incidence of the use of corporal punishment in any schools which participate in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Lang: No.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 February 1990

ENVIRONMENT

Derelict Land

4. **Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of derelict land in public ownership are currently on the register; and how many have been removed as a result of privatisation of statutory undertakings and nationalised industries.

Mr. Moynihan: A total of 82,400 acres of unused and underused land were on the register at 30 September 1989, including 1,900 acres owned by the water authorities; 5,000 acres had been removed from the register earlier as a result of privatisation of other bodies.

72. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to conclude his review of derelict land policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department is currently considering responses to the derelict land policy review which was published for consultation in September 1989 and any policy changes will be announced later in the year. It is also planned to issue further consultation papers on proposed measures to prevent land from becoming derelict and on alternative financing arrangements for the payment of derelict land grant.

Private Rented Accommodation

16. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to abolish controls on the letting of private property in the residential sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We made important changes to the controls on rent and security of tenure in the private sector in the Housing Act 1988, and we have no plans for further legislation in this area.

Local Government Finance

15. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received concerning the introduction of the poll tax in England and Wales in the current year.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) earlier today.

19. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of representations that he has received from Devon and Cornwall concerning the application of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: On 6 November my right hon. Friend announced to Parliament his proposals for the amount of revenue support grant to be paid to receiving authorities and specified bodies. As well as a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) I received representations from Cornwall and Devon county councils and from four district councils in those counties. In addition I met a deputation from Torbay on 5 December.

22. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the level of the community charge to be set in Basildon.

Mr. Chope: None.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update to 1990-91 the answer given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), *Official Report*, 2 February 1989, columns *359-60*, showing the distributional effect of the community charge in comparison with domestic rates.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not at present available.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update to 1990-91 the answer given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), *Official Report*, 2 February 1989, columns *359-60*, showing the numbers of gainers and losers by family type and income band from the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not at present available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how, with reference to paragraph 3.36 of his revenue support grant distribution report (England), the figure of *(a)* £18·55, *(b)* £4·77 and *(c)* £5·21 are arrived at; how poll tax payers and council officials can check its validity; and what effect the choice of this figure has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The figures referred to in the revenue support grant distribution report (England) were determined by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority representatives. Together they account for £27 per adult of Great Grimsby's SSA.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes were made to the indicator data for calculating revenue support grant for local authorities between 16 November 1989 and 12 January 1990; why they were made; and what was the effect of the changes on the standard spending assessment for local authorities.

Mr. Chope: The two main changes to the indicator data were that credit approvals reflected more up-to-date information on each authority's actual credit approvals for 1990-91; and that the adult population for the area was based on information from authorities' community charge registers. In addition, a number of minor changes were made as a result of further checking and correspondence with local authorities, particularly with respect to the information on traffic flows. SSAs were calculated according to the formulae set out in the revenue support grant distribution report (England) approved by the House on 18 January using the indicator data as specified in annex A to that report.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to cap Wolverhampton council's community charge in response to that council's proposal to set a community charge in excess of the Government's guideline.

Mr. Chope: We have made it clear that if authorities budget excessively for 1990-91 we shall not hesitate to cap them, but it would not be right for me to speculate on the detailed operation of any capping scheme we might need to introduce or on which authorities would be capped were we to introduce such a scheme.

108. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he estimates the level of poll tax in Lambeth to be on the assumption that the current levels of expenditure including expenditure on education remain unchanged in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: The exemplifications that the Department issued on 11 January show that if Lambeth borough council and the London fire and civil defence authority budget in line with our assumptions consistent with authorities broadly maintaining current policies, the community charge in Lambeth next year will be £308. The level of the actual charge set in Lambeth in 1990-91 is a matter for the council.

102. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Association of District Councils on the introduction of the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Over the last four years the Association of District Councils has been invited to comment on all aspects of the implementation of the community charge and has made many representations and suggestions.

95. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the criteria for assessing rate support grant.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has said that he is prepared to consider new evidence relating to the standard spending assessments on which the distribution of revenue support grant is based. Any new evidence that comes to light will be taken into account before he issues his proposals for the 1991-92 RSG settlement.

93. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the rate capping ceiling for local authorities spending less than £15 million.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has no power to reduce the £15 million budget threshold in section 101 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, below which local authorities are exempt from charge capping.

91. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the implementation of the community charge by local authorities.

Mr. Chope: The Department issued a questionnaire to all charging authorities in May 1989 which gave us a clear picture of how authorities were progressing with implementing the charge. A copy of the results of the survey were placed in the Library of the House on 6 December. The Department keeps in constant touch with local authorities and their software suppliers and has just completed a further series of visits to a number of authorities to monitor preparations for billing and collection of the charge later this year.

89. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in favour of replacing the community charge with a tax on home improvement.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any such representations. Financing local expenditure through a charge linked to the capital value of people's homes would, however, amount to a tax on home improvement. The Government have no intention of introducing such a system.

67. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effect of the proposed community charge on the outer London boroughs.

Mr. Chope: If local authorities in outer London spend in line with our spending assumption, the average charge will be £320.

64. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the community charge.

105. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the standard community charge.

Mr. Chope: We continue to receive a good many representations on all aspects of the community charge, including detailed aspects of how the standard charge may affect the owners of domestic property which is not used as a sole or main residence.

47. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he has had with private landlords on the implementation of the community charge in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: So far as England is concerned, no such meetings have been sought by landlords or their representatives. The implementation of the community charge in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

43. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received urging him to replace the community charge with a system of local income tax.

46. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking the introduction of a tax on home ownership in place of the community charge.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking replacement of the community charge with a system of local government finance based on property values.

Mr. Chope: While we continue to receive a good many representations on all aspects of the community charge, very few correspondents suggest that this should be replaced by a system of local income tax and none that I am aware of are in favour of any form of roof tax. My hon.

Friends' questions might be more appropriately directed to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who is reported to be wrestling with a policy that combines both types of tax in ways that have yet to be explained.

31. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of local authorities setting a poll tax figure of £278 in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is yet in a position to assess the amount of increased spending by county councils in the forthcoming year.

97. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his best estimates of the average level of poll tax in England in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

104. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have indicated an intention to levy a community charge at or below the Government's projected poll tax figure for their area.

Mr. Chope: Charging authorities are not required to set their amounts for the personal community charge until 1 April, and little firm information about charges set is yet available to the Department. Local authorities have recently been asked to report to the Department basic information about their spending plans and where appropriate the average charge set.

32. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he intends to use in deciding which local authorities will be poll tax capped in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 February to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Home Ownership

24. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any fresh proposals to assist first-time house buyers.

40. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to extend the opportunities for home ownership.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We will continue the policies which have enabled around 6 million people to buy a home for the first time since April 1979.

North Sea (Pollution)

25. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of pollution entering the North sea comes from rivers; and what proportion comes from British rivers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Rivers are the most important source of North sea pollution, but not all other inputs can be reliably quantified. The combined effect of all United Kingdom rivers flowing into the North sea is to contribute about 20 per cent. of riverborne pollutants.

Methane Gas

26. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the number of sites in England and Wales that may be emitting methane gas in quantities likely to present hazards to personal health and the local environment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Reliable and complete information on these sites is not held centrally. This is the responsibility of waste disposal authorities which have co-operated in studies made by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. I expect to receive a report on this shortly.

Bellwin Formula

27. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to revise the operation of the Bellwin formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government will be making revisions to the Bellwin scheme from 1 April 1990 following consultation with the local authority associations. These will reflect the changes to the local government finance system generally.

Capital Controls

28. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will finalise the new system of capital controls to be brought in under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Chope: Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which provides for the new local authority capital finance system, came into force on 16 January 1990. Consultation on a draft of the main capital finance regulations ends on 23 February. We expect to lay the regulations before Parliament shortly thereafter.

Housing Improvement Grants

29. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to help elderly people obtain housing improvement grants.

Mr. Chope: Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 we are introducing a new system of house renovation grants which will allow local authorities to help the poorest households, including the elderly, with grants of up to 100 per cent. to repair and improve their homes. Minor works assistance of up to £1,000 will be available to help elderly people stay in their own homes or move in with relatives.

United Nations Environment Programme

30. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of funds the Government provide for the United Nations environment programme; and what are the comparable levels from other countries.

Mr. Trippier: In 1989 the Government contributed £3 million ($4,705,500) to the United Nations environment programme. This was the third largest contribution, with only the United States and Japan donating more. Contributions from other countries in 1989 were as follows (where over $100,000):—

	($000)
Australia	273
Canada	940
China	129
Denmark	487
Finland	1,292
France	1,077
FRG	2,565
GDR	211
Italy	664
Japan	5,000
Kuwait	200
Netherlands	791
Norway	1,338
South Arabia	250
Spain	505
Sweden	2,591
Switzerland	900
USSR	4,224
United States of America	9,500

Toxic Waste

33. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in recent months concerning the import and incineration of toxic wastes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department has received a variety of representations revealing public concern about the import of toxic waste for incineration and other methods of disposal under the operations of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations. The Department intends to review the operation of these regulations with disposal authorities and industry.

We are already seeking to persuade developed countries that they should be self-sufficient in dealing with wastes. Meanwhile, those transfrontier movements that continue are well controlled under international transport regulations and disposal in the United Kingdom takes place at properly regulated facilities. We also have proposals in the Environmental Protection Bill for powers for the Secretary of State to control imports where this is necessary to prevent risk of pollution or harm to human health.

99. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to discuss the management of toxic waste tips with the leadership of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has arranged to meet the AMA, ACC and ADC on 26 February to discuss all aspects of environmental protection policy.

71. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what methods he regards as acceptable for disposal of toxic wastes.

Mr. Trippier: Landfill, chemical treatment and incineration are all suitable methods in appropriate circumstances.

37. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will launch a comprehensive assessment on the state of toxic tips in the United Kingdom and their effect on ground water supplies.

Mr. Trippier: A specific review of waste disposal sites is not required. A 1988 assessment by independent consultants concluded that the quality of groundwater used for public supply in England and Wales was generally good, although a number of detailed recommendations concerning monitoring and research are being followed up by the Department. Waste disposal authorities are required to consult the National Rivers Authority over all applications for waste disposal licences. The National Rivers Authority already has extensive programmes for monitoring ground and surface waters which it is reviewing; these will cover, inter alia, the possible effects of disposal sites that predate licensing controls.

Chlorofluorocarbons

34. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress Britain has made towards meeting the terms of the Montreal protocol on chlorofluorocarbons use.

79. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in Britain towards meeting the international commitment under the Montreal protocol to reduce chlorofluorocarbon emissions.

Mr. Trippier: Action taken already, especially by the aerosol industry to remove CFCs from 90 per cent. of its products, means the United Kingdom met the 1999 requirement of the protocol by the end of 1989. The Government believe that the protocol should be strengthened to require a full phase-out of CFCs within 10 years.

Homelessness

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost to London local authorities of placing homeless families with private landlords.

Mr. Chope: The Department collects information on the cost to local authorities of using bed and breakfast hotels as temporary housing for homeless families. In 1987-88, the last year for which estimates are available, the gross cost to London boroughs of using this type of temporary accommodation was £127 million. Housing subsidy claim forms provide some further information on the cost to local authorities in London of leasing (which includes accommodating homeless families). The provisional figure for 1988-89 was £20·25 million. The Department also takes full note of data available from time to time through other sources.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will carry out a survey of the level of homelessness caused by the number of mortgage repossessions by companies other than building societies.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities already make quarterly returns of the numbers of households for which they had accepted responsibility for securing accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. These provide a breakdown of the total number of households accepted by main immediate reason for homelessness including mortgage arrears; although it does not distinguish households which were actually subject to repossession or between those which were building society or other types of borrower.

Latest estimates appear in table 2 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to cut homelessness in Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The review of the homelessness legislation, published in November 1989 sets out the Government's proposals for tackling homelessness. Copies are in the Library.

103. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the number of homeless people in England.

94. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the number of homeless people in London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest estimates of households accepted as homeless in England appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

100. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the most rapidly growing cause of homelessness for families seeking emergency accommodation under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In percentage terms there has been no significant change over recent years in the reasons why those for whom local authorities accept responsibility to secure accommodation are homeless.

101. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with companies and societies providing mortgages about the effects of their policies on repossession on the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Ministers and officials at the Department of the Environment frequently meet representatives from institutions which provide mortgages and discuss a range of issues, including possessions.

90. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest estimates of households temporarily resident in bed and breakfast accommodation in England appear in table 4(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

For information about Wales I refer the right hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

57. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to combat homelessness.

87. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any new proposals for combating homelessness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 17 January at column *249*.

54. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will carry out a survey of homelessness in rural areas in England.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department publishes quarterly statistics, based on returns from local authorities, which show the numbers of households accepted as homeless in each district and the numbers in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation. Copies are in the Library.

49. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the cost to local authorities of placing homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest estimate of the cost to local authorities of keeping homeless families temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation is £143 million (£104 million net of offsetting income such as DSS allowances) for 1987-88.

51. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for homeless households in temporary accommodation in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest estimates of households resident in temporary accommodation in England appear in tables 4(a), 4(b) and 4(c) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary tables", which is in the Library.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

45. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's most recent estimate of the number of households accepted as homeless for Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Latest estimates of households accepted as homeless in Greater London appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1989. Supplementary tables", which is in the Library.

Farm Buildings

38. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue further guidelines to planning authorities regarding the change of use of redundant agricultural buildings.

Mr. Moynihan: The re-use of rural buildings is one of the subjects covered in the draft planning policy guidance note "The Countryside and the Rural Economy" issued by the Department on 13 December. The closing date for comments on this document was 19 February, and all comments received are now being considered.

Association of County Councils

39. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment met representatives of the Association of County Councils informally at a dinner on 10 January. Matters of mutual interest were discussed.

Rural Deprivation

41. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken in response to the McLaughlin report on rural deprivation; and if he will make a statement.

50. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been undertaken by his Department of rural deprivation since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

55. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he proposes to take on the McLaughlin report on rural deprivation; and if he will make a statement.

70. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been made by his Department of rural deprivation and of the variation in housing standards in the rural communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken on the problems identified in the McLaughlin study commissioned by his Department on rural deprivation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A research report "Deprivation in rural areas" was completed in 1985. An analysis of the need for and supply of affordable rural housing has recently been completed by Action with Communities in Rural England for the Rural Development Commission. The commission, which is the Government's principal agency for carrying forward the Government's policy on the rural economy, is developing and implementing a wide range of initiatives which deal with economic and social problems in the countryside, including those identified in the report.

Anti-competitive Practices

42. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received about anti-competitive practices by councils; and what action he is taking to eliminate the problem.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department has to date received just over 200 representations alleging anti-competitive practices by local authorities in respect of services put out to tender under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 and about 35 relating to services put out to tender under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Each case is investigated and appraised on its merits. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has powers of sanction under the legislation and is prepared to use them where necessary.

Council House Sales

44. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the practice of council house tenants being offered discounts on the price of their home if they wish to purchase it.

Mr. Chope: Council tenants exercising the right to buy are normally entitled to a discount. Local authorities may also sell housing by agreement at a discount to sitting tenants and to purchasers in priority categories such as homeless people and first-time buyers, but are under no duty to do so.

Housing Associations

48. **Mr. Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many extra homes he plans for housing associations to build over the next three years.

76. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the increase in the provision of the Housing Corporation to provide new homes through housing associations over the next three years.

Mr. Chope: In his Autumn Statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that provision for the Housing Corporation's gross capital expenditure programme would increase from £815 million in the current year to £1,185 million in 1990-91 and to £1,736 million in 1992-93, doubling over a period of three years. On 30 January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced at column *175* that £120 million would be brought forward from next year's provision to this year's. On the basis of these plans, we expect housing associations, with funds from the Housing Corporation, to be able to provide about 93,000 homes by new build, rehabilitation and acquisition over the next three years.

Environment White Paper

52. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what groups he consults before publishing an environment White Paper.

Mr. Trippier: We welcome the constructive input to our White Paper preparation from many interested groups and individuals, in response to our general invitations to contribute.

Litter

53. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to the Government's proposals for tackling litter contained in the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Trippier: We received over 800 representations from local authorities and other interested parties in response to the consultation on the Government's proposals for litter legislation. These were considered in drawing up the provisions contained in the Environmental Protection Bill. In general, we receive a great deal of correspondence about litter demonstrating the high level of national concern about the problem.

62. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities keep the streets free from litter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside gave on 4 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), *Official Report*, column *44*. As my hon. Friend will be aware, those proposals are now contained in the Environmental Protection Bill currently under consideration by Standing Committee H. Additionally, a draft code of practice will be published shortly for consultation with local authorities and other interested parties.

Housing

56. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to increase the supply of affordable accommodation for rent and sale.

74. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to increase the supply of low-cost housing *(a)* for sale and *(b)* for rent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have taken a variety of measures to encourage the supply of low-cost housing, including the deregulation of the private rented sector and the encouragement of private investment in housing associations. In addition, planned public funding for the Housing Corporation is being more than doubled, from £818 million originally planned for this year to £1,736 million by 1992-93, for the development of new housing for rent by housing associations and the promotion of low-cost home ownership, including shared ownership.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates his Department has made of total local authority capital expenditure on housing in the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 by *(a)* all local authorities in England and Wales and *(b)* London boroughs.

Mr. Chope: The latest estimated outturn for gross capital expenditure by English local authorities in 1989-90, based on payments made in the first half of the year, is £3,990 million, some £680 million in excess of planned provision of £3,303 million. Under the new capital finance system the Government do not plan the amount of expenditure by authorities which is financed from the receipts remaining after debt redemption or from revenue. The figure of £3,131 million for 1990-91 in the latest expenditure plans (Cm. 1008) is therefore only illustrative and reflects the changing role of local housing authorities, away from being direct providers of subsidised rented housing, while the capital resources available to housing associations are substantially increased.

Equivalent estimates for London boroughs are not readily available. For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to the Secretary of State for Wales.

84. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the allocation of funds to Leicester city council for the building of new houses.

Mr. Chope: Leicester city council was informed on 21 December 1989 that its housing investment programme allocation for 1990-91 was £18·320 million. This compares favourably with allocations to other authorities of a similar size. In addition, up to a further £2·5 million is available for new Estate Action schemes. It is for the council to decide how much of its HIP allocation should be spent on a new build programme.

60. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to increase the supply of low-cost housing for sale or rent in rural areas.

Mr. Chope: The Government have more than doubled public funding through the Housing Corporation for new investment by housing associations, so enabling the corporation to increase the target for development of new subsidised rented housing under its special rural programme to 1,500 a year by 1992-93 and to identify a rural element within its low-cost home ownership programme. We have also made changes to the planning rules, to permit development of low-cost housing for local needs on small sites not otherwise designated for housing, and introduced a repurchase scheme to ensure that shared ownership housing in rural areas remains available for local people.

South Africa (Sporting Links)

58. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, during his meeting in Auckland with other Commonwealth Ministers of Sport, sporting links with South Africa were discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: Sporting links with South Africa were briefly raised at the informal meeting of Commonwealth Sports Ministers. Ministers confirmed their continued support for the Commonwealth statement on apartheid in sport (the Gleneagles agreement) and the Commonwealth games code of conduct (the Brisbane code).

River Pollution

59. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has implemented to tighten controls of river pollution.

Mr. Trippier: The Water Act 1989 extended the range of controls over water pollution in several significant respects, and established the National Rivers Authority in England and Wales. The National Rivers Authority has extensive powers to control pollution, and wide discretion over the use of those powers.

Unleaded Petrol

61. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for sales of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Trippier: Unleaded petrol now accounts for over 29 per cent. of the United Kingdom market.

Housing Action Trusts

63. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have any plans to introduce legislation on housing action trust areas.

Mr. Chope: The legislation that provides for the designation, establishment and operation of housing action trusts is contained in part III of the Housing Act 1988.

Local Authorities (Politically Restricted Posts)

65. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many posts are on the lists of politically restricted posts lodged by English and Welsh local authorities with the independent adjudicator appointed under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Secretary of State has no power to require the independent adjudicator to provide him with information. I have therefore drawn the hon. Member's question to the independent adjudicator's attention: he will no doubt write to the hon. Member.

85. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the regulations to be made under section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As soon as possible.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

66. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence his Department has submitted to the intergovernmental panel on climate change about projections of United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions for 2000 and 2005; and if he will indicate broadly what those projections are.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom under a wide range of scenarios has been submitted to the IPCC by the Department of Energy. The study was placed in the Library of the House on 30 November 1989.

Debt Charges (Liverpool)

68. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the outstanding debt charges on properties owned by Liverpool city council which have been demolished or are to be demolished.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not have this information. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should ask Liverpool city council.

Bathing Waters

69. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the change in the number of beaches conforming with the EC bathing waters directive over the last year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the 1988 bathing season, 267 of the 403 of the bathing waters then identified in the United Kingdom under the EEC bathing water directive met the directive's mandatory coliform standards. In the 1989 bathing season 336 out of 440 identified waters in the United Kingdom met the mandatory coliform standards. This is an increase in compliance from 66 to 76 per cent.

Environmental Protection Commission

73. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for an environmental protection commission.

Mr. Trippier: Institutional aspects of environmental protection policy will be reviewed in the preparation of the Government's White Paper on the environment this autumn.

Air Pollution

75. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what processes he is proposing to be subject to local authority controls over air pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside tabled at the first Committee sitting on the Environmental Protection Bill on 23 January a draft list of processes proposed for local authority air pollution control. I have arranged for copies of the list to be place in the House Libraries.

Further revisions will be needed if any of the processes are instead scheduled for integrated pollution control because they generate significant quantities of special waste.

83. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total sum currently paid to local authorities in clean air grants.

Mr. Trippier: Clean air grant reimburses four sevenths of grants made by local authorities to private householders for the necessary conversion of heating and cooking appliances to smokeless fuel, and two fifths of the costs of this work in respect of public sector housing. In 1988-89 the total amount of clean air grant paid to local authorities was £1·3 million.

Commonwealth Sports Ministers

77. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what subjects were discussed at the meeting of Commonwealth Sports Ministers at the Commonwealth games in Auckland.

Mr. Moynihan: The informal meeting of Commonwealth Sports Ministers in Auckland on 4 February discussed a broad range of issues affecting Commonwealth sport and the Commonwealth games. These included the International Olympic Committee charter on anti-doping in sport and the Commonwealth working party being set up to look at ways of strengthening the Commonwealth games.

European Community Environment Ministers

78. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met Environment Ministers and their equivalents from other member states of the European Community; and what was discussed.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend last met his European Community counterparts at the Environment Council on 28 November. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 30 November at column *370*.

Refuse Contracts

80. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have had section 13 notices served against them for uncompetitive tendering of refuse contracts.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Four. Notices have been served on Bristol city council, Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council, Knowsley metropolitan borough council and Charnwood borough council seeking their response to inquiries about the decisions they have taken to assign their refuse collection work to their own DSOs.

Fly-Tipping

81. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is proposing to tackle the problem of fly-tipping.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection Bill contains a number of measures to tackle the problem of fly-tipping. The Bill carries forward from the Control of Pollution Act 1974 the offence of depositing waste without a licence. The Bill extends the provision through the duty of care on all producers, carriers and other holders of waste who must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their waste is not illegally disposed of by any other person. To this end, they would be responsible for ensuring that waste is handed over to an authorised person and is packaged and described in a way which allows that other person to take care of it safely.

There is also provision in the Bill for a person controlling the use of a vehicle that has been used for fly-tipping to be prosecuted unless he can show that he used due diligence to prevent an offence being committed. This is aimed at organised fly-tipping where it is particularly difficult to prosecute the owner of a vehicle who may benefit from the crime but not actually drive the vehicle.

North Sea

82. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to attend the next North sea conference.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be attending the third North sea conference which takes place in The Hague on 7 and 8 March and looks forward to joining with colleagues from other North sea states in achieving a successful conference.

Planning Applications (Compensation)

86. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the past six months concerning compensation for people and communities adversely affected by major planning applications for infrastructure projects.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received 60 responses to our consultation paper on land compensation and compulsory purchase legislation which was issued on 7 March 1989. In addition, my Department regularly receives letters and inquiries about the land compensation provisions.

Integrated Pollution Control

88. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to cover industrial sites by integrated pollution control.

Mr. Trippier: Part I of the Environmental Protection Bill sets out proposals for a system of integrated pollution control (IPC) for the major industrial sites in Great Britain. We are the first country in Europe to legislate for such a sophisticated system of pollution control. We shall be consulting interested bodies on the categories of industrial processes which will be prescribed for integrated pollution control.

Canned Spray Paint

92. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had recently with the manufacturers of canned spray paint regarding its effects on the environment and its misuse for graffitti.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Sellafield

96. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of radioactive liquid discharges entering the Irish sea from the British Nuclear Fuels plc reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and what was the level in 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Information on radioactive discharges from British Nuclear Fuels plc Sellafield works can be found in the company's annual reports "Radioactive Discharges and Monitoring of the Environment", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Landfill Sites

98. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds the Government intend to make available to local authorities to help offset the costs of locating and making safe former waste landfill sites.

Mr. Trippier: Local authority costs in monitoring their areas—including landfill sites—for public health purposes, and in taking remedial action where necessary, are reflected in standard spending assessments and annual capital guidelines provided by my Department. For 1990-91 we have also earmarked a £33 million allocation for capital expenditure on landfill gas remedial work and the revenue costs of monitoring activity will be supported through the revenue support grant system.

Competitive Tendering

106. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the potential total savings across local government as a whole through competitive tendering and other cost-efficient practices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Audit Commission's annual report for the financial year ended 31 March 1989 identified total achievable financial savings or added value

(arising from service improvements) of £920 million for projects undertaken by local authorities between 1983 and 1989 but concluded that at 31 March 1989 savings of only £372 million had been fulfilled. The report notes, however, that the rate of improvement by authorities in implementing achievable savings has increased steadily.

Estate Action

107. **Mr. Butcher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total allocation of funds for the Estate Action programme being made available in 1989-90.

Mr. Chope: The Estate Action budget for 1989-90 is £190 million.

Disabled People (Public Toilets)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of organisations dealing with the needs of the disabled he intends to consult on the question of access to public toilets.

Mr. Chope: My Department intends shortly to commission a programme of research on access to public toilets for people with special needs, the primary purpose being to provide information on the needs of disabled people. To ensure that this research addresses all relevant practical issues, my Department will be consulting representatives of the Access Committee for England, the Centre on Environment for the Handicapped, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Spastics Society, Arthritis Care, the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain, the Spinal Injuries Association, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People.

New Parliamentary Building

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the new parliamentary building will be finished and ready for occupation.

Mr. Chope: I advised the House on 25 January 1990 that, subject to there being no further slippage in the contractor's programme, the building should be fitted out and ready for occupation around Easter 1991. I regret to say that the contractor has now reported further slippage which suggests that it would be unrealistic to expect the building to be available for occupation before mid-1991.

The New Building Sub-Committee is currently investigating this project and I understand that it expects to report to the House before the Easter recess.

Helicopters

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what advice his Department makes available to local planning authorities in respect of helicopter stations on *(a)* the storage of fuel, *(b)* the prevention of nuisance from noise and *(c)* general safety; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what matters are included in general planning guidance to local authorities on helicopter operation areas; and if he will make a statement.

(3) what representations he has received from the Civil Aviation Authority on the planning and layout of helicopter ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Planning applications for development associated with helicopter operations must be determined having regard to the local development plan and to any other material considerations. My Department has issued no specific guidance to local planning authorities on such development, although DOE circular 10/73 "Planning and Noise" contains advice on the development control implications of aircraft noise.

The safety aspects of fuel storage and of helicopter operations are the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive and the Civil Aviation Authority respectively. My right hon. Friend has received no representations from the CAA on the planning and layout of helicopter ports.

Chemicals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those chemicals or chemical compounds that are classed as toxic in the United States of America, but which are classed as non-toxic in England and Wales;

(2) if he will list those chemicals or chemical compounds that are shipped from the United States of America to England and Wales that are classed as non-toxic waste in the United States of America, but which are classed as toxic waste in England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: My Department does not hold sufficient information to allow a list of toxic and non-toxic chemicals or chemical compounds, as defined under United States legislation, to be prepared. It is, therefore, not possible to list those chemicals, or chemical compounds, classed as toxic in the United States of America which are classed as non-toxic in England and Wales, or vice versa.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many opencast planning inquiries his inspectors have attended in the last 10 years; and how many appeals against planning refusal have been allowed.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is available only in respect of planning appeals decided since 1 April 1987 and is as follows:

Year	*Appeals Decided*	*Appeals allowed after Inquiry*	*Appeals allowed by Written procedure*	*Inquiries Held*
1987-88	15	6	1	12
1988-89	16	8	—	14
[1]1989-90	9	4	2	7

[1] To 31 December 1989.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has on the levels of alpha activity in becquerels per kilogram of fly ash from Blyth coal-fired power station; and whether this exceeds the lower limit for low-level waste from a nuclear installation;

(2) what information he has on the levels of alpha activity, in becquerels per kilogram in fly ash from all major coal-fired generating plants in the United Kingdom with a capacity exceeding 500 MW.

Mr. Trippier: The levels of alpha activity in fly ash from the major coal-fired generating plants in the United Kingdom would be typically in the range 1,000 to 2,000 bec/kg. The ash from Blyth power station is likely to contain similar concentrations of alpha activity. These levels are lower than the thresholds set out in schedule 3 to the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, below which certain naturally occurring substances are not considered to be radioactive material for the purposes of control under this Act.

High-level Radioactive Wastes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between his Department and (i) Nirex and (ii) the radioactive waste producing agencies on future inclusion of high-level radioactive wastes into the deep repository being investigated by Nirex.

Mr. Trippier: No discussions have been held with Nirex or the nuclear industry on this subject.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals there are to allow the inclusion of high-level radioactive wastes in the deep repository, currently being investigated by Nirex.

Mr. Trippier: UK Nirex Ltd. has responsibility for providing disposal services for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste. There are no proposals for Nirex to assume responsibility for the disposal of heat-generating or high-level radioactive waste.

Norwich and Norfolk Councils

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out for each year since 1985-86 in a table the expenditure of Norwich city council *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in constant price terms;

(2) if he will set out for each year since 1985-86 in a table the expenditure of Norfolk county council *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in constant price terms.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Net Current Expenditure

	Cash Terms (£ million)	*Real Terms—1989-90 Prices (£ million)*[1]
Norfolk County Council		
1985-86	234·656	293·132
1986-87	254·034	307·000
1987-88	281·686	323·263
1988-89	312·355	334·220
1989-90	335·435	335·435
Norwich City Council		
1985-86	7,599	9·493
1986-87	6,343	7·666
1987-88	8·567	9·831
1988-89	9·670	10·347
1989-90	10·858	10·858

[1] Using the GDP deflator to convert from cash values to constant prices.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of people employed by *(a)* Norfolk county council and *(b)* Norwich city council for each year since 1985.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Staffing Levels at June

	Norfolk County Council	*Norwich City Council*
1985	23,985	2,189
1986	24,378	2,250
1987	25,176	2,221
1988	25,447	2,259
1989	26,293	2,180

Water and Sewerage Charges

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the new infrastructure charges on water and sewerage being introduced by each water plc in England and Wales as from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The infrastructure charges limits which the Secretaries of State for England and Wales have determined for the 10 water service companies and 27 of the statutory water companies, together with the proposed limits for Mid Kent and Mid Sussex Water Companies, are listed in the tables:

Water Services Companies: Water and Sewerage infrastructure charges (at 1990-91 prices)

	Water £	*Sewerage £*
Anglian Water Services Limited	479	597
Southern Water Services Limited	365	485
Thames Water Utilities Limited	43	337
Yorkshire Water Services Limited	529	626
Northumbrian Water Limited	111	240
North West Water Limited	198	338
Severn Trent Water Limited	498	356
South West Water Services Limited	654	557
Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig	259	332
Wessex Water Services Limited	551	983

Statutory water companies: water infrastructure charges (at 1990-91 prices)

	£
Bournemouth	1,000
Bristol	439
Cambridge	1,000
Cholderton	201
Colne Valley	435
East Anglian	1,000
Eastbourne	1,000
East Surrey	251
East Worcestershire	576
Essex	404
Folkestone	998
Hartlepool	252
Lee Valley	808
Mid Kent	[1]1,000
Mid Sussex	[1]392
Mid Southern	700
Newcastle	216
North Surrey	392
Portsmouth	358
Rickmansworth	395
South Staffs	606
Sunderland	485
Sutton	254
Tendring Hundred	1,000

	£
West Hampshire	868
West Kent	834
York	222
Chester	758
Wrexham	390
Average	593

[1] Proposed.

Infrastructure Charges

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Water Act 1989 to remove multi-occupancy, self-contained, charitable developments from the requirements of section 79 of that Act.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. It is for each water and sewerage undertaker to decide what infrastructure charge, if any, to make in specific cases, provided the charge does not exceed the limit specified in its instrument of appointment and is in accordance with its charges scheme.

Housing Completions

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the housing completion figure in *(a)* 1960 to 1970, *(b)* 1970 to 1980 and *(c)* 1979-89.

Mr. Chope: Total new housebuilding completions in England for these periods were 3·303 million, 2·779 million and 1·963 million dwellings, respectively.

Airborne Lead

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the level of airborne lead has changed since 1985.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The report by the Warren Spring laboratory on airborne lead concentrations in the United Kingdom 1984-88 shows a decrease from 408 nanogrammes of lead per cubic metre of air (ng/m) in 1985 to 190 ng/m in 1988—a decrease of 53 per cent.

Land Register

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to increase the rate at which land in public ownership currently on the land register is being disposed of.

Mr. Moynihan: The new codes of practice requiring owners to publish their own registers of unused and underused land place the responsibility clearly on them to ensure that such land is brought into use. Members of the public can use our PROD ('Public Request to Order Disposal') scheme to bring to my right hon. Friend's attention cases where the use of his powers to require disposal might be appropriate; these powers have been used in relation to 81 sites since 1984. Overall half the land entered on the register since 1981 has subsequently been removed.

Internal Delivery Service

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to move the internal delivery service from its current Ponton road site.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* New premises for the IDS are being sought, but no commitment will be made prior to sale as it is possible that the purchaser may be able to provide premises.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of jobs *(a)* in construction and *(b)* in all other categories in the area administered by the London Docklands development corporation; and what were the equivalent numbers of jobs in the same area or the nearest area for which statistics are available in the last full year before London Docklands development corporation was set up;

(2) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of jobs currently in the area of the Merseyside development corporation in *(a)* construction and *(b)* all other categories; and what were the equivalent number of jobs in the same area or the nearest area for which statistics are available in the last full year for which statistics are available;

(3) what is the most up-to-date estimate available to him of the total number of jobs in *(a)* construction and *(b)* all other categories for areas administered by urban development corporations; and what were the nearest equivalent figures for the same areas in the last full year before those urban development corporations were set up.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The information available is as follows:

UDC and designation date	*Estimated total number of permanent jobs in area*		*Estimated total*[1] *number of construction jobs 1988-89*
	At designation	*At March 1989*	
London Docklands—July 1981	[2]25,200	48,000	[2]5,000
Merseyside: original area—March 1981	1,500	2,900	1,110
Black Country—May 1987	70,500	75,100	n.a.
Teesside—May 1987	9,500	10,900	[3]66
Trafford Park—February 1987	24,500	26,000	[3]736
Tyne and Wear—May 1987	40,200	41,500	[3]249

[1] Pre designation figures are only available for LDDC.
[2] LDDC figures:
—the permanent job figures are not directly comparable. 1981 data was derived from the Census of Employment which included only jobs with a pay point in the UDA. The 1989 data includes all jobs in the UDA.
—the construction job figures are similarly not comparable. The 1981 Census gave a total of 1,964 construction jobs with a pay point in the UDA.
[3] Information is only available in terms of man-years, not actual numbers of jobs.

The UDCs in Bristol, central Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, and Merseyside's extended area, were established during 1988-89. They had therefore not been in existence long enough, by March 1989, for the total number of jobs in their areas to have altered significantly.

Denham Court

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the application by Buckinghamshire county council for consent under the London and Home Counties (Green Belt) Act 1938, to grant a lease of the land at Denham court, Denham.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* A decision is being announced today.

Audible Bird Scarers

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations from which he has received written representations concerning the use of audible bird scarers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* The following organisations submitted comments on the draft code of practice on audible bird scarers issued for public consultation by the Department in December 1988:

Association of District Councils
Association of Noise Consultants
Birdscarers Anti-Nuisance Group
The British Horse Society
Country Landowners Association
The Environment Council
The Law Society
National Society for Clean Air
National Farmers Union
Nature Conservancy Council
Noise Abatement Society
The Noise Council
National Physical Laboratory
The Ramblers Association
South Cambridgeshire District Council

The working party that drafted the code included the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisatons with which he has met to discuss the future use of audible bird scarers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* None.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet with representatives of the birdscarers' anti-nuisance group.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* None at the moment.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a further draft code of practice relating to the use of audible bird scarers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* By the end of March 1990.

Chipboard Factories

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy to require chipboard factories to be fitted with electrified filter bed equipment;

(2) what analysis has been made of the emissions from chipboard factories in England; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what controls exist on emissions to the air from chipboard factories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* Emissions to the air from chipboard factories are subject to control by local authorities under the statutory nuisance provisions of part III of the Public Health Act 1936. I understand that analyses of emissions from three major chipboard factories have been undertaken by, or on behalf of, local authorities.

Under part I of the Environmental Protection Bill it is proposed to give local authorities powers of prior authorisation over air pollution from certain categories of timber processes including chipboard factories. These processes will not be scheduled under the Bill until national guidance on appropriate air pollution controls has been issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Different pollution abatement technologies including electrified filter bed equipment are currently being considered in drawing up this guidance.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations, which came into effect in 1986, his Department has considered with respect to the waste recycling plant at Wath-on-Dearne, where toxic and dangerous chemicals are stored.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

None. The waste recycling installation at Wath-on-Dearne is a site licensed under section 5 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and as such is excluded from the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 by virtue of regulation 3(1)(e).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ambulance Union

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have been held with officials of the ambulance union in Northern Ireland about proposed salary increases and a pay review formula.

Mr. Needham: None.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met officials of the trade union representing ambulance drivers and associated paramedic staff in Northern Ireland; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Needham: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not met these officials.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the ambulance service dispute in Northern Ireland and *(a)* salary increases and *(b)* a pay review formula.

Mr. Needham: Representations have been received from six district councils supporting the request of staff side of the ambulance Whitley council to have the dispute referred to arbitration. One council also recommended that the ambulance service should be treated no differently from the emergency services for the purpose of determining pay.

Bomb Explosions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many bomb explosions there have been at the premises of Short Bros. since 25 May 1989; and if he is giving this firm security advice about future employees.

Mr. Cope: Since May 1989, there have been three separate incidents of terrorist attack against property belonging to Short Bros. plc, during which a total of seven bombs exploded. The security of Shorts' property is kept under review and, in line with longstanding Government policy on such matters, I know the right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to elaborate further on the measures being taken to safeguard this firm's property.

School Rolls

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each primary school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment[1]
Aghavilly	85
Ahorey	37
Anamar	84
Annaghmore	85
Armagh Christian Bros	459
Armstrong	441
Ballynaclosha	75
Bessbrook	125
Cabra	32
Carrickrovaddy	38
Clady (St. Michael's)	36
Clare	67
Clay	74
Clonalig	167
Cloughoge	333
Collegeland	40
Collone	123
Corttamlet	40
Darkely	86
Derryhale	86
Drelincourt Infants	45
Dromintee	138
Drumhillery	91
Drumsallen	46
Foley	82
Glassdrummond	72
Hamiltonsbawn	102
Hardy Memorial	496
Jonesborough	139
Keedy	57
Killeen	95
Killylea	82
Kingsmills	31
Kinnego	28
Lisdrumchor	23
Lislea	12
Lisnadill	52
Lissummon	54
Loughgall	48
Markethill	235
Middletown Boys'	49
Mount St. Catherine's Convent	484
Mountnorris	86
Mullaghglass	69
Mullavilly	50
Newry Model	48
Newtownhamilton (St. Michael's)	97
Newtownhamilton	125
Poyntzpass	77
Salters Grange	18
St. Brigid's, Crossmaglen	49
St. Brigid's, Drumilly	87
St. Clare's Convent, Keady	272
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	695
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry	777
St. Colmcille's, Armagh	27
St. James's, Markethill	49
St. James's, Tandragee	69
St. Jarlath's, Blackwaterstown	168
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	448
St. Joseph's, Armagh	113
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass	90
St. Joseph's, Killeavy	178
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook	376
St. Lawrence's, Belleek	53
St. Louis Convent, Middletown	42
St. Malachy's, Whitecross	92
St. Malachy's, Armagh	195
St. Malachy's, Camlough	311
St. Malachy's, Carnagat	427
St. Mary's Boys', Keady	250
St. Mary's, Granemore	61
St. Mary's (Barr)	58
St. Mary's, Mullaghbawn	237
St. Mochua's, Derrynoose	87
St. Oliver Plunkett, Forkhill	74
St. Oliver Plunket, Loughall	99
St. Patrick's Boys', Newry	377
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen	313
St. Patrick's, Armagh	505
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna	291
St. Peter's, Cloughreagh	286
Tandragee	349
The Cope	91
Tullyheron	52
Tullymore	67
Tullyroan	37
Tullysaran	74
Tynan	24
Windsor Hill	242

[1] At January 1989.

Benefits

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the latest figures of how many people are dependent upon *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit, broken down into claimants, dependants and children.

Mr. Needham: The latest available figures are:

	Claimants	*Dependent partners*	*Children*
(a) Income support (May 1988)[1]	184,140	44,940	118,240
(b) Family credit (February 1990)	14,524	11,118	[2]36,000
(c) Housing benefit (February 1990)	164,754	n/a	n/a

[1] *Source:* 5 per cent. sample.
[2] Approximate.

Stalker Inquiry

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 12 February, whether any aspect of the Stalker inquiry was on the agenda at the meeting held on 12 June 1986.

Mr. Cope: It is not the practice to divulge the content of discussions within Government, but the hon. Member will note that by that date Mr. Sampson had been appointed to head the Northern Ireland inquiry.

Housing

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were (i) the number and type of houses, (ii) the date of contract, (iii) the contract price and (iv) the final cost of Northern Ireland Housing Executive schemes *(a)* phase 6 RDA 1 project 2610263, *(b)* phase 1 RDA 89 project 2610376, and *(c)* phase 3 RDA 89 project 2610430.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. We have been advised by the chief executive that project Nos. 2710376 and 2610430 relate to phases 1 and 3 in RDA 87 not RDA 89. On this basis the information requested is as follows:

(a) Project 2610263 RDA 1 Phase 6: (i) 56 dwellings comprising five 3-person bungalows, eight 3-person houses, ten 3-person flats, twenty-four 5-person houses and nine 7-person houses; (ii) 9 February 1987; (iii) £1,314,551·51; (iv) not yet available but anticipated to be £1,349,298.

(b) Project 2610376 RDA 87 Phase 1: (i) 60 dwellings comprising five 3-person bungalows, fifteen 3-person houses, ten 3-person flats, fifteen 4-person houses, eight 5-person houses, six 6-person houses and one 7-person house; (ii) 18 March 1985; (iii) £1,442,279 (Fluctuating Price Contract); (iv) not yet available but anticipated to be £1,742,754.

(c) Project 2610430 RDA 87 Phase 3: (i) 41 dwellings comprising one 3-person bungalow, nine 3-person houses, fourteen 3-person flats, ten 4-person houses, and seven 5-person houses; (ii) 26 May 1987; (iii) £1,028,050; (iv) not yet available but anticipated to be £1,150,000.

Civil Servants

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of civil servants in Northern Ireland who *(a)* have made applications for and *(b)* are in receipt of (i) family credit and (ii) housing benefit.

Mr. Needham: I regret that no such information is available.

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate what the overall cost in Northern Ireland would be of increasing the rate of income support for all single people under 25 years to the same rate as for those over 25 years.

Mr. Needham: The estimated weekly cost would be £265,000.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate what the overall cost in Northern Ireland would be of extending entitlement to full income support to all those under 18 years of age in receipt of bridging allowance and special hardship allowance in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The estimated weekly cost for those getting bridging allowance would be an extra £1,500. Young people entitled on severe hardship grounds already receive the full rate of income support.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number and cost of student claims for housing benefit, unemployment benefit and income support/supplementary benefit in the past five years.

Mr. Needham: The information is available only for income support, and is as follows:

Summer vacation (1989)

Number of claims	*Amount paid £ million*
12,720	2·15

Note:—Excludes claims from lone parent and disabled students.
Source: 20 per cent. sample.

Life Sentences

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners in Northern Ireland prisons are serving a life sentence for *(a)* murder and *(b)* other crimes; and of these how many are admitted members of (1) the Ulster Defence Association, (2) the Ulster Freedom Fighters, (3) the Ulster Volunteer Force, (4) the Red Hand Commando, (5) other Protestant paramilitary groups, (6) the Official Irish Republican Army, (7) the Provisional Irish Republican Army, (8) the Irish National Liberation Army, (9) other Roman Catholic paramilitary groups and (10) none of these, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope: A total of 379 prisoners are serving life sentences in Northern Ireland; of these, 350 were convicted for murder and 29 for other very serious crimes. It is not possible to list the current paramilitary affiliation of these prisoners but at the time of conviction it was as follows:

	Numbers
UDA	64
UFF	5
UVF	107
RHC	1
Other Loyalist	14
OIRA	Nil
PIRA	136
INLA	15
Other Republican	Nil
None	37

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total number of life sentences received for crimes committed in Northern Ireland since 1974; and what was the average length of imprisonment served.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, between 1974 and 1989, a total of 467 individuals were sentenced to life imprisonment (which were not subsequently quashed on appeal) by the courts in

Northern Ireland. Of these, 63 had been released on licence at 31 December 1989 after serving an average of 13 years and eight months in prison.

Republic of Ireland (Extradition)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show by organisation and date the number of persons who have been members of a proscribed organisation and have been extradited from the Irish Republic in each year since 1968, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope: Statistical material about extradition from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland has been collected by the RUC since 1971. The information is not available precisely in the form requested: records differentiate only between terrorist and non-terrorist cases. The information available is summarised in the table:

Persons extradited

Year of return	*Terrorist offences*	*Non-terrorist offences*
1971	—	7
1972	—	—
1973	—	3
1974	—	9
1975	—	1
1976	—	7
1977	1	8
1978	—	15
1979	—	8
1980	—	12
1981	—	5
1982	—	18
1983	—	10
1984	2	1
1985	—	5
1986	—	—
1987	1	—
1988	2	1
1989	1	—

DHSS Offices

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* Roman Catholic and *(b)* Protestants in each of the following grades (i) administrative assistants, (ii) administrative officers, (iii) executive officers grade 2, (iv) executive officers grade 1, (v) staff officers in each of the following Department of Health and Social Services offices: (1) Strabane, (2) Omagh, (3) Londonderry, (4) Lisnakelly, (5) Limavady, (6) Coleraine and (7) Magherafelt.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The Northern Ireland Civil Service has an equal opportunities monitoring system which contains information on the sex, religious affiliation and disability of its staff. Disclosure of information on the religious affiliation of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff is governed by a code of practice which stipulates that no statistical summaries will be produced which fall outside the categories of analyses agreed with the equal opportunities Whitley committee.

The most recent agreed analyses were published in October 1989 in the third report of the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal opportunities unit; a copy of that report was placed in the Library.

Terrorist Offences

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people charged with terrorist-type offences were employed in Government offices and in the SPED dwellings department of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 14 February 1990]:* I am not aware of anyone employed in Government offices being charged with terrorist-type offences. Under both the Northern Ireland and Home Civil Service codes, a civil servant is required to report to his Department if he is arrested and refused bail or if he is convicted. He is not required to report that he has been charged.

I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that no person employed in the Executive's SPED department has been charged with terrorist-type offences.

Fishermen (Financial Aid)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial aid package will be provided by the Government to the fishermen on the County Down coast as a consequence of the inclement weather combined with the effect of the social security regulations introduced on 10 December 1989.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Social security legislation provides for the payment of unemployment benefit in respect of weeks throughout which fishermen are unable to work because of inclement weather. Where fishermen are able to work only on certain days of a week, unemployment benefit is payable for the remaining days provided that the earnings for that week do not equal or exceed the lower earnings level for national insurance contribution liability. This is currently £43 a week. Income support may also be available to fishermen who work for less than 24 hours a week subject to the normal rules regarding income and capital.

While I would sympathise with the difficulties caused by the recent adverse weather the Government have no plans to introduce special assistance for fishermen on the County Down coast.

Housing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings or percentages of dwellings in Northern Ireland are at present (1) owned outright by the occupant, (2) have owners with a mortgage, (3) are rented from a private owner, (4) are rented from a public body and (5) other types of tenure; and what were the percentages five, 10 and 15 years ago.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form required. Details of housing stock by tenure are given in tables 2.2A and 2.2C of "Housing Statistics 88" published by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). Copies of this publication are available in the Library.

The figures are given in the table for 1988, 1983 and 1978.

Percentage of dwellings by tenure

	1988	*1983*	*1978*
Owner Occupied	62	57	51
Rented from Northern Ireland Housing Executive	33	36	39
Rented from Registered Housing Association	1	1	—
Private rented and other	4	6	10

Figures available from the Northern Ireland continuous household survey published in the "Northern Ireland Annual Abstract of Statistics No. 7" which is available in the Library show 30 per cent. of dwellings were owned outright in 1987 compared with 42 per cent. in 1983.

Supplies and Services Boycott

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms which have made it known by advertisement or statement in the press that they will not provide material to any firm which carries out work for the security forces in Northern Ireland and the date on which such advertisements or statements were published or as much of such information as is available to him.

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms which have made it known by advertisement or statement in the press that they will not carry out work for the security forces in Northern Ireland and the date on which such advertisements or statements were published or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 20 February 1990]*: No.

Constituency Boundaries

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the boundary commission for Northern Ireland intends to conduct any interim reviews of the Northern Ireland parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 20 February 1990]*: I understand that the commission has not yet decided its future programme of work.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Departments (Accounts)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, when the format of commercial-style accounts produced by certain Government Departments will comply with the requirements of the Companies Acts.

Mr. Ryder: Government Departments which produce commercial-style accounts are as a general rule directed to meet the accounting and disclosure requirements set out in the Companies Acts, except where it would be impracticable to do so—for example, the disclosure of called-up share capital which has no counterpart in the central Government sector.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements will be made for customs checks on the passengers using the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Ryder: Customs' overall approach has been to devise arrangements which best suit the different types of train while observing the need for economy in the use of public sector staff. There will be three types of passenger train using the tunnel:

(a) shuttle services carrying private cars, coaches and ro-ro vehicles between Coquelles and Cheriton. For these, customs checks will be done at Coquelles before vehicles join the train, allowing them a free exit on arrival in the United Kingdom;

(b) through trains bound for points beyond London. In accordance with the Channel Tunnel Act, Customs are planning for all checks to be performed on the train during the journey, subject to the operators providing satisfactory facilities and to the payment of any fees or charges that may be imposed;

(c) capital-to-capital services terminating at Waterloo. Customs checks will be done at Waterloo station using the familiar airport-style red/green system.

Customs checks are highly selective in green channel systems, and only a very small percentage of passengers on the trains bound for Waterloo will experience any delay in their journey.

PRIME MINISTER

AIDS

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *382*, she will state the proportion of people with AIDS who are eligible for payments from the Macfarlane trust; and if she will make a further statement.

The Prime Minister: At 31 December 1989, approximately 6 per cent. of people in the United Kingdom reported to have AIDS were haemophiliacs who may qualify for payments from the Macfarlane trust. The trust was set up with an ex-gratia payment from the Government in recognition of the wholly exceptional circumstances of people with haemophilia and HIV.

ENERGY

Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the non-fossil levy on electricity prices to *(a)* industrial and *(b)* domestic consumers.

Mr. Baldry: The fossil fuel levy will be charged to licensed electricity suppliers as a percentage of their total leviable electricity sales revenue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 February that the rate for 1990-91 would be 10·6 per cent.

Nuclear Fuels (Disposal)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies his Department has carried out to compare the costs of dry storage with the costs of reprocessing and ultimate disposal of spent fuel from *(a)*

Magnox, *(b)* advanced gas-cooled reactors and *(c)* pressurised water reactors and nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has carried out no such studies. However, in May 1988, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, deposited in the Library of the House studies by the generating boards and by Ove Arup and Partners into the storage and disposal of spent Magnox fuel. The decision to reprocess spent fuel is taken by the owners of the fuel on safety, technical and economic grounds.

Liquid Petroleum Gas Tanks

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the Government have any plans to give grant aid for the removal of liquid petroleum gas tanks.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether under its contract to provide public relations and marketing advice to his Department, Lowe Bell has direct dealings with the news media.

Mr. Wakeham: Contact with the news media is an integral part of the marketing of the forthcoming offers for sale in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales. Lowe Bell Communications will, if required, be in contact with the news media in its role as special marketing and public relations adviser to my Department.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, under its contract to provide public relations and marketing advice to his Department and the electricity supply industry, Dewe Rogerson has direct dealings with the news media.

Mr. Wakeham: Contact with the news media is an integral part of the marketing of the forthcoming offers for sale in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales. Dewe Rogerson will be in contact with the news media in its role as joint marketing and public relations adviser to my Department and the electricity industry.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the percentage of the energy research budget in each of the OECD countries that is devoted to the development and application of renewable energy techniques.

Mr. Wakeham: No figures are available for private sector expenditure on renewable energy in OECD countries. Statistics on Government expenditure on energy R and D are collected for member countries by the International Energy Agency. The percentages requested for such countries, given in the 1988 IEA review, are as follows:

Percentage of Energy R and D Budget (which in some cases includes expenditure on Nuclear R and D) committed to Renewable Energy Research and Development (1988)

Country	Percentage
Austria	16·63
Belgium	4·09
Canada	4·23
Germany	17·61
Greece	61·46
Italy	6·51
Japan	5·95
Netherlands	13·39
Norway	6·95
Portugal	26·07
Spain	20·71
Sweden	21·06
Switzerland	14·19
United Kingdom	5·40
United States	6·08

The United Kingdom percentage is rising and, in 1989, was about 6·5 per cent. Care must be exercised in using such international statistics since countries differ in their definitions. The figures are also influenced by the extent to which countries have nuclear programmes which, of their nature, involve large expenditure.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total output of British nuclear power plants as a percentage of total power generation for each month in 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The total output of electricity generated by nuclear power plants as a percentage of total generation in the United Kingdom public electricity supply industry for each month in 1989 was:

	Percentage
January	24·4
February	22·5
March	21·9
April	21·9
May	27·4
June	26·5
July	23·8
August	23·9
September	24·8
October	21·1
November	19·4
December	[1]19·1

[1] Provisional.
Source: Energy Trends, Table 15.

Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the load factors for the advanced gas-cooled reactors at *(a)* Hartlepool, *(b)* Heysham and *(c)* Dungeness, for each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This is an operational matter for the CEGB.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list any projects in the Eastwood constituency which have received more than £100,000 in assistance from the Scottish Development Agency in the last five years.

Mr. Lang: No projects in the Eastwood constituency have received over £100,000 in assistance from the Scottish Development Agency in the last five years. However, in the period 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1989, agency expenditure in Eastwood has amounted to £457,000.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the potential economic consequences of the removal of the present limitations on increases in non-domestic rates; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The fact that the increases in non-domestic rates in Scotland have been held to inflation during the current year has already benefited industry and commerce. They will benefit further next year by my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to reduce poundages by 6·25 per cent. below indexation as the first step towards a common business rate with England. The Labour party's proposal to return to local authorities freedom to set rate poundages would on the basis of experience inflict a significantly higher rate burden on Scottish business than borne by its competitors south of the border and would consequently damage Scotland's economic prospects. It would also remove any prospect of harmonisation of business rates in Great Britain, a prospect which has been welcomed both by the business community and the general public in Scotland.

Rating Reform

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list all the orders made under the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, including any subsequently revoked;

(2) if he will list all the paragraphs of orders made under the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, including any subsequently revoked, which have been the subject of later amendment, substitution or insertion; and if he will provide the derivation and the date of the coming into force of each alteration listed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Statutory Instrument	*Statutory Instrument number*	*Date of coming into force*
The Abolition of Domestic Rates, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 Commencement Order 1987	1987/1489	18 August 1987
The Non-Domestic Rates and Community Charges (Timetable) (Scotland) Regulations 1987	1987/2167	7 January 1988
The Non-Domestic Rates and Community Charges (Timetable) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1989—these amend SI 1987/2167 and revoke part of Schedule 2 to those regulations	1989/2436	22 January 1990
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1987—now revoked	1987/2179	8 January 1988
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—these revoke and replace SI 1987/2179	1988/1477	15 September 1988
The Housing Benefit (Social Security Act 1986 Modification) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1483	21 September 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/157	26 February 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988—these revoke and replace SI 1988/157	1988/1539	1 October 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Amendment Regulations 1988—these correct mistakes in regulation 7 of and Schedule 3 to SI 1988/1539	1988/1611	1 October 1988
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/631	20 April 1988
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 1988—these amended regulations 2 and 3 of SI 1988/631, and are now revoked	1988/1540	1 October 1988
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1989—these amended regulations 3 of SI 1988/631, and are now revoked	1989/1004	1 July 1989
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1989—these revoke regulation 4 of SI 1988/631	1989/1476	4 September 1989
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (No. 2) (Scotland) Regulations 1989	1989/1477	4 September 1989

Statutory Instrument	Statutory Instrument number	Date of coming into force
The Standard Community Charge (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these revoke and replace regulation 3 of SI 1988/631, SI 1988/1540 and SI 1989/1004	1989/2437	22 January 1990
The Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/632	20 April 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these revoke and replace SI 1988/632	1989/32	3 February 1989
The Community Water Charges (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1538	1 October 1988
The Community Water Charges (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1989—these amend paragraphs 3 and 4 of SI 1988/1538	1989/2362	15 January 1990
The Personal Community Charge (Exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/1541	1 October 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these revoke and replace SI 1988/1541	1989/63	9 February 1989
The Community Charges (Levying, Collection and Payment) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1880	22 November 1988
The Community Charges (Information Concerning Social Security) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—these will lapse on 31 March 1990	1988/1889	23 November 1988
The Community Charges (Information Concerning Social Security) (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these will replace SI 1988/1889 on 1 April 1990	1989/476	1 April 1990
The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1904	24 November 1988
The Local Government (Non-Domestic District Rates and District Community Charge (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1963	2 December 1988
The Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988—now revoked	1989/69	12 January 1989
The Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1989—these revoke and replace SI 1989/69	1990/130	26 January 1990
Housing Benefit (Social Security Act 1986 Modifications) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1483	21 September 1988
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1989	1989/241	20 March 1989
The Community Charges (Deductions from Income Support) (Scotland) Regulations 1989	1989/507	8 April 1989
The Personal Community Charge (Exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired) (Scotland) Regulations 1989	1989/2234	29 December 1989
The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Regulations 1989	1989/2462	24 January 1990
The Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1990	1990/131	26 January 1990

Funerals

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the 1989 Office of Fair Trading report entitled "Funerals"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received no such representations.

Library Services

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the recent report on public library provision in rural Scotland; and if he will introduce a rural public library incentive scheme to help local authorities to develop the service and meet new demands.

Mr. Lang: My officials recently met representatives of the Scottish Library Association and the Library and Information Services Committee (Scotland) for which the report was prepared. I shall consider the report's recommendation for a rural public library incentive scheme in the light of an evaluation of a comparable initiative in England, and other relevant factors. The report also calls for action by rural library authorities to improve services to meet the needs of rural communities.

North East River Purification Board

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the detail of the letter his Department received from the clerk to the board of the North East river purification board, in October 1989, which intimated the board's intention to restructure its management organisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have nothing useful to add to the answer which I gave the hon. Member on 9 February 1990.

Acute Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the acute hospitals with fewer than 600 beds.

Mr. Rifkind: There are 149 NHS hospitals with fewer than 600 beds providing inpatient services in the acute, supra-area and special categories speciality groups. These

are listed in the table. Fourteen hospitals which provide maternity services but no other inpatient acute services are excluded.

	Average available staffed beds
Argyll and Clyde	
Calton Hospital	33
Oban County Hospital	41
Dunoon and District General Hospital	103
Islay Hospital	27
McKelvie Hospital	17
Mid Argyll Hospital	48
Campbeltown Cottage Hospital	19
Victoria Hospital	23
West Highland Hospital	33
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	353
Victoria Infirmary Helensburgh	24
Rankin Memorial Hospital	57
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	424
Paisley Maternity Hospital	118
Ayrshire and Arran	
Isle of Arran War Memorial Hospital	24
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	390
Lady Margaret Hospital	14
Ayr County Hospital	104
Heathfield Hospital	117
Seafield Sick Children's Hospital	47
Davidson Cottage Hospital	28
Ballochmyle Hospital	321
Borders	
Coldstream Cottage Hospital	12
Knoll Hospital	36
Hawick Cottage Hospital	26
Kelso Cottage Hospital	20
Sister Margaret Cottage Hospital	7
Hay Lodge Hospital	50
Borders General Hospital	401
Dumfries and Galloway	
Castle Douglas and District Hospital	30
Cresswell Maternity Hospital	69
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	405
Nithbank Hospital	77
Kirkcudbright and District Cottage Hospital	14
Moffat Cottage Hospital	18
Newton Stewart Hospital	27
Garrick Hospital	43
Dalrymple Hospital	56
Fife	
Cameron Hospital	298
Forth Park Hospital	143
Hunter Hospital	27
Adamson Hospital	53
St. Andrews Memorial Hospital	37
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	75
Glenrothes Hospital	72
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	121
Milesmark Hospital	187
Dunfermline Maternity Hospital	62
Forth Valley	
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	543
Stirling Royal Infirmary	415
Clackmannan County Hospital	23
Woodend General hospital	505
City hospital	228
Hyperbaric Centre	1
Royal Aberdeen Children's hospital	132
Arduthie hospital	21
Aboyne hospital	26
Aberdeen Maternity hospital	128
Kincardine O'Neill War Memorial hospital	9
Glen O'Dee hospital	60
Tor-na-Dee hospital	61
Roxburghe house	21
Jubilee hospital	46
Chalmers hospital	75
Dr. Gray's hospital	113
Greater Glasgow	
Belvidere hospital	312
Canniesburn hospital	328
Glasgow Royal Maternity hospital	128
Ruchill hospital	217
Mearnskirk General hospital	308
Philipshill hospital	124
Royal Samaritan hospital	53
Rutherglen Maternity hospital	107
Duntocher hospital	25
Gartnavel General hospital	533
Glasgow Homeopathic hospital	20
Knightswood hospital	210
Royal Beatson Memorial hospital	6
RHSC Drumchapel	22
Royal Hospital for Sick Children	294
Queen Mother's hospital	134
Glasgow Western infirmary	590
Children's Home hospital	25
Highland	
Dunbar hospital	16
Caithness General hospital	121
Lawson Memorial hospital	16
Culduthel hospital	28
Town and County hospital Nairn	26
Ian Charles hospital	14
Belford hospital	73
Mackinnon Memorial hospital	28
Portree hospital	13
Ross Memorial hospital	31
Nicolson Mackenzie hospital	15
Lanarkshire	
Bellshill Maternity hospital	161
Victoria Cottage hospital	16
Monklands District General hospital	534
Kello hospital	16
Lady Home hospital	21
Lockhart hospital	30
William Smellie Maternity hospital	64
Hairmyres hospital	420
Stonehouse hospital	292
Beechmount hospital	19
Belhaven hospital	57
Eastern General hospital	350
East Fortune hospital	97
Edenhall hospital	157
Edington Cottage hospital	9
Northern General hospital	144
Roodlands General hospital	74
Western General hospital	597
Astley Ainlie hospital	257
Bruntsfield hospital	12
Chalmers hospital	80
City hospital	418
Elsie Inglis Maternity hospital	3
Liberton hospital	230
Longmore hospital	107
Princess Margaret Rose hospital	261
Royal Hospital for Sick Children	158
Simpson Memorial Maternity pavilion	161
Douglas House Annexe of RHSC	22
Bangour General hospital	453
Orkney	
Balfour hospital	69
Eastbank hospital	62
Shetland	
Gilbert Bain hospital	73

	Average available staffed beds
Tayside	
Dundee Royal infirmary	311
Kings Cross hospital	194
Royal Victoria hospital	206
Dundee limb fitting centre	17
Bridge of Earn hospital	173
Perth Royal infirmary	329
St. Margarets hospital	16
Crieff cottage hospital	21
Aberfeldy cottage hospital	20
Irvine Memorial hospital	23
Blairgowrie cottage hospital	55
Meigle cottage hospital	12
Arbroath infirmary	70
Brechin infirmary	68
Forfar infirmary	65
Montrose Royal infirmary	47
Sunnyside Royal hospital	327
Stracathro hospital	312
Western Isles	
Lewis hospital	85
Daliburgh hospital	21
Lochmaddy hospital	25
St. Brendan's hospital	5

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now give details of the effects of the recently announced increases in hill livestock compensatory allowances, for eligible sheep and cattle, paid to farmers in the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. Rifkind: I have made a scheme under the powers contained in section 4 of the Congested Districts Act 1987 which will increase the HLCA supplement on hill sheep within the HIDB area in line with those awarded in the less-favoured areas generally. The new rate of HLCA supplement will be raised to 64p. The rate for cows maintained on C grade farms within the HIDB area is increased by £1·18 to £70·36 to take account of recent devaluations in the green pound. The increases will apply from 1 January 1990 and their cost will be covered by the provisions already made for such supplements within the vote for agricultural support in Scotland (class XVI, vote 1).

Cash Limits

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits for 1989-90 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 22, revenue and rate support grants, Scotland will be increased by £9,481,000 from £2,336,800,000 to £2,346,281,000 to cover adjustments in rate support grant payments for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 5 February, if he will now give the detailed terms of reference of the inquiry into the finances of Lothian health board; amd when he will publish the report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The independent inquiry into the financial position of Lothian health board is complete and the chief executive, NHS in Scotland is now working with the board to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to rectify the board's problems. I would be unhappy about publishing the report without the agreement of the health board.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was paid in housing benefit to tenants in the private sector in Scotland in 1988-89 to cover domestic rate bills.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that actual expenditure information is not collected in the detail requested. It is estimated on the basis of the average weekly value of rate rebate in payment to private tenants on 31 May 1988 that the overall cost was about £13·75 million. This includes both cases where the tenant paid rates directly to the local authority and those where rates were included in the rent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on measures implemented by the Hungarian Government to establish a law of contract and property rights and on further measures planned by the Governments of Poland and Hungary.

Mr. Redwood: Hungarian law on contract and property rights is embodied in the 1959 civil code (as amended). Other relevant economic and legislative measures recently adopted in Hungary include the law on economic associations, the law on foreign investment, the transformation law and the law on the protection of state assets. As far as we are aware, no fresh legislation in this field is currently planned. Ministers recognise the need to make long leases available to inward investors.

We understand that Poland is currently drafting new legislation on the law of contract and on property rights in conjunction with a privatisation bill. But the process is at an early stage. The present law of contract is, we understand, governed by the civil code of 23 April 1964 (as amended). Expropriation of property is governed by a special act, published in 1985 in the state gazette. We are led to believe that this will shortly be amended.

Companies considering investment in Poland and Hungary are welcome to consult my Department's east European branch or the commercial sections of our embassies to obtain fuller details of relevant legislation.

Inward Investment

Mr. Heseltine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total cost to United Kingdom taxpayers of all forms of grant and subsidy paid to encourage inward investment by Japanese industry in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Around £190 million was paid in investment incentives to Japanese-owned companies in the United Kingdom in the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1989 under the main schemes of regional and national assistance for industrial development.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what means are open to an investor to discover whether the auditors of his company have been criticised by his Department's inspectors or any disciplinary committee of the profession.

Mr. Redwood: Apart from writing direct to the auditors, or raising the matter at the company's general meeting, an investor may as appropriate consult my Department's investigations division or the professional accountancy body to which the firm of auditors belongs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will take steps to ensure that sole practitioners and partnerships which are permitted to carry out statutory audits will be required to file annual accounts and reports with the appropriate supervisory body.

Mr. Redwood: Decisions on the information which company auditors should furnish to recognised supervisory bodies have yet to be made.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to require companies to supplement their accounts-based financial statements with cash flow statements.

Mr. Redwood: No. Such supplementary information is best dealt with by means of accounting standards.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any accountancy firm was criticised by his Department's inspectors in their report on Orbit Holdings.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. I regret that no reference was made to this report or the inspectors' report on Burnholme and Forder Limited and Brayhead Limited in the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *139*.

Name of company	*Date of publication of report*	*Name of accountants*
Burnholme and Forder Limited	17 July 1979	Josolyne Layton Bennett and Co.
Brayhead Limited		
Orbit Holdings Limited	23 December 1981	C. T. Moore and Co. Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will take steps to require companies to publish profit forecasts.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the names and business connections of the 13 non-departmental inspectors appointed by him in 1988-89;

(2) if he will list the names and business connections of the non-departmental inspectors appointed by him in 1989-90.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

1988-89

L. D. Ziman of Messrs. Nabarro Nathanson, Solicitors
W. M. Hoffman of Messrs. Baker Tilley and Co., Chartered Accountants
D. A. Evans QC
B. L. Worth of Messrs. Clark Whitehill, Chartered Accountants
Miss M. H. Arden QC
G. N. Lane of Messrs. Chantrey Vellacott, Chartered Accountants
G. W. Staple of Messrs. Clifford Chance, Solicitors
T. G. J. Tress of Messrs Hays Allen, Chartered Accountants
P. L. Heslop QC
R. P. G. Lewis of Messrs. Kidsons, Chartered Accountants
M. Crystal QC
D. L. Spence of Messrs Grant Thornton, Chartered Accountants
F. J. Lawson QC
D. Anton of Messrs. Deloitte Haskins and Sells, Chartered Accountants

1989-90

Miss H. Heilbron QC
M. D. Boohan of Messrs. Grant Thornton, Chartered Accountants
G. S. Moss QC
J. R. Venning of Messrs. Robson Rhodes, Chartered Accountants
R. M. Owen QC
P. D. Powell of Messrs. Moore Stephens, Chartered Accountants
C. J. Brougham QC
R. T. Turner of Messrs. Neville Russell, Chartered Accountants.

Textiles

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that the ban on sectoral aid schemes for the textile industry has been adhered to by all member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement concerning the results of his monitoring of this agreement and the effects on the British textile industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is the responsibility of the European Commission to maintain the regulation of sectoral aid schemes for the textile industry, and the Government are confident that it vigorously enforces the rules in an even-handed way.

The United Kingdom closely monitors the Commission's work to ensure a level playing field for British industry and we are satisfied that it is not having an adverse effect on the industry.

Advertising

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his advertising budget for each of the next three years; and on what basis it is to be allocated.

Mr. Ridley: Individual allocations within the publicity budget beyond the current year have yet to be decided, but the Department's central publicity budget will fall in real terms over the next three years. I expect the majority of next year's publicity spend to go towards information materials other than paid advertising. Expenditure is decided according to need, and on a case-by-case basis.

Brand Valuations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department will issue guidance on the inclusion of brands valuations in the balance sheet.

Mr. Redwood: No. The Accounting Standards Committee has already issued guidance on this subject, which will be included in an exposure draft due to be published later this year.

Newtech, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will visit Newtech, Deeside industrial park, Clywd, to see the one-stop shop for business advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no present plans to visit Newtech.

Departmental Structure

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the future structure of his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The organisation of DTI was changed in 1988 at the time of the White Paper "DTI—the department for Enterprise" (Cm 278). One of the main changes then was the replacement of "industry" divisions by "market" divisions, organised by sector and covering a wide range of activities for each sector including collaborative projects, technology transfer, standards, market information, international trade issues and the promotion and presentation of policies for which other DTI divisions were responsible, such as the single market, deregulation and business/education links. My predecessor as Secretary of State decided last year that these organisational arrangements should be reviewed; the review has now been completed and I have decided to make some modifications to this part of DTI's organisation.

There are key priorities spanning all industrial sectors, on which the industrial side of my Department needs to concentrate. They include policies and programmes for collaborative research projects, technology transfer and standards; and there are other important issues for my Department, such as the response of business to environmental issues. I intend to bring together DTI expertise to provide a more concentrated focus on these long-term issues.

The present activities of "market" divisions will be better managed by a different structure of divisions each concentrating on a set of policies or programmes; expertise will then be focused on information technology, on manufacturing technology, on the environment and business, and on market assessment. Divisions with policy responsibilities for matters such as international trade, the single market, business/education links and deregulation will be responsible for communicating with business direct, rather than through the "market" divisions as at present. The focus of responsibility, and lines of communication, will both be clearer and more direct.

Where there are continuing Government responsibilities towards specific industrial sectors—such as aerospace, shipbuilding, vehicles, industrial materials and steel—these responsibilities will be handled, so long as they are required, by task forces which focus on the sectors in question. The task force approach will also provide a capability for responding flexibly to specific but temporary issues affecting industry and commerce.

For other sectors of the Department's work, I intend to continue my predecessor's policy of setting up entities such as the Patent Office, Companies House, the Insolvency Service and the research establishments as Next Steps agencies. Good progress is being made.

As I said in my letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on 26 January, I intend no changes in the arrangements for the regulatory divisions of the DTI—other than to make sure they continue to be adequately staffed to pursue their important functions. More widely, I am continuing to study how best industry and commerce should be provided with other DTI services.

The changes in the organisation of the market divisions will be implemented over the next few months. This process will lead to a reduction in the number of posts in the Department, of probably about 100 to 150 posts. I do not expect there to be any redundancies.

Military Equipment Exports

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for the export of military equipment were made in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989; and in each case how many of these applications were successful.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 February 1990]:* The number of licence applications submitted, and licences granted, in 1988 and 1989 to export goods classified as military equipment or technology defined as falling within group 1 of part II of schedule 1 to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 is as follows:

	Applications	*Licences granted*
1988	10,756	11,020
1989	10,099	9,952

The statistics of licence applications received and licences granted in the same calendar year are not strictly comparable because the processing of some applications carries over into the following year.

Car Phones

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on east and west European countries that have regulations banning or affecting the temporary importation and use of cars equipped with permanently fixed telephones that can be operated only within the United Kingdom; and if he has any plans to make bilateral or international arrangements to reduce this problem.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* My Department does not collect such information on a systematic basis. However, I am aware that many countries make arrangements to prevent the operation of mobile radio equipment installed in cars which because of differing frequency allocations or equipment standards cannot be lawfully used in those countries, either through sealing up the radio equipment or preventing its importation entirely.

As international radio networks develop, arrangements are being put in place to permit the temporary importation and operation of this type of equipment. Eighteen member nations of CEPT, the organisation of European telecommunications operators, including the United Kingdom, have signed a memorandum of understanding for the introduction of a pan-European cellular radio network which will, among other things, allow for the free circulation of the relevant equipment in these countries. Similar moves are contemplated by the European Commission, both with regard to equipment standards and free circulation, although discussions on the latter are at an early stage.

I believe that these moves will go a considerable way towards alleviating this problem where it occurs.

Footwear Imports

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total value of imports of both leather and synthetic footwear from *(a)* the Republic of Korea and *(b)* Taiwan, in each of the past three years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The available figures are as follows:

United Kingdom imports of footwear by country of origin

	Leather uppers £000[1]	*Rubber-plastic uppers £000*[2]
(a) Republic of Korea		
1987	16,862	2,807
1988	42,931	4,367
1989	47,236	6,076
(b) Taiwan		
1987	22,239	29,099
1988	34,648	27,975
1989	44,038	21,662

Source: Customs and Excise-British Footwear Manufacturers Federation.

[1] All men's women's and children's footwear with leather uppers, including sports and safety footwear, but excluding slippers.

[2] Waterproof and non-waterproof footwear with rubber or plastic uppers, but excluding footwear with textile uppers.

Electric Vehicles

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what investments have been made by his Department into research into electrically powered vehicles for each year since 1980.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* Assistance given by my Department towards research into electrically powered vehicles for each year since 1980 is as follows:

Year	*Assistance £*
1980	763,740
1981	658,223
1982	1,317,449
1983	1,541,799
1984	2,111,109
1985	2,169,772
1986	1,737,317
1987	816,995
1988	184,469
1989	Nil
Total	11,300,873

Post Office (Privatisation)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) at whose instigation companies have submitted proposals to his Department in relation to the privatisation of Post Office Letters;

(2) if the Post Office has been involved in consideration of proposals from companies in relation to the privatisation of Post Office Letters;

(3) what was the nature of the proposals sent by companies to his Department in relation to the privatisation of Post Office Letters; and on what basis they have been rejected;

(4) which companies have approached his Department in relation to the privatisation of Post Office Letters;

(5) if, in relation to the privatisation of the Post Office, he will indicate which companies were approached by his Department.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* As I said on 14 February 1990, *Official Report*, column 260, my right hon. Friend has met a number of parties some of whom have put forward proposals in relation to letters delivery, and some of whom have not. My right hon. Friend requested these meetings in order to hear all points of view, but the discussions were on a basis of confidentiality.

1992

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what manpower in his Department is devoted to providing advice and briefing to industry, commerce and the general public on the 1992 proposals; and what expenditure is devoted to this area of policy.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 30 January 1990]:* My Department's "Europe Open for Business" campaign, which is dedicated to providing factual information to business on single market proposals, is run by a unit of 13 staff, supported as required by officials elsewhere in the Department, including regional offices. Expenditure on the campaign since its launch in March 1988 has been £4·7 million, excluding advertising to alert firms to the challenges and opportunities.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the county courts in England and Wales and the current backlog in unopened mail at each county court.

The Attorney-General: I am informed that there is no unopened mail at any of the 275 county courts in England and Wales. At Manchester county court mail was not opened for the period 29 January to 1 February 1990 when the court was closed and moved to new premises. The backlog of unopened mail was dealt with by 11 February 1990.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on closer scrutiny of the human rights situation in Guatemala by the United Nations human rights commission;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations special rapporteur on Afghanistan;

(3) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations special rapporteur on Romania;

(4) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations special rapporteur on Chile;

(5) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations special rapporteur on Iran;

(6) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations special rapporteur on El Salvador.

Mr. Sainsbury: We strongly support the United Nations system of special rapporteurs and special advisers on human rights. We shall be studying their recommendations to this year's commission on human rights and, in the light of these recommendations, shall make a decision on each of their mandates.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether Her Majesty's Government will raise human rights violations in Burma in the United Nations human rights commission;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government will raise the human rights situation in Sri Lanka in the current session of the United Nations human rights commission;

(3) whether Her Majesty's Government will raise the human rights situation in Peru at the forthcoming session of the United nations human rights commission;

(4) whether Her Majesty's Government will raise the torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners in Turkey at the forthcoming session of the United Nations human rights commission.

Mr. Sainsbury: At this year's commission on human rights, for the first time, the 12 members of the European Community agreed to make a common statement on item 12 (country situations). In view of this development, national statements will not be made. The common statement was delivered by the Irish Presidency on 21 February. It raised our concerns about human rights in a wide range of countries including Burma and Sri Lanka. It did not raise Peru or Turkey. A copy of the statement is being placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to Washington DC, he discussed with his counterpart progress in arrangements for the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: This subject was not discussed. However, there is regular contact at official level with United States representatives.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during the European Foreign Affairs Council on 5 February, he discussed the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his meeting in Bonn on 6 February wih Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher, he raised the matter of the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. We do, however, have regular contact on this subject at official level.

English Teaching

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current annual expenditure on schemes funded by all Government agencies to teach English to adults around the world.

Mr. Sainsbury: About £30·7 million in 1988-89, of which £23 million was on direct teaching by the British Council, covered by income generated. The remainder was made up of FCO scholarships, ODA schemes and BBC World Service English programmes. Expenditure in the current financial year is expected to be about 5 per cent. higher.

Ivory

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any evidence of breaches of the worldwide ban on ivory trade involving elephants slaughtered in Kenya.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have seen no evidence of breaches of the ban on international commercial trade in ivory introduced by CITES on 18 January. Infractions of CITES rules are in the first instance a matter for the CITES secretariat.

South Africa

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the Government have put to European Community Governments for the lifting of sanctions against South Africa: and which sanctions were involved.

Mr. Waldegrave: At the European political co-operation meeting on 20 February my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pointed out to EC partners that for all practical purposes President de Klerk has taken the steps demanded by EC Foreign Ministers in 1986 when they imposed restrictive measures on South Africa and that it would be logical therefore to respond by lifting those measures. The measures concerned are a ban on new investment in South Africa, a ban on the import of gold coins and a ban on the import of iron and steel. My right honourable Friend urged our European Community colleagues to begin this process by lifting the ban on new investment in South Africa.

Hong Kong

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his supplementary answer of 16 February. *Official Report*, column 581, he will state the occasions on which the Chinese Government publicly expressed a preference for direct elections in Hong Kong to start with 10 directly elected seats.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are not aware that the Chinese Government have publicly expressed a view on the precise number of directly elected seats before 1997.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Employment Credit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the disability employment credit will be available to previous recipients of severe disablement allowance who have completed a youth training course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: It is our intention that people who have completed a youth training course and who were previously receiving severe disablement allowance will be eligible to claim the disability employment credit.

Civil Servants (Benefits)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to collect information on the number of staff in each Government Department who *(a)* have made applications and *(b)* are in receipt of (i) family credit and (ii) housing benefit and (1) are likely to receive from April or (2) are already in receipt of community charge rebate; and if he will give as much information as is already available to him.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total number of families receiving family credit where the main earner is a civil servant is 6,000. The number of families receiving family credit where the main earner is a member of staff of the Department of Social Security or the Department of Health is 835. We have no plans to collect any more detailed information on a routine basis. The numbers within DSS/DH are known only because the cases concerned are held separately for reasons of confidentiality.

Since these considerations do not apply to housing benefit or community charge benefit, separate figures are not recorded to show the number of claims from staff in Government Departments.

Relocation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends *(a)* to publish the results of the further study of the options for relocating some headquarters work and *(b)* to make a decision regarding relocation of further offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 14 November 1989, concerning relocation of headquarters work, to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) at column *170*. A copy of the review team's report was placed in the Library.

There are no further central plans to relocate work from any social security local offices other than the 21 local offices in London, the details of which were announced to the House by the then Secretary of State for Social Security on 16 January 1989 at column *46-47*.

All regions are currently reviewing their network of local offices in consultation with local management to take account of the changes flowing from the introduction of the operational strategy, the creation of the Contributions Unit/Agency, the creation of the Benefits Agency, and other related issues. Regions will be producing proposals for consideration at the end of March 1990. Any proposals for further relocation of work will be considered on their merits as part of this exercise.

Sick Pay

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the Government will amend the relevant statutory provisions so that women can apply for payment of statutory sick pay over the age of 60 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. Statutory sick pay (SSP) is not payable to women (or men) employees whose sickness begins after reaching state retirement pension age. Instead such people receive sickness benefit based on the rate of retirement pension which would have been payable if they had retired. We could not expect employers to know about their employees' entitlement to retirement pension. However, an employee whose period of entitlement to SSP begins shortly before minimum pension age can continue to get SSP after that age for as long as that period of entitlement lasts, subject to a maximum of three years.

Benefits (Child Rates)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* giving the child rates of national assistance, supplementary benefit, income support *(a)* as a percentage of the adult rate and *(b)* in real terms for each year 1960-1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The information requested is in the tables.

Ordinary child rates

	£	*As percentage of adult rate*[1]	*Adjusted to December 1989 prices*[2]
September 1959			
16-17 years	1·50	60·0	13·10
11-15 years	1·15	46·0	10·05
5-10 years	0·95	38·0	8·30
0-4 years	0·80	32·0	6·99
April 1961			
16-17 years	1·60	59·8	13·45
11-15 years	1·20	44·9	10·09
5-10 years	1·00	37·4	8·41
0-4 years	0·85	31·8	7·15
September 1962			
16-17 years	1·70	59·1	13·61
11-15 years	1·28	44·3	10·25
5-10 years	1·05	36·5	8·40
0-4 years	0·90	31·3	7·20
May 1963			
16-17 years	1·85	58·3	14·47
11-15 years	1·40	44·1	10·95
5-10 years	1·18	37·0	9·23

	£	As percentage of adult rate[1]	Adjusted to December 1989 prices[2]
0-4 years	0·98	30·7	7·66
March 1965			
16-17 years	2·23	58·6	16·54
11-15 years	1·68	44·1	12·46
5-10 years	1·35	35·5	10·01
0-4 years	1·13	29·6	8·38
November 1966			
16-17 years	2·35	58·0	16·31
11-15 years	1·75	43·2	12·15
5-10 years	1·40	34·6	9·72
0-4 years	1·18	29·1	8·19
October 1967			
16-17 years	2·50	58·1	17·19
11-15 years	1·85	43·0	12·72
5-10 years	1·50	34·9	10·31
0-4 years	1·25	29·1	8·59
October 1968			
16-17 years	2·65	58·2	17·23
13-15 years	2·05	45·0	13·33
11-12 years	1·95	42·9	12·68
5-10 years	1·60	35·2	10·40
0-4 years	1·35	29·7	8·78
November 1969			
16-17 years	2·80	58·3	17·22
13-15 years	2·20	45·8	13·53
11-12 years	2·05	42·7	12·61
5-10 years	1·65	34·4	10·15
0-4 years	1·40	29·2	8·61
November 1970			
16-17 years	3·50	67·3	19·99
13-15 years	2·40	46·1	13·71
11-12 years	2·20	42·3	12·56
5-10 years	1·80	34·6	10·28
0-4 years	1·50	28·8	8·57
September 1971			
16-17 years	3·60	62·1	19·02
13-15 years	3·00	51·7	15·85
11-12 years	2·45	42·2	12·94
5-10 years	2·00	34·5	10·57
0-4 years	1·70	29·3	8·98
October 1972			
16-17 years	4·05	61·8	19·89
13-15 years	3·40	51·9	16·70
11-12 years	2·75	42·0	13·50
5-10 years	2·25	34·3	11·05
0-4 years	1·90	29·0	9·33
October 1973			
16-17 years	4·40	61·5	19·64
13-15 years	3·70	51·7	16·52
11-12 years	3·00	42·0	13·39
5-10 years	2·45	34·3	10·94
0-4 years	2·05	28·7	9·15
July 1974			
16-17 years	5·15	61·3	20·16
13-15 years	4·35	51·8	17·03
11-12 years	3·55	42·3	13·90
5-10 years	2·90	34·5	11·35
0-4 years	2·40	28·6	9·40
April 1975			
16-17 years	5·90	61·5	19·61
13-15 years	4·95	51·6	16·45
11-12 years	4·05	42·2	13·46
5-10 years	3·30	34·4	10·97
0-4 years	2·75	28·6	9·14
November 1975			
16-17 years	6·70	61·5	19·81
13-15 years	5·60	51·4	16·55
11-12 years	4·60	42·2	13·60
5-10 years	3·75	34·4	11·09
0-4 years	3·10	28·4	9·16
November 1976			
16-17 years	7·80	61·4	19·96
13-15 years	6·50	51·2	16·63
11-12 years	5·35	42·1	13·69
5-10 years	4·35	34·3	11·13
0-4 years	3·60	28·3	9·21
November 1977			
16-17 years	8·90	61·4	20·09
13-15 years	7·40	51·0	16·70
11-12 years	6·10	42·1	13·77
5-10 years	4·95	34·1	11·17
0-4 years	4·10	28·3	9·25
November 1978			
16-17 years	9·55	61·4	20·02
13-15 years	7·95	51·1	16·67
11-12 years	6·55	42·1	13·73
5-10 years	5·30	34·1	11·11
0-4 years	4·40	28·3	9·23
November 1979			
16-17 years	11·25	61·5	20·20
13-15 years	9·35	51·1	16·79
11-12 years	7·70	42·1	13·82
5-10 years	6·25	34·2	11·22
0-4 years	5·20	28·4	9·34
November 1980			
16-17 years	13·10	61·5	20·74
11-15 years	10·90	51·2	17·26
0-10 years	7·30	34·3	11·56
November 1981			
16-17 years	14·30	61·5	20·48
11-15 years	11·90	51·2	17·04
0-10 years	7·90	34·0	11·31
November 1982			
16-17 years	15·80	61·5	21·23
11-15 years	13·15	51·2	17·67
0-10 years	8·75	34·0	11·76
November 1983			
16-17 years	16·50	61·6	21·18
11-15 years	13·70	51·1	17·58
0-10 years	9·15	34·1	11·74
November 1984			
16-17 years	17·30	61·7	21·38
11-15 years	14·35	51·2	17·73
0-10 years	9·60	34·2	11·86
November 1985			
16-17 years	18·20	61·7	21·45
11-15 years	15·10	51·2	17·79
0-10 years	10·10	34·2	11·90
July 1986			
16-17 years	18·40	61·7	21·37
11-15 years	15·30	51·3	17·77
0-10 years	10·20	34·2	11·85
April 1987			
16-17 years	18·75	61·7	21·12
11-15 years	15·60	51·3	17·57
0-10 years	10·40	34·2	11·72
April 1988			

	£	As percentage of adult rate[1]	Adjusted to December 1989 prices[2]
16-17years	19·40	58·1	21·06
11-15 years	16·10	48·2	17·48
0-10 years	10·75	32·2	11·67
April 1989			
16-17 years	20·80	59·6	21·44
11-15 years	17·35	49·7	17·88
0-10 years	11·75	33·7	12·11
April 1990			
16-17 years	21·90	59·7	—
11-15 years	18·25	49·7	—
0-10 years	12·35	33·6	—

[1] Based on the ordinary single householder scale rates until 1987 and the Income Support personal allowance for single people aged 25 or over.

[2] Based on movement in the Index of Retail Prices less housing costs.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Secretaries and Clerical Assistants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the pay of school secretaries and clerical assistants.

Mrs. Rumbold: The pay of non-teaching staff in schools is a matter for their employers.

GCSE

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage increase in GCSE A-grades in each of the past two years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following figures relate to attempts made by 14 and 15-year-olds. In 1988, 8·6 per cent. of GCSE attempts resulted in a grade A. Grade A results at O-level in 1987 constituted 13·9 per cent. of all O-level attempts and 5·3 per cent. of all O-level and CSE attempts. Comparable figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), of 30 January, *Official Report*, column 148, when he expects to complete his consideration for improving co-ordination between the AFRC and the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on 1 February at columns *289-90*.

Standards of Attainment

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the achievements of Her Majesty's inspectors in relation to standards of attainment in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's inspectorate makes an important contribution to the standards of education in schools by reporting impartially on the existing state of education across the country; by providing the Secretary of State and the Department with advice on policy matters; and by evaluating the impact of Government policy on schools.

Workers Education Association

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the general secretary of the Workers Education Association; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so. A working party composed of representatives of the workers educational associations, the local authority associations and the Department is currently discussing the practical arrangements for the funding of the WEA districts in England over the next four years.

Tertiary Colleges (Outer London)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the quality and effectiveness of the educational services offered in the tertiary colleges of the outer London boroughs.

Mr. Jackson: Two outer London boroughs, Harrow and Richmond, provide maintained education for those over the age of 16 through tertiary colleges. The colleges in Harrow were the subject of a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate last October, entitled "Aspects of Tertiary Education in the London Borough of Harrow". I am placing a copy in the Library. The inspectorate found that the quality of teaching and learning was generally sound, with good work leading to satisfactory examination results in many cases. There is no recent information available for Richmond.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking in respect of the disciplinary record of the city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is not taking any steps, and sees no need for a statement.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allowances for special needs or handicapped children are being made under LMS in respect of the greater expense of welfare and ancillary help for these children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In line with the Government's statutory guidance on LMS, all LEAs have taken into account in their resource allocation formulae the variations between schools in the incidence of pupils with special educational needs.

Teachers (Financial Incentives)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a chart or table showing, for each academic year since their introduction the percentage of each category of financial incentive, A, B, C, D or E,

offered to teachers in *(a)* infant schools, age range five to seven years, *(b)* junior schools, age range seven to 10 years, *(c)* middle schools, age range eight to 12 or nine to 13 years, and *(d)* secondary schools, age range 11 to 16 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available.

Non-contact Time

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has regarding Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools' recommendations in respect of non-contact time for primary school teachers; whether the Government plan to act upon any of the recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The organisation of the school day and the duties to be undertaken by individual teachers in their 1,265 hours of directed time are matters for head teachers. The interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions has recently drawn attention to the scope that exists for LEAs and governing bodies to develop policies to increase teachers' non-contact time.

Geography

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the teaching of geography in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The national curriculum geography working group was established last May to make recommendations about the geography to be taught to 5 to 16-year-olds in maintained schools. Its final report is due to be submitted by 30 April 1990.

Teacher Unions

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what meetings he has planned with teacher unions' representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend expects to meet the teacher unions shortly to discuss their response to the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions and to his proposal for implementation.

Capital Allocations, London

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what elements are taken into account to reflect the higher London costs in the capital allocations made to schools and colleges in London.

Mr. Alan Howarth: When local education authorities submitted their cash plans for education for 1990-91, these reflected regional differences in costs. In setting annual capital guidelines for education for 1990-91 the Department took into account local authority plans, and where the component of the annual capital guideline relating to a genuine need for additional school places was based on a standard building cost multiplier it was adjusted to reflect regional differences in building costs.

Further Education

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the proportion of children aged 16 to 18 years who attended schools or colleges of further education in each education authority in England and Wales *(a)* in 1980-81 and *(b)* for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer my hon. Friend to Department of Education and Science statistical bulletin 9/86 tables 1 and 2 and Department of Education and Science statistical bulletin 3/89 tables 4 and 8, copies of which can be found in the Library. Statistics for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

National Curriculum

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the rate of implementation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The full national curriculum will be implemented as soon as practicable to raise standards of education as quickly as possible. Implementation is proceeding in phases to make it manageable for schools. To ease pressure on secondary schools, my right hon. Friend recently announced that the requirement to teach 14 to 16-year-olds the foundation subjects outside the core subjects of maths, science and English would be introduced no earlier than autumn 1993.

Workers Education Association

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* district secretaries and national officers, *(b)* tutor organisers, *(c)* development officers and *(d)* clerical/administrative staff, are employed full-time by the Workers Education Association in England (i) in total and (ii) by district.

Mr. Jackson: The information provided by the Workers Education Association is set out in the following table:

Number of full-time staff employed by the Workers Education Association in England listed by district and category of staff

Districts	*District secretaries*	*Tutor/ Organisers*	*Development officers*	*Administration and clerical staff*
Eastern	1	5	—	5
East Midlands	1	10	1	5
London	1	4	2	4
Northern	1	8	—	2
North Western	1	8	3	4
Southern	1	6	—	2
South Eastern	1	4	—	1
South Western	1	5	—	2
Thames Valley	1	5	1	3

Districts	District secretaries	Tutor Organisers	Development officers	Administration and clerical staff
Western	1	8	1	2
West Lancashire and Cheshire	1	6	1	2
West Mercia	1	8	—	2
Yorkshire North	1	8	—	5
Yorkshire South	1	4	—	2
National officers				
National Office[1]	3			6
TOTAL	17	89	9	47

[1] National officers serve the whole of the Association including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Medical Research Council

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to suspend the funding of the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has concerning the amount of money spent by the Medical Research Council on the dissemination to Members of both Houses of Parliament of information concerning experimentation upon the human embryo.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that, since the beginning of 1989, the Medical Research Council spent a total of £3,530 in dissemination to Members of both Houses of Parliament of information concerning human fertilisation and embryology.

Study Vouchers

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any intention of introducing study vouchers for the 16 to 18-year-old age group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any intention of introducing study vouchers for the 16 to 18-year-old age group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government believe that all young people leaving full-time education at 16 or 17 should have the opportunity to pursue good-quality part-time education and training leading to nationally recognised qualifications. It is essential that our work force has the skills necessary to compete in the 1990s. The Government are giving serious consideration to the CBI's proposals for credits as a possible means of achieving this.

Assessment

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the objective criteria for assessment at seven, 11, 14 and 16 years are now in place; and by when he expects the balance to be in place.

Mrs. Rumbold: Criteria for assessment at seven, 11, 14 and 16 years are embodied in national curriculum attainment targets for key stages 1 to 4. Attainment targets have already been laid down in maths and science for all four key stages and in English for key stage 1. My right hon. Friend expects to make orders shortly laying down attainment targets in English for key stages 2 to 4 and in technology for all key stages. He intends to lay down attainment targets for the remaining foundation subjects by 1992.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the Government's pay policy for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently consulting the interested parties on his proposals in response to the interim advisory committee's recommendations for teachers' pay for 1990-91. He has received representations from three of the bodies concerned so far.

Physical Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list recent reports from Her Majesty's inspector of schools on the provision of physical education in schools; and if he intends to publish these reports.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is Government policy to publish all Her Majesty's inspectorate inspection reports. Some assessment of physical education provision would be included in all full inspection reports of primary and secondary schools. The most recent published Her Majesty's inspectorate documents which deal specifically with PE are as follows:

A Survey of Work in Physical Education in 16 Secondary Schools
A Survey of Some Aspects of Dance in a Sample of Secondary Schools
Curriculum Matters No. 16—Physical Education from 5-16

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those schools which have been *(a)* given grant-maintained status, *(b)* refused grant-maintained status and *(c)* await a decision on an application for grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is set out in the table.

Schools which have been approved for grant-maintained status

Schools	Area
Hendon School	Barnet
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained School for Boys	Barnet
Wilson School	Sutton
Baverstock Grant-Maintained School	Birmingham
Small Heath School	Birmingham

Schools	Area
Old Swinford Hospital	Dudley
St. James' Church of England School, Bolton	Bolton
Audenshaw High School	Tameside
Heckmondwike Grammar School	Kirklees
Castle Hall Grant-Maintained School	Kirklees
London Oratory School	ILEA
Queensbury School	Bedfordshire
Colyton Grammar School	Devon
The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington	Kent
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	Lancashire
Skegness Grammar School	Lincolnshire
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained School	Lincolnshire
The Kings School, Grantham	Lincolnshire
St. Francis Xavier's College	Liverpool
Bankfield High School	Cheshire
Claremont High School	Brent
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	ILEA
London Nautical School	ILEA
Beechen Cliff School	Avon
Southlands School	Berkshire
Netherthorpe School	Derbyshire
Ribston Hall High School	Gloucestershire
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	Lancashire
Southfield School for Girls	Northamptonshire
Long Field High School	Leicestershire
Guildford County School	Surrey

Schools which the Secretary of State is minded to approve for grant-maintained status

School	Area
Bishopshalf School	Hillingdon
Marling School	Gloucestershire
Stroud Girls High School	Gloucestershire
Rickmansworth School	Hertfordshire
Watford Boys Grammar School	Hertfordshire

Schools which have been refused grant-maintained status

School	Area
Ramsden School for Girls	Bromley
The Longlands School	Dudley
Simon Digby Comprehensive School	Solihull
Hindley Park High School	Wigan
Sir James Altham School	Hertfordshire
Castlemount School	Kent
Blessed Hugh More Roman Catholic Secondary School	Lincolnshire
Southpark High School	Lincolnshire
Kettering Boys School	Northamptonshire

Other schools where the parents have voted in favour of an application for grant-maintaind status but where a decision has yet to be made

School	Area
North Halifax High School	Calderdale
Wolverhampton High School for Girls	Wolverhampton
Bridgewater Hall School	Buckinghamshire
Brindley Hall School	Buckinghamshire
Foster's Grammar School for Boys	Dorset
Lord Digby's Grammar School for Girls	Dorset
Highwood School	Gloucestershire
Pate's Grammar School	Gloucestershire
Francis Bacon School	Hertfordshire
Adam's Grammar School	Shropshire
Stratford School, Newham	Newham
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	Birmingham
Crossley Heath School	Calderdale
Carre's Grammar School	Lincolnshire

Teachers (Employment Costs)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest available figures for the annual cost of employing *(a)* a primary teacher, *(b)* a secondary teacher and *(c)* a teacher in further education.

Mrs. Rumbold: In April 1989 the estimated average cost, including employers' on-costs, of employing a primary teacher outside London was £16,190 per annum. The comparable figure for a secondary teacher is £17,490 per annum. The estimated average cost of employing a further education lecturer, including those in London, was £18,400 per annum.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Television Signal Feed

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take steps to provide a feed of the television signal from the Chamber to offices and facilities used by Members in the vicinity of the Chamber.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The report of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House, agreed to by the House last June, did not envisage the provision, for the direct use of Members, of monitors carrying the live feed from the Chamber, with the exception of two sets in the Division Lobbies. The Committee has since approved the installation of monitors to meet the special requirements of Mr. Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means. So far as the rest of the House is concerned, the Committee has so far taken the view that the presence of monitors in Members' rooms could be intrusive and might constitute a distraction from the Chamber, leaving aside the question of cost. The Committee will, however, keep the matter under review during the course of the experiment.

Bleepers

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the regulations governing the use of radio pagers and other bleeping machines within the precincts; and what steps he is taking to prevent their use in areas used by other hon. Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[holding answer 20 February 1990]*: The use of radio pagers by right hon. and hon. Members is a personal matter and no regulations exist governing their use within the precincts of the House. I am aware that such devices can cause annoyance and I have asked the Serjeant at Arms to remind Members that pagers should be switched off while they are present in the Chamber or in Committees of the House.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Duchy of Lancaster has a small staff and there are no formal arrangements for paternity leave. Requests for paternity leave would be considered as and when they arose.

WALES

Cataract Treatment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing, for the latest available date, and for 12 months earlier, the number of people in each district health authority area, or at each district general hospital, as convenient, awaiting treatment for eye cataracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Waiting list information on individual types of treatment is not collected centrally on a routine basis. However, information on patients waiting for treatment in the specialty of ophthalmology is published in Welsh hospital waiting list bulletin: 1988, Vol. 2 and 1989, Vol. 2, copies of which are in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made, in deciding on community charge relief for certain community council areas in Wales, of the adequacy and comprehensiveness with which the last rate revaluation throughout each such community was completed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Entitlements to community charge relief have been calculated on a uniform basis, using information on domestic rateable values supplied by Welsh charging authorities (district councils), and duly certified by the principal finance officers of those authorities.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

Transport Policies

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish details of the current and relevant transport policy and programme submissions of Gwent, South Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan county councils;

(2) what are the delays on progress in the current transport policy and programmes submitted by the Gwent, South Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan county councils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: County councils in Wales are no longer required to submit transport policy and programme statements to me though a number of counties continue to produce them for their own use. The outcome of the transport grant submissions for 1990-91 from all Welsh counties and the submission from Mid Glamorgan for acceptance of the second phase of the valleys rail strategy as a project of regional or national importance was announced on 29 November 1989.

Hospitals

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans have been initiated for restructuring the organisation of certain hospitals in Gwent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Gwent health authority is formulating proposals for revised management arrangements for the South Gwent health unit, which include organisation of hospitals in the unit's area.

I understand that after further local consultation the authority will submit the proposals to the Welsh Office for approval.

Fishguard Bypass

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans for a bypass at Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, on the suggested route 6 from the A40 to A487 during the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Such a scheme might be a possibility in the longer term.

"Wales: Land of Quality"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many companies are currently licensed to use the "Wales: Land of Quality" identity; and what is their turnover and number of employees;

(2) what income has been gained from licence fees for using the "Wales: Land of Quality" identity for selling the labels;

(3) what were the itemised costs for the design and development of the "Wales: Land of Quality" identity;

(4) what were the itemised costs of producing, distributing and promoting the "Wales: Land of Quality" identity in terms of product labels, promotional material and advertisements.

Mr. Peter Walker: The cost of producing the "Wales: Land of Quality" emblem was £60,000 resulting from a competitive tender between three firms, which represented professional fees for design and production by outside consultants and transfer of copyright to the Welsh Office.

The emblem and the positive image it conveys has been used as part of a wider strategy to help develop the Welsh economy by reinforcing the growing perception of the high quality of Welsh firms and their products. The costs incurred so far in promoting its use have been limited to the cost of writing to eligible Welsh companies (principally those awarded quality certification under BS 5750, BS 9000, MoD allied quality assurance procedure quality marks), to appropriate public agencies and to local authorities, urging them to use the emblem.

Eligible organisations are issued with a licence, for use of the emblem, and sample artwork, for which no fee is charged. Currently 72 companies and 12 agencies are licensed to use the emblem. A further 100 companies and agencies have recently been approached with a view to their adopting the emblem. (No details are available of turnover and number of employees).

GCSE Cources

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many courses were offered by the Welsh joint education committee *(a)* at the start of the GCSE programme and *(b)* at the current time.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Fifty-three courses were offered by the WJEC at the start of the GCSE programme, and 57 courses are offered at the present time.

Craft Initiative

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra jobs and sales have been achieved following the setting up of the craft initiative; and what were the original targets set for *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991.

Mr. Peter Walker: The craft initiative was launched in early 1988 with the overall aim of boosting sales and jobs in the Welsh craft industry by at least 50 per cent. within three years of the start of the initiative (April 1988). An evaluation of the campaign's impact on the industry will be carried out once the final year, which starts on 1 April 1990, is complete.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the consultants and consultancies involved in the initial review of the craft industry have subsequently had contracts with or provided services to *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(c)* the Development Board for Rural Wales; and what is the worth of these contracts or services.

Mr. Peter Walker: The craft initiative review was carried out by Tony Ball Associates. Since the review was completed in 1988, Mr. Ball and his company have undertaken no paid work in connection with the craft initiative for my Department.

I am not responsible for or consulted on contracts placed by the WDA or the DBRW and have therefore asked them to provide the hon. Gentleman with the information he is seeking.

Road Improvements

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many road improvement schemes costing over £1 million have been developed in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Forty-one major road improvement schemes have been completed since 1980. Completions up to January 1989 are given in table 4 of "Roads in Wales; Progress and Plans for the 1990s." Since then the following have been completed:

	Opening Date
A55 Northop by-pass	June 1989
A55 Penmaenbach-Dwygyfylchi	June 1989
A55 Penmaenmawr by-pass	October 1989
A55 Llanfairfechan by-pass	October 1989

Nine schemes are under construction as follows:

A55 Conwy Crossing
A483 Newbridge by-pass and Whitehurst Link
A55 Travellers Inn
A483 Chirk by-pass
A48 Nant-y-Caws-Coed Hirion
A470 Llanidloes by-pass
A487 Cardigan by-pass
A40 Haverfordwest Eastern by-pass II
A55 Pen-y-Clip

Fifty schemes listed in table 6 of "Roads in Wales" are in preparation; and the addition to the programme of schemes for the A5 on Anglesey has been announced.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total spending on road improvement schemes within his Department's responsibilities in the areas of *(a)* each district borough or city council and *(b)* each county council area in Wales, for each year since 1980.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on trunk roads and motorway expenditure, for which the Welsh Office is the responsible highway authority, is not readily available analysed by district borough or city council area, or by county prior to April 1981. The available information by county is shown in the table:

£ million (gross)

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
[1]1981-82	24	20	30	8	7	7	6	6
[1]1982-83	45	15	7	23	11	5	5	8
[2]1983-84	53	20	6	23	27	5	9	6
[2]1984-85	33	13	6	15	22	5	8	3
[2]1985-86	27	13	16	16	13	6	4	4
[2]1986-87	28	20	12	27	11	5	6	3
[2]1987-88	19	17	7	63	8	5	3	7

Source:
[1] Digest of Welsh Statistics.
[2] Welsh Transport Statistics.
Comparable information for expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 is not yet available.

Opencast Mining, Buckley

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a public inquiry to enable local residents to put their case concerning the application by British Coal to begin opencast mining operations at Bannel Bridge, Buckley, Clwyd.

Mr. Grist: The application is before Clwyd county council as minerals planning authority. On the information available to him my right hon. Friend sees no reason why an application of this nature, which does not appear to raise planning issues of more than local importance, should not be decided by the council. He is unable, therefore, to agree to the hon. Gentleman's request.

Primary School Classes

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of primary classes in each of the Welsh counties now contains more than 40 children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The proportion of registered ordinary classes in maintained primary schools containing more than 40 pupils at September 1988 is shown in the table:

	Percentage
Clwyd	0·2
Dyfed	0·1
Gwent	0·1
Gwynedd	0·1
Mid Glamorgan	—
Powys	—
South Glamorgan	0·1
West Glamorgan	0·1

Water Supplies

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made with water companies in Wales to ensure that water supplies are readily accessible and available to the emergency services in Wales to deal with fires and other emergencies.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the fire authorities concerned. Section 47 of the Water Act 1989 places a duty on a water undertaker to allow any person to take water for extinguishing fires from any of its water mains or other pipes on which a water hydrant is fixed. Section 51 places a duty on a water undertaker to cause the water in such of its water mains and other pipes that have fire hydrants fixed on them to be laid on constantly and at such a pressure as will cause the water to reach to the top of the topmost storey of every building within the undertaker's area. The obligations of a water undertaker under both sections are enforceable under section 20 by the Secretary of State; and in addition, where a water undertaker is in breach of a duty under this section, the undertaker shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine.

Llandudno Centre

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will reconsider the application by Aberconwy borough council to spend £11 million on an arts, leisure and conference centre for Llandudno.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 15 January 1990.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will widen the remit of the Welsh Development Agency in line with that of the Development Board for Rural Wales to include social improvements and tourism facilities.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Adequate provision already exists for aiding social and tourism facilities in areas which are not served by the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Teachers

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of vacant teaching places in each of the education authorities in Wales; and what is the number of teachers leaving the profession in Wales each year from 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of vacant teaching places in each of the education authorities is shown in the table:

	Number[1]
Clwyd	26
Dyfed	7
Gwent	61
Gwynedd	24
Mid Glamorgan	125
Powys	16
South Glamorgan	15
West Glamorgan	12
Total Wales	286

Source: Form 618G, supplied by local education authorities at 19 January 1989 relating to full-time teacher vacancies.

Information on the number of teachers leaving the profession in Wales is not available. The number of teachers who ceased full-time teaching in the maintained schools sector for any one of a number of reasons including retirement is as follows:

Year ending	*Number*
31 March 1986	1,971
31 March 1987	1,879

Rural Wales

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to urge the Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales to give special attention to areas of rural Dyfed and Gwynedd in the drive to revitalise the economy of rural Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The distribution of WDA and DBRW resources to particular areas is largely a matter for the bodies themselves. Government policies are, of course, directed towards the establishment of a thriving and self-sustaining rural economy. The WDA's recently launched rural strategy and the DBRW's strategy for the 1990s and its western initiative provide clear evidence of those bodies' commitment to those policies. Dyfed and Gwynedd, along with the rest of rural Wales, will continue to benefit from the activities of the agency and the board.

Monitoring Officers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to allow adequate time for consultation with bodies representing local authorities in Wales on the draft subsidiary legislation bringing into effect the provisions of section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Grist: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Gentleman's question on 8 February I will provide local authority associations in Wales with an advance draft of the order, bringing into effect the regulations on companies, for comment.

Acute Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the acute hospitals with fewer than 600 beds.

Mr. Grist: The information, as at 31 December 1988, is shown as follows:

ACUTE HOSPITALS

Clwyd
Catherine Gladstone
Colwyn Bay Community
Denbighsire Infirmary
Flint Cottage
Holywell Cottage
Llangollen
Mold
Prestatyn Community
Ruthin
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd

East Dyfed
Cardigan and District
Llandovery Cottage
Llanelli

Gwent
Blaenavon Health Care Unit
Monmouth General
Nevill Hall

Gwynedd
Caernarvonshire Eye and Cottage
Ffestiniog Memorial
Madoc Memorial
Stanley Sailors
St. Davids

Mid Glamorgan
Bridgend General
East Glamorgan General
Llynfi
Maesteg General
Mountain Ash
Pontypridd and District
Porth and District
Prince Charles
Princess of Wales
Treherbert

Pembrokeshire
Tenby Cottage

Powys
Brecon War Memorial
Builth Cottage
Machynlleth and District

South Glamorgan
Barry Community

West Glamorgan
Neath General
Port Talbot
Singleton

MAINLY ACUTE HOSPITALS

Clwyd
Abergele

East Dyfed
Bronglais General
West Wales General

Gwent
County

Gwynedd
Dolgellau and District
Llandudno General
Towyn and District
Ysbyty Gwynedd

Mid Glamorgan
Aberdare and District
Caerphilly District Miners
Llwynpia
Pentwyn Cottage

Pembrokeshire
Withybush

Powys
Machynlleth Chest
Montgomery County Infirmary

South Glamorgan
Cardiff Royal Infirmary
Llandough
Rookwood

PARTLY ACUTE HOSPITALS

Clwyd
HM Stanley
Royal Alexandra

East Dyfed
Amman Valley

Gwent
Abertillery and District
St. Woolos

Gwynedd
Bryn Beryl

Mid Glamorgan
Aberbargoed and District
Mardy
Redwood Memorial
Tonteg

Powys
Llandrindod Wells War Memorial
Llanidloes and District
Victoria Memorial

South Glamorgan
St. Davids

West Glamorgan
Hill House

State Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the state primary and secondary schools he has visited in Wales, by county, since June 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1 June 1987 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or I have visited maintained schools as follows:

LEA	*Primary*	*Secondary*
Clwyd	—	2
Dyfed	1	2
Gwent	1	2
Gwynedd	2	3
Mid Glamorgan	2	3
Powys	3	—
South Glamorgan	3	1
West Glamorgan	1	1

I hope to visit a further eight maintained schools later in this school year.

Psychiatric Units

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the development of medium secure psychiatric units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Efforts to make the substantive progress in this area which I believe is necessary have been hampered by the difficulty of recruiting the necessary expert advisory staff. Now that appointments have been made of the consultant forensic psychiatrist (who is also co-ordinator of forensic psychiatric services and adviser to the chief medical officer) and the senior nurse adviser to the chief nursing officer of the Welsh Office, I propose to set up an all-Wales advisory group to determine a comprehensive policy for forensic psychiatric services in the Principality and to report as speedily as possible.

The remit of the group will be as follows:

In the context of the document "Mental Illness Services —A Strategy for Wales" to develop an operational framework for the provision of a comprehensive forensic psychiatric service in Wales in the light of the needs of patients and the experience of health authorities in England of setting up similar services: identifying in particular the appropriate district and regional elements of the service, an operational policy and development programme for medium secure psychiatric units and the future role and functioning of Garth Angharad Hospital.

I shall shortly announce the membership of the group, which is to be chaired by an official of the Welsh Office NHS directorate, once consultations have been concluded.

I intend that the group should undertake its work quickly, but it is clear that it will be some time before its agreed recommendations can be implemented. I accept that further delay in providing facilities for mentally abnormal offenders in Wales is undesirable. I also note the recommendation in the third biennial report of the Mental Health Act Commission that interim arrangements should be established in Wales. This has also been recommended by the Department's specialist advisers. As a consequence, I propose that interim secure facilities should be established in north and south Wales and Clwyd and Mid Glamorgan health authorities have been invited to prepare proposals to that end. They will be assisted by the Department's specialist advisers and their proposals will be considered by the all-Wales advisory group. I have asked that, the practical arrangements including recruitment of staff permitting, efforts be made to admit the first patients in 1990-91. I do not propose to initiate any further work on the development of individual substantive medium secure psychiatric units, including a decision on provision in west Wales, or on the development of Garth Angharad hospital until the all-Wales advisory group's report is to hand.

It is my expectation, subject to consultation on the report of the all-Wales advisory group, that these interim secure arrangements will be subsumed within the framework of the comprehensive forensic psychiatric services which will be formulated by the advisory group and thereby enable us to provide in the Principality as speedily as possible a service of excellence based on the experience of best practice gained in other parts of the United Kingdom.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Community Service

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what stricter elements he will be introducing into community service orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We introduced the National Standards for Community Service Orders on 1 April 1989. These were designed to ensure that offenders in all areas do work which is demanding and seen to be of use to the community and that the discipline of the order is maintained. The White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" contains proposals for combining community service and probation orders, and for requiring offenders on community service to report to their supervisor at any time when the supervisor considers this necessary to secure compliance with the order.

Police Officers (Ports)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the manning of ports by police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Waddington: There are continuing discussions on the policing of ports between the Home Office and the police forces and authorities concerned.

EC Nationals (Right of Residence)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many EEC nationals and their dependants will have the right of residence in the United Kingdom in consequence of the right of residence directive; and if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom of the minute of the Council relating to the further extension of the definitions of relative.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to predict with any precision the numbers of people who will benefit from the proposed right of residence directives. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the numbers seeking to take advantage of them will be very large.

The Government have not agreed to any widening of the definition of dependants. As revised by the Council, in the light of concerns expressed by the United Kingdom and a number of other member states, the proposed directives will specify precisely to which family members they apply and will not be linked to the definition in other Community legislation dealing with the family members of other groups such as workers.

The Council and the Commission have agreed that the definition of family members in the new right of residence directives may be reviewed in the light of the proposal for a regulation amending article 10 of regulation 1612/68. The position of the United Kingdom and of a number of other member states in relation to that proposal is, however, reserved.

If a change were nevertheless made to regulation 1612/68, it is likely that a corresponding change would be sought to the new right of residence directives. The Council minute does not, however, commit any member state to accepting any such change, and any proposal to that effect would be for separate negotiation.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will meet representatives of the Pensioners Association to discuss the question of free television licences for all pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to his question on 7 December 1989 at column *470*. As he knows, the question has been raised many times before, and I doubt whether further discussion would serve any strong purpose.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to amend the concessionary television licence regulations.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Basildon Courthouse

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new courthouse in Basildon will be opened.

Mr. John Patten: The courthouse is due to be completed and ready for use in October 1990, and the official opening will take place in November 1990.

Drugs

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of juveniles arrested for drug-related offences in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not held centrally on the number of arrests by age of offender. However, in England and Wales in 1988, 721 juveniles were cautioned for drug offences and 234 juveniles were prosecuted: of those prosecuted 181 were found guilty.

Information for 1989 will not be available until the autumn of 1990.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. John Patten: None.

War Crimes

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the individuals identified in the unpublished part II of the war crimes report are currently alive and resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: The war crimes inquiry set out in chapter 9 of its published report (Cm 744) its information about whether individuals in respect of whom it had received allegations were alive and resident in this country.

"How You Can Help the Police"

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the pamphlet "How You Can Help the Police" have been distributed; and what percentage of those distributed elicited a written or telephoned response.

Mr. John Patten: Between May 1988 and February 1990 1·1 million copies of the leaflet "Victims of Crime —how you can help the police to help you" were issued. The Home Office does not have statistics on the responses.

Forensic Science

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff have left the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory, other than for normal retirement, in each year of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that since 1982 (the earliest year for which the information is available) the following staff of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory have left for reasons other than normal retirement, and, in the case of administrative staff, career transfer to other parts of the Metropolitan police:

	Scientists	*Administrative staff*
1982	7	[1]4
1983	17	4
1984	[2]13	7
1985	[3]11	15
1986	8	[4]11
1987	12	15
1988	12	9
1989	18	[5]10
1990	1	—

Note:
The figures for scientists include those who have transferred to other Government Departments on promotion.
[1] Includes one officer who died.
[2] Includes one officer who retired on medical grounds and one who died.
[3] Includes one officer who left at the end of a one-year contract.
[4] Includes one officer whose employment was terminated.
[5] Includes one officer who died.

National Association of Probation Officers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The last such meeting with the Home Secretary took place on 3 August 1987, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers to discuss the document "Probation—The Next Five Years". I last met NAPO on 4 July 1988 to discuss the forthcoming Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community". It has not requested a meeting since that date. Home Office officials have frequent meetings with NAPO.

West Midlands Police

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has anything to add to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *304*, concerning Detective Sergeant Morton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The answers I gave on 25 January and 1 February referred only to those officers who conducted interviews with those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the progress of his electronic tagging programme.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to questions from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 9 February at column *823*.

Charities

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many charities registered with the Charity Commission have failed to submit accounts for the last financial year; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total number of charities registered with the commission;

(2) how many of the charities registered with the Charity Commission have submitted annual accounts that have been professionally audited.

Mr. John Patten: Some 12 per cent. of registered charities submitted accounts to the commission in 1989. However, under the Charities Act 1960 only charities possessing a permanent endowment are required to submit accounts annually without request. In addition, some of these are excepted by order or regulations from the need to submit accounts. In the circumstances it is not possible to say how many charities obliged to submit accounts yearly failed to do so.

Information about the number of registered charities which have submitted annual accounts that have been professionally audited is not readily available. There is at present no general statutory obligation for the accounts of a charity to be professionally audited, although those charities which are companies have to be audited under companies' legislation. In addition, some charities are required to have their accounts audited by their own governing instruments; and the Charity Commissioners may, at their own expense, order an audit of a charity's accounts.

Our proposals for reforming the law on the submission and auditing of charity accounts are contained in chapter 4 of the White Paper "Charities: A Framework for the Future" published in May last year. Our main proposals are that in future all registered charities should be required to submit proper accounts annually to the Commission; that trustees should be obliged to make copies of their charity's statement of account available to the public on request; and that large charities should be required to have their accounts professionally audited.

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what immigration control arrangements will be made for the Channel tunnel when it opens.

Mr. Waddington: For Eurotunnel shuttle train journeys ending at Cheriton, inward controls are planned at Coquelles. For through trains proceeding beyond London the Channel Tunnel Act provides for immigration controls to be carried out on train subject to the provision of satisfactory facilities to enable the controls to be exercised on those trains and to the payment of any fees or charges that may be imposed. For trains terminating in London I have now decided that passport checks should normally take place on the trains subject to the payment by British Rail of the additional costs involved and to the provision of satisfactory accommodation and control arrangements on board the trains and at the stations. These matters are being discussed with the train operators.

Refugees, Azad Kashmir

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure those from Azad Kashmir who seek political asylum in the United Kingdom are interviewed before decisions are taken on such applications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question of 5 December 1989 at column *182*. With the exception of those whose applications are based solely on links with the Pakistan People's party, asylum applicants from Azad Kashmir would be interviewed before a refusal decision was taken.

Underground (Fire Inspections)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what routine fire inspections of underground system railways stations are required by the relevant statutory authorities in respect of London Regional Transport, the Paris Metro and RER and the Berlin U-Bahn.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: Fire precautions on the London Underground are controlled by regulations made under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 which are enforced by the London fire and civil defence authority.

The regulations themselves do not specify what fire inspections should take place. London Underground Ltd. has, however, applied to the authority for temporary exemption from certain provisions of the regulations which came into force on 1 January 1990. As a condition of granting the exemptions, the LFCDA has required LUL to carry out regular inspections of high-risk areas in particular Underground stations. These inspections will continue until LUL complies with regulations and the exemptions can be lifted.

I have no information on the routine inspections required by the relevant statutory authorities in respect of the Paris Metro and RER, or the Berlin U-Bahn.

Batons

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces in the United Kingdom are at present conducting field trials of martial-arts type batons for the control of civilians.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 February 1990]*: I understand that the West Midlands police have acquired 100 batons which are inflexible cylindrical rods about 6 in long and five eighths of an inch in diameter. These are being made available to trained officers in a pilot scheme running until the end of March. As with any other piece of equipment these batons may be used only in accordance with the principle of section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 which requires the use of no more force than is reasonable in the circumstances.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount of civil defence grant aid for *(a)* staff costs, *(b)* building work and *(c)* other costs in the financial years from 1983-84 to 1988-89 and projected for 1989-90, received by each London borough.

Mr. John Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 8 January, c. 471-74]:* I am sorry to say that there was an error of transposition in the table headed "Civil Defence Grant Aid Received by London Boroughs 1986-87". The sums of £29,279 and £94,582 shown in the "Staff" column for Richmond and Waltham Forest respectively should have appeared in the "Building" column. The amended table reads as follows:

Civil Defence Grant Aid Received by London Boroughs 1986-87

Borough	*Staff* £	*Building* £	*Other* £
Barking and Dagenham	2,061	—	3,364
Barnet	—	—	2,230
Bexley	—	—	4,143
Brent	—	—	1,894
Bromley	3,402	—	4,249
Camden	—	—	2,393
City of London	—	146,656	14,453
Croydon	—	—	2,076
Ealing	224	—	198
Enfield	—	—	45
Greenwich	—	—	1,737
Hackney	—	—	1,900
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	3,330
Haringey	—	—	2,370
Harrow	—	—	5,724
Havering	1,530	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	5,565
Hounslow	1,218	—	1,351
Islington	—	—	1,579
Kensington and Chelsea	648	—	2,405
Kingston	—	—	2,675
Lambeth	—	—	6,922
Lewisham	—	—	2,492
Merton	3,552	—	3,015
Newham	—	—	1,173
Redbridge	644	—	2,027
Richmond	—	29,279	4,418
Southwark	—	—	4,193
Sutton	—	—	3,616
Tower Hamlets	1,363	—	3,473
Waltham Forest	—	94,582	1,964
Wandsworth	—	—	5,886
Westminster	—	—	2,362

TRANSPORT

London Taxis

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many registered London black cabs there are; what this number is as a percentage of the population of London; and what information he has on the comparable figures in capital cities of other industrial countries.

Mr. Portillo: Statistics on foreign taxi operations are not kept by the Department. However, I have obtained the following information:

City	*Number of licensed taxis*	*Population*	*Taxis as a percentage of population*
London	15,800	7,200,000	0·22
Washington	7,000	3,100,000	0·23
Paris	14,300	5,500,000	0·26
Tokyo	50,300	11,900,000	0·42

Figures may not be on a comparable basis.

Road-building

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many acres of land in public ownership have been utilised for the building of motorways and trunk roads; and what is his estimate of such building over the next five years.

Mr. Atkins: I regret that the information requested cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

HGV Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the steps he intends to take to ensure that the drivers' hours and rest period regulations, vehicle weights and dimensions are conformed to by foreign international hauliers within the United Kingdom, following elimination of frontier checks.

Mr. Atkins: Traffic examiners will continue to carry out selective checks on United Kingdom and foreign heavy goods vehicles at ports and inland sites. Checks will be carried out without discrimination of vehicles or drivers. Vehicles will be weighed in the ports using more automated weighing systems being installed for this purpose.

Drivers' tachograph charts will be checked to ensure that drivers are complying with the legal requirements for driving limits and rest. Vehicle dimensions will also be checked to ensure that they conform with the requirements of United Kingdom law.

Single Market

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to ensure that the introduction of the single European market does not have an adverse effect on the environment.

Mr. Atkins: All member states of the European Community and the Commission itself are mindful of the need to protect the environment and are taking account of environmental aspects in all proposals for new Community measures. A number of specific measures to protect the environment have already been agreed, in particular controls on vehicle emisions. In so far as the introduction of the single European market will encourage greater efficiency in the use of transport, it will have a beneficial effect on the environment.

British Rail

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the income from the sale of British Rail land and property in 1989.

Mr. Portillo: The income for the 1988-89 financial year was £263·5 million.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the planned expenditure for the maintenance of motorways and trunk roads in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

£ million (cash)

Year	*Capital expenditure*	*Current expenditure*
1985-86	164	77
1986-87	218	93
1987-88	264	84
1988-89	190	102
1989-90	337	99

Notes:

1. All figures are for national roads, England.
2. 1985-86 to 1988-89 are outturn figures; 1989-90 revised vote provision.
3. Capital expenditure comprises renewal of roads, and renewal and strengthening of bridges including the Severn Bridge.
4. Current expenditure is net of receipts (tolls, damage claims, administration and hire charges and VAT refunds).

Outturn expenditure was close to or above original planned targets in each year except 1988-89, when it was necessary to transfer some capital maintenance resources to new construction to avoid an overspend on the roads vote as a whole in the face of increased construction prices and faster progress with some new road schemes.

Traffic Flow

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to improve traffic flow from all directions by removing the traffic lights recently installed at the junction of St. George's road and Garden way, London; at what level the decision to instal them was taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The decision to instal the traffic lights was taken by Southwark borough council following consultation with the traffic control systems unit. The Department of Transport was notified of the council's intention. The traffic lights and pelican crossings installed by the council are designed to improve safety for pedestrians. I see no reason to intervene.

Vehicle Excise Tax

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reports of vehicle excise tax evasion were processed during 1989; and how many summonses for non-payment were issued.

Mr. Atkins: During 1989, 875,639 vehicle excise duty evasion reports were actioned by the Department. Summonses were issued against 192,813 evaders. In addition, 184,131 out-of-court settlements were paid by evaders.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants are currently employed to detect vehicle excise duty offenders.

Mr. Atkins: Outside London, vehicle excise duty enforcement is conducted from the Department's network of vehicle registration offices, where staff also deal with vehicle licensing and registration. A total of 984 man-years was allocated to enforcement in 1989-90, taking those offices, the London enforcement office, and staff at DVLC together.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which geographical areas publicity campaigns were mounted to encourage vehicle owners to tax their vehicles during 1989; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Atkins: During 1989 vehicle excise duty enforcement campaigns were held in the following geographical areas:

Devon and Cornwall
Kent
Leicestershire
London
Sussex
Central Scotland
Humberside
South Yorkshire
Staffordshire
West Mercia
Hertfordshire
Dumfries and Galloway
Dorset
Derbyshire
Nottinghamshire
Surrey
Fife
Essex
West Yorkshire
Northern (Highlands)
West Midlands
Bedfordshire
Thames Valley

The publicity costs of the 1989 campaign programme were £776,180. In addition the Department's staff costs, including the prosecution of evaders caught during campaigns, totalled £170,000. Police costs are not available.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average cost to public funds of prosecuting non-payment of vehicle excise duty in 1989; and how much was recovered by orders of courts to prosecution costs.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated average cost to public funds of prosecuting a vehicle excise duty evader in 1989 was £21·78. The amount ordered by courts in finds, back duty orders and costs amounted to £17·5 million.

Docks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned or undertaken into *(a)* employment prospects on the docks and *(b)* company liquidations before arriving at his estimate that the Dock Work Act 1989 will lead to 1,500 to 2,000 redundancies and cost £25 million over the full period, *Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 16 May 1989, column 537.

Mr. McLoughlin: The estimate of redundancies among registered dock workers was the best that could be made in all the circumstances. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State emphasised to the Standing Committee, no one could tell with any precision what would happen when the dock labour scheme ended; the figures were between an estimate and a guess.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, 11 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *486*, what further negotiations his Department has had on additional transatlantic flights to and from Manchester airport since 1 December 1989; what has been the outcome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A round of talks was held in London on 29 November to 1 December 1989. My right hon. Friend went himself to Washington to meet the US Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Skinner, on 11 and 12 January. Negotiations continue, and my right hon. Friend hopes to welcome Mr. Skinner here soon for further talks.

Regional Airports

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he intends to discuss transatlantic flights from Glasgow airport with the United States Secretary of Transportation; and when he next intends to meet the United States Secretary of Transportation;

(2) if he will list the flights from United Kingdom airports outside London which his Department expects to discuss at the next meeting with the United States Secretary of Transportation.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend hopes to welcome the United States Secretary of Transportation here soon, but no date or agenda has been settled. However, it is perhaps unlikely that the United States side will wish to raise the question of services from Glasgow, since it already has extensive unused rights to that airport.

Scottish Airports

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which calendar month he expects to announce his decision on the review of Scottish airports policy.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce his decision next month.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about the minimum period of time needed to manufacture the trains necessary for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: This is a commercial matter for the railways concerned. I understand that BR is planning for through trains to be in operation when the Channel tunnel opens.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Rail has sought approval for investment in the trains necessary for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: No. British Rail has published its proposals for through services but has not yet submitted the application to make the necessary investment.

DEFENCE

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discretion is given to the co-ordinating centre at RAF Pitreavie to disregard the restriction on night-time flying search and rescue operations from RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The operating procedures of the rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Pitreavie state that the RAF Leuchars flight will operate at night only if the rescue operation in question began during daylight hours, or in the event of a major disaster.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends to review the current restriction on night-flying operations on search and rescue helicopters operating from RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) at what time on Monday 12 February the request from Ninewells hospital, Dundee, for the assistance of a search and rescue helicopter, was received by the co-ordinating centre at RAF Pitreavie;

(2) why a search and rescue helicopter from RAF Leuchars was not scrambled on Monday 12 February in response to the request for assistance from Ninewells hospital, Dundee.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 7.42 pm on Monday 12 February 1990, the rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Pitreavie received a request for a helicopter to airlift a man suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning from Ninewells hospital in Dundee to a specialist medical unit in Aberdeen. By this time of day RAF Leuchers had ceased operations. The duty controller informed the hospital that any helicopter would have to come from one of three bases; RAF Lossiemouth, RAF Boulmer or HMS Gannett. The request for assistance was therefore withdrawn and the patient was transferred by road.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set up an inquiry to establish whether there is an abnormal level of childhood leukaemia among the children of nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the national radiological protection board is examining the possibility of a nationwide study of leukaemia in 0 to 25-year-olds in th United Kingdom, in which the children of nuclear test veterans might be included.

EMPLOYMENT

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of accountancy firms that have failed to meet statutory quotas on the recruitment of disabled persons.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not held centrally and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory premises are registered with the factory inspectorate in each of the Health and Safety Executive's geographical areas and were registered with the factory inspectorate in each of the last five years; and for each Health and Safety Executive area, how many trained factory inspectors were employed in each area in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The following table gives details of fixed premises (including factories) registered with the factory inspectorate in each of the Health and Safety Executive's areas at 31 March for the last three years. Information for March 1990 is not yet available. Other information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Numbers of trained factory inspectors employed in each area for the last five years are included in the table.

HSE Geographical area	*1985*		*1986*		*1987*		*1988*		*1989*	
	Number of fixed premises[1]	*Number of trained inspectors (May)*[2]	*Number of fixed premises*[1]	*Number of trained inspectors (April)*	*Number of fixed premises*	*Number of trained inspectors (April)*	*Number of fixed premises*	*Number of trained inspectors (April)*	*Number of fixed premises*	*Number of trained inspectors (April)*
South West	—	25·0	—	22·0	21,281	22·0	20,788	21·5	20,759	21·0
South	—	24·0	—	23·5	27,342	24·5	27,028	22·5	27,113	22·0
South East	—	22·0	—	19·0	25,312	22·5	25,506	23·0	25,404	22·5
London North	—	32·5	—	32·5	30,962	32·0	31,197	29·0	30,869	28·5
London South	—	32·5	—	29·0	19,271	29·0	19,003	31·0	18,747	32·0
East Anglia	—	23·5	—	22·0	20,610	18·5	20,550	19·5	20,123	19·5
North Home Counties	—	19·0	—	20·0	17,964	21·5	18,166	19·5	17,887	18·5
East Midlands	—	22·0	—	22·0	19,277	22·0	19,542	21·5	19,857	21·0
West Midlands	—	29·0	—	26·0	19,948	27·0	19,308	29·0	18,502	24·0
Wales	—	21·0	—	19·0	18,378	20·0	18,544	21·5	18,957	21·0
Marches	—	22·0	—	22·5	15,886	19·5	16,074	21·0	16,165	20·5
North Midlands	—	24·0	—	20·0	16,245	20·0	16,095	17·0	16,608	19·0
South Yorkshire and Humberside	—	23·5	—	22·5	17,260	21·5	16,632	21·0	16,058	24·0
West and North Yorkshire	—	32·5	—	30·5	23,973	28·5	24,067	27·0	24,107	28·0
Greater Manchester	—	30·5	—	25·5	16,404	24·5	16,902	22·0	17,345	22·5
Merseyside	—	23·0	—	22·0	16,503	19·0	17,003	23·5	16,912	21·0
North West	—	26·0	—	21·0	18,208	21·0	18,453	21·0	18,718	22·5
North East	—	31·0	—	28·0	16,416	26·0	16,580	20·5	16,814	23·5
Scotland East	—	25·0	—	22·0	20,192	20·0	20,357	18·5	20,302	20·5
Scotland West	—	26·0	—	23·0	20,383	21·0	20,128	23·0	19,757	19·5
Totals	395,860	514·0	399,885	472·0	401,815	460·0	401,923	452·5	401,004	451·0

[1] Information by Area not readily available.
[2] May 1985 is the earliest date on which trained and trainee inspector numbers can be split by area.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is successfully meeting its objective of helping large numbers of unemployed people to get the skills and experience they need to obtain jobs. Its success will be further reinforced through the introduction of training and enterprise councils (TECs) which will have the flexibility to make the programme even more responsive to the training needs of both individuals and employers within local labour markets.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of unemployed entering employment training for each of the categories *(a)* six months to 12 months, *(b)* one year to two years, *(c)* two years to three years, *(d)* three years to four years, *(e)* four years to five years and *(f)* over five years between September 1988 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Of those people entering employment training between September 1988 and December 1989, 169,000 had been unemployed for between six and 12 months, 72,000 for between one and two years and 186,000 for over two years.

Sick Pay

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implications for British legislation of the European Court of Justice decision in Rinner-Kuhn *v.* FWW Spezial-Gebaudereinigung GmbH and Co. of 13 July 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: This is a decision which arises from German domestic legislation on the payment of sick pay. Ministers will have to consider whether it has any implications for the law in this country.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to ensure that at least one person on each training and enterprise council has experience of working with young people with special needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are independent companies which will appoint their own board members subject to the criteria laid down by my Department.

However, to be effective and credible TECs will need to establish local partnerships and collaborate with a wide range of local interests and organisations including bodies representing young people with special needs.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the contracts with training and enterprise councils will include national targets to guarantee the

quality of training for young people with special needs under the new arrangements for youth training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Each training and enterprise council (TEC) will be set an agreed performance-related target for the number of people with special needs who start training. Each TEC will in addition need to set out in its business plan proposals for ensuring that those young people in its area with special needs are properly identified and assessed and given access to quality training leading to qualifications appropriate to their individual levels of ability.

Youth Training

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the funding arrangements for youth training will include incentives to ensure quality training for young people with special needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Youth training funding arrangements will include incentives to ensure quality training for young people with special needs.

Each young person identified as having special training needs will have an endorsement certificate which will be lodged with the training provider. The provider will then be obliged by contract to provide appropriate training and the Training Agency's area office or the training and enterprise council (local enterprise company in Scotland) will have regard to that in determining the appropriate funding levels.

In addition, at least 10 per cent. of each TEC's youth training budget will be paid on qualifications achieved. Those who gain national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level II (or equivalent as determined by the Training Agency) will count towards TECs' output-related funding. In addition, level I (or equivalent) NVQs gained by young people with particularly severe special training needs will also count.

TECs will also be eligible for a 2 per cent. performance bonus. Criteria for earning this will include NVQs as for output-related funding, the percentage of starts on youth training of young people with disabilities, members of ethnic minority groups and, where appropriate, people from the inner cities.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements will be made to ensure that the interests and views of organisations and agencies providing training for young people with special needs are represented on training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Each training and enterprise council (TEC) will be expected to consult and work closely with appropriate organisations and agencies to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged young people in their area are met. A number of TECs are establishing sub-groups to take account of different interests in the community.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from Barnardo's about employment and training of young people with a mental handicap; what reply he has given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department received representations from Barnardos last year raising a number of issues about the employment and training of young people with special needs, particularly in relation to the setting up of training and enterprise councils (TECs).

My Department gave assurances that TECs will be expected to set out in their plans proposals on how they intend to provide for young people with special needs. These proposals will be looked at very carefully before plans are approved.

Employment Centres

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* employment rehabilitation centres and *(b)* asset centres nationally; and if he will list the services they provide.

Mr. Eggar: A list of the employment rehabilitation service's employment rehabilitation centres and asset centres is given in the table.

The employment rehabilitation service offers a wide range of services including assessment, rehabilitation and preparatory training, practical experience with employers or in workshops, help in finding jobs and access to open learning materials. Employment rehabilitation centres offer the full range of services. Asset centres are similar but do not operate workshops.

(a) Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Bellshill	Leeds
Bristol	Long Eaton
Croydon	Plymouth
Egham	Preston
Humberside	Birmingham
Liverpool	Coventry
North Staffs	Edinburgh
Portsmouth	Glasgow
South Gosforth	Leicester
Billingham	Manchester
Cardiff	Port Talbot
Dundee	Sheffield
Garston Manor	

(b) Asset Centres

East Ham	West London
Birtley	Medway
Exeter	Wrexham

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stretford of 14 February, if he will identify on whose initiative the employment of two occupational psychologists by Grand Metropolitan community services at Exeter asset centre was undertaken.

Mr. Eggar: The employment of two occupational psychologists at Exeter asset centre was a joint initiative by the Training Agency and Grand Metropolitan community services.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the actual and percentage fall in unemployment in the Birkenhead constituency for 1981; and what is the comparable figure overall in other inner city areas.

Mr. Nicholls: Unemployment figures for parliamentary constituencies and the 57 local authority districts in England within which the Government target inner city aid are not available before June 1983. The following table shows the number of unemployed claimants at that date compared with the latest available figures.

Unemployed claimants (unadjusted)

	June 1983	*January 1990*	*Change*	*Percentage change*
UPAs[1]	1,130,512	658,947	−471,565	−41·7
Birkenhead parliamentary constituency	8,726	6,479	−2,247	−25·8

Note:
Comparisons over time are affected by changes to the count over the period as well as seasonal influences.
[1] Urban Programme Areas, the 57 local authority districts in which the Government targets inner city aid.

Deptford Skillcentre

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the development value of the site of the Deptford skillcentre now that the sale of the Skills Training Agency is completed.

Mr. Nicholls: Terms for the sale of the training business at Deptford skillcentre have been agreed with Astra Training Services Limited, the management buy-out team. Astra plans to lease part of the site, and my right hon. and learned Friend intends to offer the property for sale via open market competition subject to that lease. My right hon. and learned Friend has taken professional advice on the value of the site; the sale of the site has not yet been completed and it would be inappropriate to reveal a valuation.

Disabled People (Employment Quotas)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list how many firms received quota exemption permits under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 for the latest date for which information is available; and how many of these firms held quota exemption permits for longer than two years, five years and 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* On 1 June 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the number of firms issued with quota permits was 18,530. Permits are issued for a maximum period of six months. Information on the length of time for which individual employers have held a continuous series of such permits is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answer of 13 February to the hon. Member for Stretford, he will list *(a)* the number of firms not meeting their quota obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 for every year since 1979 to the latest available date and *(b)* the number of firms not meeting their quota obligations and without permits, for each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year ending	*Firms not employing the quota of 3 per cent. people with disabilities*	*Firms not employing the quota of 3 per cent. people with disabilities and which are without permits*
1 June 1979	31,234	8,822
1 June 1980	30,226	8,225
1 June 1981	29,073	7,890
1 June 1982	28,828	9,032
1 June 1983	25,681	7,145
1 June 1984	25,550	6,781
1 June 1985	25,501	6,829
1 June 1986	24,643	5,803
1 June 1987	24,593	6,016
1 June 1988	24,705	6,111
1 June 1989	24,700	6,170

Employers who are below quota and without permits have not necessarily committed an offence unless they have engaged people who were not registered as disabled when a suitable registered disabled person was available.

HEALTH

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will identify the revenue costs of alternative arrangements for each Thames regional health authority of the ambulance dispute to date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: These costs have not yet been assessed by the authorities concerned.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the cost of using the army, police and voluntary bodies on ambulance duties on *(a)* a daily basis, *(b)* a weekly basis and *(c)* total cost;

(2) what has been the cost to date of using the Army and police in each health authority in which the Army or police began performing ambulance duties.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* It is too soon for all these costs to have been assessed. The total cost for the provision of military assistance up to the end of December 1989 was £1·8 million. Figures for the costs of police assistance have not yet been assessed by all the authorities concerned.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost to date of *(a)* the police and *(b)* the Army doing ambulance duties; and what is the estimated daily cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 January 1990]:* Costs have not yet all been assessed. The total cost for the provision of military assistance up to the end of December 1989 was £1·8 million. There are some offsetting savings from the normal service. The cost of police assistance has not yet been assessed by all the authorities concerned.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the normal weekly cost of the emergency service *(a)* to Coventry district health authority and *(b)* to each county.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this detailed local information centrally.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the weekly cost of *(a)* police assistance, *(b)* Army assistance, and *(c)* the emergency ambulance service that is still being incurred in each county.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information is not available. However, the cost for the provision of military assistance to the end of December 1989 was £1·8 million. The cost of police assistance has not yet been assessed by all the authorities concerned.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is considering making tests on blood donations to ensure that they are not contaminated by Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Freeman: There is no blood test to detect the causative agent of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. However, there is no evidence that this rare disease can be transmitted via blood.

Babies (Abduction)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by year and by regional health authority for the last 10 years the number of cases of babies that have been abducted while in hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not hold information on such incidents centrally.

The Department has commended to all health authorities a security manual prepared by NAHA. Copies were distributed to the NHS in 1984. The manual includes advice on the issue of personal identification badges to all members of staff.

In the maternity field, the health building note on maternity departments refers specifically to the need to consider the safety of babies temporarily unattended in postnatal areas or neonatal units. The design briefing states that accommodation for babies must be sited so as to be easily visible from the staff base.

Nurses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals of nurses concerning their clinical grading *(a)* have been submitted, *(b)* have been heard and *(c)* await decision; and how many have been upgraded for each district health authority in the west midlands area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how self-governing trusts will be asked to alter employees' contracts, conditions of service and superannuation rights;

(2) whether self-governing trusts will be allowed to opt out of the Whitley system;

(3) whether the employment conditions and employment protection rights for self-governing hospital trusts will differ from the present arrangements in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Staff who transfer from health authority to NHS trust employment will retain their existing contracts and all rights arising from them, subject to the substitution of the new employer for the old and any consequential technical changes. It will be open to the NHS trusts to seek to introduce changes in existing contracts at any time after transfer. In doing so, they will be free to decide whether to continue to adopt Whitley council conditions or to make alternative arrangements if they so wish.

Employees of NHS trusts will be eligible to stay in or to join the NHS superannuation scheme. However, subject to the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, trusts will have the power to establish their own arrangements for providing pensions if they wish.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce any change to the ratio of trained nurses coupled with untrained nurses in the National Health Service; and whether self-governing trusts will be under any obligation to maintain any given ratio.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not lay down any ratio of qualified to other nursing staff in the National Health Service. The planning and setting of staffing establishments is a matter for individual health authorities to determine in the light of local needs and priorities. National Health Service trusts will be free to determine the number, skill and grade mix of nurses they employ.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if self-governing hospital trusts may decide to give up self-governing status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there will be any changes to the skill and grade mix of nurses who work in the self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will be free to determine the number, skill and grade mix of nurses they employ.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are planned for the education and training of nurses; what requirements of education and training he intends to impose on self-governing trusts; and whether he intends to allow competition in training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We intend to ensure that NHS trusts participate in the training of key professional staff, including nurses. Detailed proposals for dealing with the education and training implications of the White Paper "Working for Patients" are set out in working paper 10, a copy of which is in the Library. This document has been the subject of a widespread consultation exercise, which ended on 31 January 1990. The comments which we have received are being carefully studied: we shall announce decisions as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what control his Department will exercise over the accounts of self-governing hospital trusts; what will be the position should self-governing trusts go bankrupt; and who will be accountable to Government for providing continuity of health service in this eventuality.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will be required to keep proper accounting records and to draw up accounts each year as directed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State with the approval of the Treasury.

Should a trust become financially unsound and the services which it provides still be needed, it might be necessary to transfer responsibility for managing those services to another trust or to a health authority. In the event of the financial failure of any provider unit, district health authorities will be responsible for securing continued provision of health care for their residents.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what industrial relations rights Royal College of Nursing stewards will have in the self-governing trusts; and what structure of industrial relations he intends to propose for them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will be free to make their own arrangements for union representation for their employees.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information systems need to be installed to set up self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will be expected to have information systems which are adequate for the effective and efficient management of the trust.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rights staff will have to opt out of self-governing trusts and to safeguard their employment, pension and other rights in this event.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Staff of a hospital which is to become an NHS trust will transfer to employment by the trust unless other arrangements have been individually agreed with them beforehand. A member of staff who is transferred to trust employment will retain the right to terminate his contract of employment if a substantial change to his detriment in his working conditions is brought about by the transfer; no such right will arise solely by reason of the change in employer on transfer.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all staff affected by the establishment of a self-governing trust will be eventually transferred to the self-governing trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All staff who were employed at a unit which is to become an NHS trust will transfer to employment by the trust from the date when it becomes fully operational unless other arrangements have been individually agreed beforehand. Special arrangements will be made for splitting the contracts of employees who work partly in a unit which is to become a trust but will continue to work partly in other units.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether *(a)* trade unions, *(b)* local government, *(c)* local business, *(d)* medical representatives and *(e)* nursing representatives will be represented on the boards of self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All NHS trusts which are established to manage hospital or community health services will have executive medical and nursing directors on their boards. The non-executive directors on NHS trust boards will be chosen for the personal contribution they can make to the effective management of the trust and not to represent any interest group. In the case of trusts with a significant teaching commitment one of the non-executive directors will be drawn from the relevant university or medical or dental school.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the numbers and percentages of abortions performed on pregnancies of 18 weeks' or more gestation under the statutory grounds 2 (alone) and 3 (with or without 2) by *(a)* age of mother, *(b)* marital status, *(c)* numbers of previous children, *(d)* number of previous abortions and *(e)* whether performed in the public or private sectors, distinguishing in each category between residents and non-residents.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of abortions performed in England and Wales, 1988 by statutory grounds: 2 (alone) and 3 (with or without 2), by (a) age of mother, (b) marital status, (c) number of previous children, (d) number of previous abortions, and (e) category of premises, for residents and also non-residents, at 18 weeks and over gestation.

	Residents				*Non-Residents*			
	Statutory grounds				*Statutory grounds*			
	2 (alone)		*3 (with or without 2)*		*2 (alone)*		*3 (with or without 2)*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
(a) Age of Mother								
All ages	5,343	82·90	394	6·11	3,208	98·22	40	1·22
Under 16	301	98·69	4	1·31	120	100·00	—	—
16 to 19	2,085	95·38	56	2·56	882	99·66	3	0·34
20 to 44	2,948	74·92	331	8·41	2,190	97·59	37	1·65
45 and over	8	44·44	3	16·67	16	94·12	—	—
Unknown	1	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Marital Status								
Single	4,446	92·99	199	4·16	2,544	99·18	16	0·62
Married	468	42·24	106	9·57	355	92·93	16	4·19
Widowed/divorced/separated	322	75·94	75	17·69	236	96·72	7	2·87
Not stated	107	81·06	14	10·61	73	97·33	1	1·33
(c) Number of Previous Children								
0	4,084	93·73	23	0·53	2,325	99·53	5	0·21
1	660	63·04	165	15·76	468	95·90	14	2·87
2	348	57·81	127	21·10	242	96·03	7	2·78
3	149	55·39	55	20·45	95	88·79	11	10·28

	Residents Statutory grounds				Non-Residents Statutory grounds			
	2 (alone)		3 (with or without 2)		2 (alone)		3 (with or without 2)	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
4	64	64·65	16	16·16	50	94·34	2	3·77
5 and over	24	48·98	8	16·33	27	93·10	1	3·45
Unknown	14	63·64	—	—	1	100·00	—	—
(d) Number of Previous Abortions								
Legal terminations								
0	4,460	83·21	300	5·60	2,725	98·20	33	1·19
1	755	82·15	80	8·71	418	98·12	7	1·64
2	91	77·12	13	11·02	50	100·00	—	—
3	20	86·96	1	4·35	11	100·00	—	—
4[1]	3	100·00	—	—	3	100·00	—	—
Spontaneous miscarriages								
0	5,077	85·20	343	5·76	3,120	98·36	37	1·17
1	203	56·23	42	11·63	78	93·98	2	2·41
2	37	49·33	6	8·00	7	87·50	1	12·50
3	5	38·46	—	—	1	100·00	—	—
4[1]	7	46·67	3	20·00	1	100·00	—	—
(e) Category of Premises								
NHS	579	43·21	69	5·15	1	20·00	—	—
Non-NHS	4,764	93·32	325	6·37	3,207	98·34	40	1·23
Non-NHS Agency	459	90·89	43	8·51	1	100·00	—	—

[1] *Statutory Grounds:*
1. The continuance of pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
5. To save the life of the pregnant mother.
6. To prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the child.

Note:—The notification form for abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 requires information about previous abortions to the woman concerned to be recorded, distinguishing between spontaneous miscarriages and legal terminations.
Notifications having at least one previous spontaneous miscarriage and also at least one previous legal termination, and women having more than one abortion under the Act in 1988 will be counted more than once in the statistics.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the numbers of abortions performed on pregnancies of 18 weeks' and more gestation under statutory grounds 2 (alone) and 3 (with or without 2) which were done by *(a)* prostaglandins and *(b)* D and E, distinguishing in each category between residents and non-residents.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is shown in the table:

The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 on pregnancies of 18 weeks and more gestation under statutory grounds 2 (alone) and 3 (with or without 2) which were performed by (a) prostaglandins and (b) D and E for residents and non-residents of England and Wales for 1988

	Residents	Non-residents
Ground 2 (alone)		
Prostaglandins	3,063	623
D and E	501	748
Ground 3 (with or without 2)		
Prostaglandins	307	23
D and E	3	3

Child Care

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals the Government have to promote child care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The range and level of day care services for pre-school children and after school and holiday schemes for school-age children is best decided locally by parents, voluntary bodies, employers, local authorities and the private sector.

NHS Reform

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what criteria are being used for establishing asset management and capital charging within the National Health Service;

(2) what progress there has been in establishing efficient asset management and capital charging in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The intention to introduce a system of capital charges was announced in the White Paper, "Working for Patients". Each hospital will be required to calculate and pay capital charges to its regional health authority from April 1991. The capital charge represents depreciation and interest calculated on the value of assets held. In order to facilitate the introduction of this scheme health authorities are being required to compile, value and maintain asset registers with effect from April 1990. This will enable the capital charging scheme to operate on a shadow basis during 1990-91. Managers will begin to understand the value of assets held and will, under the full scheme, have direct incentives to make best use of assets in order to minimise capital charges. In this way the capital charge scheme will be an impetus to good asset management, which the Government have been encouraging in the NHS in recent years.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to fund research into the costs and benefits of hormone replacement therapy and of screening techniques for detecting osteoporosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of Health is funding two research projects at a total cost of around £128,000, which will examine the costs and benefits of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and screening techniques for detecting osteoporosis before it is severe enough to cause symptoms.

Professor Martin Vessey of Oxford University will be examining the cost-effectiveness of HRT in relation to the menopause. HRT, which is already available on the NHS, has a role to play in the treatment of menopausal symptoms and the prevention of osteoporosis.

Dr. John Kanis of Sheffield university will be conducting a critical review of screening techniques for detecting osteoporosis—a disease of the weakening of the bones which primarily, but not exclusively, affects women after the menopause—before it is severe enough to give rise to symptoms.

The Department will be meeting the full costs of both studies. Professor Vessey's two-year project and Dr. Kanis' one-year project are expected to be completed by 31 January 1992 and 31 March 1991 respectively.

Menopausal symptoms or the development, later, of severe osteoporosis cause misery to many women in this country. For some of the symptoms can be very severe. We hope that these studies will enable us to find ways to improve the quality of life for women.

Opticians

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the dates of the ophthalmic service committee hearings referred to in the Minister's written answer of 5 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *506*; and what were the dates of the endorsements of the ophthalmic committee's decisions by Manchester family practitioner committee.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The ophthalmic service committee of the Manchester family practitioner committee considered the complaints without a hearing at its meeting on 20 April 1988. The FPC endorsed its recommendations on 25 May 1988.

Leukaemia

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, following the announcement of 15 February about possible leukaemia and lymphonia links between those working at Sellafield and their children, when he expects the consideration of the case control study by COMARE at AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield to be completed.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health funded the case control study in west Berkshire and north Hampshire in 1987 for three years; we therefore expect it to be completed by the end of this year. The results of the study should be available shortly after completion.

Food Imports (Holland)

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tests are generally applied to food imported from Holland.

Mr. Freeman: At present all foods imported to the United Kingdom, regardless of the country of origin, are subject to the Imported Food Regulations 1984, which require food to be sound, wholesome and fit for human consumption. Examinations, as appropriate, to ensure that food meet these criteria are carried out by local enforcement authorities, including port health authorities.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for the results of a cervical smear test.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested. Health authorities must aim to return the results of cervical smear tests to the doctor who undertook them within one month. As at December 1989, the latest available date, around 80 per cent. of health authorities were meeting this target. The average processing time of those districts which were failing to meet this target was 6·2 weeks.

Food Poisoning, London

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify for each London borough in each of the last 10 years *(a)* the number of cases of food poisoning and *(b)* the percentage increase of such cases over this 10-year period.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the table:

Number of notifications of food poisoning for each London borough in each of the last 10 years and the percentage increase of such cases over this 10 year period (1979-1988)

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*Percentage increase 1979-88*
Greater London	1,525	1,442	1,335	1,581	1,793	1,857	1,888	2,280	2,919	3,723	144·13
City of London	7	10	7	9	4	8	4	7	11	9	28·57
Barking and Dagenham	22	30	10	27	17	21	30	30	31	41	86·36
Barnet	103	122	81	115	173	191	204	222	305	292	183·50
Bexley	27	22	26	46	73	51	64	75	188	231	755·56
Brent	45	50	89	115	95	75	82	82	87	96	113·33
Bromley	33	53	23	29	41	37	35	52	70	91	175·76
Camden	33	37	38	72	90	79	77	89	106	81	145·45
Croydon	58	81	53	58	38	49	83	117	135	161	177·59
Ealing	32	57	48	37	57	36	42	51	49	67	109·38
Enfield	130	56	25	53	25	122	49	48	51	81	−37·69

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	Percentage increase 1979-88
Greenwich	43	38	42	32	49	53	59	48	144	173	302·33
Hackney	31	27	29	26	27	38	29	45	79	70	125·81
Hammersmith and Fulham	22	24	53	25	50	61	41	25	22	47	113·64
Haringey	64	32	30	36	45	77	72	93	106	120	87·50
Harrow	23	44	54	54	90	70	110	159	218	233	913·04
Havering	34	15	43	46	71	28	32	74	104	106	211·76
Hillingdon	58	51	35	44	56	33	38	54	86	148	155·17
Hounslow	12	17	20	20	28	52	32	39	47	69	475·00
Islington	83	82	92	58	71	59	97	115	160	193	132·53
Kensington and Chelsea	51	45	41	44	61	60	54	35	59	83	62·75
Kingston Upon Thames	32	30	14	22	26	23	38	45	39	58	81·25
Lambeth	47	34	47	44	53	106	65	110	106	142	202·13
Lewisham	53	46	48	42	76	145	98	79	93	172	224·53
Merton	19	15	14	31	22	38	67	73	51	87	357·89
Newham	81	38	30	39	41	25	58	104	74	105	29·63
Redbridge	78	75	37	50	20	23	23	58	39	95	21·79
Richmond Upon Thames	22	20	19	27	26	26	26	22	50	59	168·18
Southwark	46	44	45	75	58	83	90	80	78	156	239·13
Sutton	41	39	43	65	48	19	12	22	26	79	92·68
Tower Hamlets	27	68	30	57	38	41	34	53	82	93	244·44
Waltham Forest	50	20	25	25	15	16	18	1	3	46	−8·00
Wandsworth	62	72	77	64	121	43	63	90	117	131	111·29
Westminster, City of	56	48	67	94	88	69	62	83	97	108	92·86

In addition, since 1982, cases of food poisoning ascertained by means other than formal notification have been reported to OPCS.

Ambulance Services (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost per day to each of the health authorities operating in south Yorkshire for the ambulance services being provided by the police, armed services and voluntary organisations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 January 1990]:* The cost of military assistance in individual regional health authorities has not yet been assessed. The cost of assistance by police and voluntary organisations in individual district health authorities is not available centrally. I would refer the hon. Member to the Trent regional health authority.

Cash Limits

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made in the cash limits and running costs limit of his Department for 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 29 January 1990, c. 42-43]:* Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIV, vote 3, Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England, will be increased by £87,000 (from £697,307,000 to £697,394,000) reflecting a transfer from class XV, vote 7, Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services as a contribution to the cost of grants to voluntary organisations and local authorities towards the cost of providing temporary accommodation for homeless people during periods of severe weather. The running cost limit for the Department remains unchanged at £244,259,000.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Fleet

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans there are to reduce the fishing effort in the North sea; what are the implications for fishing in the western waters of the United Kingdom; whether he has any proposals to reduce the overall size of the United Kingdom fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement about the displacement of part of the United Kingdom fleets in the North sea to the Irish sea.

Mr. Curry: I hope to make an announcement soon on arrangements to reduce North sea haddock fishing in 1990. Access to pressure stocks and non-pressure stocks in other sea areas will remain restricted to those vessels holding appropriate licences. I also hope shortly to announce new quota management arrangements which will begin the process of bringing the size of the fleet into line with the available fishing opportunities.

Poultry

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he has carried out into salmonella levels in poultry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently funding a comprehensive programme of research on aspects of salmonella amounting to £2·4 million in 1989-90. The projects listed in the table fall into two main categories —food safety and animal health—and cover external contamination and vertical transmission, which are the two sources of infection. The programme includes epidemiological studies on the distribution of salmonella enteritidis in the laying flock.

R and D on salmonella currently funded by MAFF

	Project	*Location*	*Amount of funding in 1989-90 £'000*
1.	Modelling of growth of pathogenic micro-organisms in food systems	British food Manufacturing Industries Research Association (BFMIRA) Leatherhead	150
2.	Detection and quantification of micro-organisms in foods by novel lectin-based assays	BFMIRA	57
3.	Separation: an important aid to rapid microbiological analysis	BFMIRA	40
4.	Thermal destruction of salmonella in foods made with eggs	BFMIRA	4
5.	Destruction of Salmonella enteritidis in egg albumen	BFMIRA	30
6.	Mathematical prediction of growth of micro-organisms in food systems	Campden Food and Drink Research Association (CFDRA), Chipping Campden	200
7.	Guidelines for pasteurisation	CFDRA	25
8.	Investigation into the use of biosorbants for the concentration, separation and detection of low levels of food contaminants with special reference to pathogenic micro-organisms such as salmonella	CFDRA	70
9.	Database and expert system development for microbiology modelling initiative	CFDRA	88
10.	Survival and growth of salmonella and *Bacillus subtilis* in bakery ingredients, products or fillings	Flour Milling and Baking Research Association (FMBRA), Chorleywood	86
11.	Modelling micobial growth effects of processing and storage on survival and growth of pathogenic bacteria	AFRC Institute of Food Research, Bristol (IFR(B))	59
12.	Modelling microbial growth: develop predictive models for food safety	IFR(B)	59
13.	Modelling microbial growth: optimise poultry processing conditions to reduce occurrence of pathogenic bacteria	IFR(B)	59
14.	Optimisation of spray washing of poultry carcases	IFR(B)	30
15.	Modelling microbial growth: safety of foods and beverages	IFR, Reading	100
16.	Develop and investigate novel methods to separate and concentrate micro-organisms from foods to enhance rapid microbiological methods	IFR, Reading	127
17.	Enzyme-linked immunological biosensors for the detection of pathogenic bacteria in food	IFR, Reading	40
18.	Development of improved diagnostic tests to study epidemiology	AFRC Institute of Animal Health (IAH), Compton	75
19.	Intestinal colonisation of salmonella in poultry	IAH	61
20.	Basis of virulence in salmonellas (in relation to poultry)	IAH	61
21.	Virulence in salmonellas (in relation to calves)	IAH	94
22.	The genetic basis for virulence	IAH	95
23.	Use of non-radioactive DNA probes for the detection and identification of food borne pathogens	University of Nottingham	12
24.	Risk assessment of salmonella in eggs	University of Bath	19
25.	Salmonella infection in the egg	University of Bath	15
26.	Salmonella infection in the laying hen	University of Bristol	76
27.	The influence of shell quality on the ease of translocation of salmonella into the egg	Glasgow University Veterinary School	26
28.	The influence of storage conditions on the survival of salmonellas	Public Health Laboratory Service, Exeter	19
29.	Development of diagnostic tests and vaccines	MAFF Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL)	316
30.	Epidemiological studies in laying flocks	CVL	50
31.	Salmonella in feeds: recontamination and isolation	CVL	88

	Project	Location	Amount of funding in 1989-90 £'000
32.	Pathogenesis in chickens	CVL	171
Total			2,402
33.	Egg products and human salmonellas	University of Bath	[1] —
34.	Microbial growth and survival on food contact surfaces pertinent to food poisoning spoilage and hygiene	University of Warwick and CFDRA	[1] —
35.	Theoretical approaches to minimal methods of food preservation	University of Reading	[1] —

[1] Work being carried out under the MAFF Post-Graduate Studentship Scheme.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the resistance levels to disease among poultry as a consequence of the continual use of antibiotics.

Mr. Maclean: All salmonella from animals and their environment have been monitored for antibiotic resistance continuously since 1971.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of feedstuffs for poultry is subject to prior heat treatment; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of heat-treating feedingstuffs in reducing the incidence of salmonella in poultry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Details are not available on the percentage of poultry feedstuffs subject to heat treatment. Most broiler and turkey feeds, however, are heat-treated as part of the pelleting process. There is also a growing trend towards use of pelleted feeds for laying flocks. Published work indicates that whilst heat treatment of feedstuffs can be effective in tackling salmonella contamination, it cannot be guaranteed to eliminate salmonella completely. My Department issued last year five codes of practice which set out a range of measures to be taken by the feedstuffs industry to reduce salmonella contamination.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that the process of stripping animal bones to obtain mechanically recovered meat entails no risk of spinal tissue being included in the final product.

Mr. Maclean: As an ultra-precautionary measure my Department introduced the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989, which prohibit the use of spinal cord and other specified bovine offals in food for sale for human consumption. In practice the spinal cord would be removed before recovery of MRM. Animals displaying symptoms of BSE are required to be slaughtered and disposed of so that they do not enter the human food chain.

Irradiation

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further discussions he has had, or proposes to have, with *(a)* consumer organisations, *(b)* retailers, *(c)* trade unions, *(d)* manufacturers and *(e)* others on the question of the irradiation of foodstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: In accordance with long-established practice in the food sector, there will be full consultation of all the relevant interests when the regulations have been prepared.

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he proposes to make available to customers of restaurants, cafes and public houses as to whether the food they have purchased there has been irradiated.

Mr. Maclean: I have already announced my intention to ensure that customers of restaurants, cafes and public houses are given clear information to enable them to choose whether or not they wish to buy irradiated food. Recently agreed European Community food legislation already provides for clear labelling of irradiated food and listed ingredients for prepacked sales. Additional requirements are needed for non-prepacked retail sales and food sold by caterers and I am currently consulting interested parties on the most effective and practical way of presenting this information to consumers.

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and other organisations with regard to the irradiation of food.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of letters from interested organisations on aspects of food irradiation. The views of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers are set out in its evidence to the recent inquiry by the House of Lords European Communities Committee, the report of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what research is being conducted by his Department on the irradiation of food;

(2) what tests his Department recommends to discover whether food has been irradiated.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is currently carrying out research aimed at identifying and developing suitable tests for detecting irradiated foods. We are also investigating the effects of irradiation on plastic food packaging materials.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 February 1990

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Churches (Subsidence)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list by location the number of churches waiting compensation from British Coal due to subsidence damage; and if he will show in his answer, when the claims were first submitted.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners do not possess this information. I am, however, writing to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City College for the Technology of the Arts

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a timetable for *(a)* the appointment of teachers, *(b)* signing of a lease for the premises, *(c)* closing date for application by pupils, *(d)* projected opening date, *(e)* agreement on curriculum the school will pursue, *(f)* the announcement of the cost of the Exchequer's contribution for capital costs and *(g)* the announcement of the sponsors' contribution to capital costs at the Britschool city technology college Croydon; and if he will publish a full list of sponsors for the Britschool city technology college and their projected contributions (i) in cash and (ii) in goods and services.

Mr. MacGregor: The lease of the premises of the city college for the technology of the arts (CCTA) in Croydon is scheduled to be signed today. The opening date for the college will be September 1991. The British phonographic industry has undertaken to provide capital funding of 40 per cent. of an agreed £5·9 million, of which my Department will provide 60 per cent. It is for the project team appointed by the sponsor to decide appropriate dates for the appointment of teachers to the college, a closing date for applications by pupils, and the details of the college's agreed curriculum. The college's principal was appointed on 1 January this year.

Further Education

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the expected staying on rate in full-time education for the 16 to 18 years age group in 1992-93.

Mr. Jackson: The projected participation rate for full-time students aged 16 and 17 in England for 1992-93 is 47 per cent. The ages are those at 31 August 1992.

Pupils (Attendance)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to remedy the poor attendance record of students in the later years of secondary schooling and in schools in deprived areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The national curriculum and other educational reforms being introduced by the Government will increase opportunity and motivation for all pupils and thereby help to improve school attendance. In addition, a new category of education support grants, to raise attendance at designated schools, begins in April. The grants will support three-year projects in 35 English local education authorities at a total cost in 1990-91 of £2·34 million. Most of those grants are for projects in urban programme areas. Similar arrangements apply in Wales.

The Department has recently published a survey report by Her Majesty's inspectorate which reviews school attendance and calls attention to examples of good practice in schools and local education authorities.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the total sum of bids by local education authorities for capital spending on further education colleges for 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: The bids by local education authorities for capital spending on further education colleges for 1990-91 totalled £186·1 million, as follows:

	£ million
Major building works[1]:	
Started prior to 1990-91	50·0
To start in 1990-91	36·8
Minor works	25·4
Equipment and furniture	53·1
Other	20·8
TOTAL BIDS	186·1

[1] Projects in excess of £200,000.

Student Awards

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out, in 1987 prices, the expenditure on discretionary student awards in *(a)* 1984-85, *(b)* 1985-86, *(c)* 1986-87, *(d)* 1987-88, *(e)* 1988-89 and *(f)* 1989.

Mr. Jackson: The available data are as follows:

Real terms[1] expenditure on section 1(6) and section 2 discretionary awards[2] 1984-85 to 1987-88 England and Wales

	£ million
1984-85	156·8
1985-86	159·8
1986-87	169·0
1987-88	171·0

[1] Real terms expenditure at 1987-88 prices.
[2] Includes expenditure on fees and maintenance

Education Budget

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the education budget will be met by local authorities in the next financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the present financial year local authority expenditure on education is expected to account for some four fifths of the Department's total programme. Education budgets for 1990-91 are still being determined by local education authorities. As the bulk of central Government support for local authority spending is not hypothecated to individual services, it is not possible to determine on a service by service basis what percentage of those budgets will be met from local authorities' own resources.

Community Charge

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what sum of money was added to higher education students' grants representing 20 per cent. of average community charge; and when the calculation from which that sum resulted was made.

Mr. Jackson: The increased main rates of mandatory student grant for the academic year 1990-91 were announced on 19 December 1989. As in previous years these broadly reflected both the resources available and the net impact of several factors upon students' living costs. These factors included students' discounted liability for the community charge and the abolition of domestic rates. The basic maintenance grant is not earmarked in respect of any element of students' living costs.

Student Loans

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of students in further education who will take out student loans.

Mr. Jackson: Top-up loans will mean extra resources for students in higher education. If 80 per cent. of those eligible were to apply, some 455,000 higher education students would receive top-up loans in 1990-91.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding the Government's continued policy concerning footwear and leather imports from Taiwan and Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: We have received a small number of representations on this matter. The European Commision is still considering the way forward in the light of member states' views.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will indicate, or place in the Library, the details of the scheme Her Majesty's Government intend to deploy to enforce the European Commission decision on applying for a voluntary restraint agreement covering leather and synthetic footwear imports from the Republic of Korea and Taiwan;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the recent decision by the European Commission to enter into a voluntary restraint agreement covering leather and synthetic footwear imports from Korea and Taiwan.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The Commission has still to decide what action, if any, to take. We understand that it may be considering Communitywide restraints on trade in leather and synthetic footwear from South Korea and Taiwan. Any restraints would, of course, have to be fully and economically justified. If, however, the industry has any evidence of unfair trading practices it should be forwarded to the DTI or the Commission.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many of the specialists recruited for the development of the Securities and Investments Board and of its rule book are no longer required;

(2) if he will give details of the steps taken in the preparation of the planned expenditure of the Securities and Investments Board for the year 1990-91 to contain expenditure to reflect the reduction in formation and development of the regulatory role of the Securities and Investments Board;

(3) what are the premiums which the Securities and Investments Board will be required to pay in respect of salary and rental costs as a result of the decision to relocate within central London;

(4) whether he has any plans to make available free of charge to the public in Scotland access to the Securities and Investments Board's Prestel system which holds details of all authorised firms;

(5) whether the manpower levels within the Securities and Investments Board are intended only to reflect the minimum personnel required to maintain compliance standards;

(6) which locations outside London were considered for the possible relocation of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* This is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

ENERGY

Wave Power

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review his Department's policy concerning funding for research into and development of electricity generation from offshore wave power devices; and if he will make a statement on his Department's assessment of the likely cost of such electricity per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A thorough review of the technical and commercial viability and prospects for wave energy in the United Kingdom is currently being undertaken, following which it will be possible to review the Department's policy concerning funding for research into and development of electricity generation from offshore wave power devices. Offshore wave energy is currently considered unlikely to be competitive, with estimated costs exceeding 10p/kWh, but reassessing these costs is fundamental to the review now taking place.

Electricity Pylons

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to require pylons to be moved away from urban settlements in view of the effect of the electrical fields generated beneath them on human health.

Mr. Baldry: I have no plans to require pylons to be moved away from urban settlements in view of the presence of electrical fields. All types of electrical conductor, whether overhead or underground, and whether forming a power transmission or distribution system or simply the wiring and appliances in the home, create electric and magnetic fields.

TRANSPORT

Road Building Objections

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road building objections in the form of Valentine cards he has received this month.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend and I and officials on our behalf have received a number of road building objections in the form of Valentine cards. All those giving names and addresses will be taken into account in the consultation process.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on his policy towards the location and development of motorway service areas by the private sector;

(2) if he will make it his policy to allow the private sector to take responsibility for the location and development of motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from the major oil companies regarding the development of motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Representations have been made by certain oil companies that the initiative should be left with them to identify, seek planning clearance for, and obtain ownership of sites for new motorway service areas. The current general policy is for the Department itself to identify sites, usually on the basis of a private consultant's study, and itself to seek planning clearance and ownership, and to market the right to provide services there by competitive tender. The aim of this policy is to ensure the satisfactory choice, development and continued operation of sites, primarily from the point of view of road safety and traffic management considerations, to promote competition between operators in the interests of consumer choice and satisfaction, and to ensure an adequate return to the Exchequer by way of premium for the right to provide services at key locations on the motorway network.

There are no present proposals to change this policy. It will however be kept under review in the light of experience and representations made.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to consider the privatisation of the Civil Aviation Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to privatise the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the shortage of Civil Aviation Authority examiners to test for the commercial pilot's licence and instrument ratings examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. I have asked the chairman of the authority to write to my hon. Friend.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he set down any ordering timetable before approving investment by British Rail in the trains necessary for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland;

(2) what is the number of trains for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland for which he has given investment approval to British Rail; and what is the minimum number of such trains required.

Mr. Portillo: While BR has outlined its plans for through services, it has not yet submitted its investment proposals with its estimate of the cost of the trains.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the types of trains for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland for which he has given investment approval to British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: BR published its plans for through services on 14 December and I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on that date, *Official Report*, column *767*. It has not yet submitted its investment proposals.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what parameters for the completion and delivery of the order for the trains which will run from London through the Channel tunnel to the continent he set down before approving British Rail's investment in the new rolling stock;

(2) what requirements he imposed when giving his approval to investment in new rolling stock for British Rail about the companies to be invited to tender for the order to produce the trains necessary for the direct link from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: None. These are commercial matters for the railways concerned.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the cost of the trains which will run from London through the Channel tunnel to the continent for which he has given investment approval to British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: I refer to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 11 December 1989 at column *486*.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when reaching his decision about investment in new rolling stock for British Rail what consideration he gave to the extent to which continental trains could run directly through the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland;

(2) when reaching his decision on whether to approve investment in new rolling stock for British Rail, what consideration he gave to the extent to which existing British Rail trains would be able to run directly through the Channel tunnel to the continent from the north of England and Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: Neither existing BR nor continental trains can use the Channel tunnel for a variety of safety and engineering reasons.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive from British Rail its investment proposal for the trains to be used for the through passenger services to be introduced from the continent to the north of Britain.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail proposes to submit its proposals in April.

London Underground

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the eastern alignment of the proposed Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Parkinson: Following further work and negotiations with property developers and landowners, I am pleased to be able to authorise LRT to seek the leave of the House for the deposit of an additional provision to re-route the Jubilee line extension, from Canary Wharf to Canning Town via Greenwich point.

The east London rail study which I announced in July last year, identified two possible alignments for the Jubilee line extension between Canary Wharf and Canning Town either via Greenwich point, or via the Brunswick foreshore. The pressure of a November deadline for LRT to deposit a Bill, for the extension, made it necessary to take a decision as early as September to plan on the basis of the shorter and cheaper alignment via Brunswick. The Bill that I authorised in November was drafted on that basis. However, since then further discussions have been held with property developers and landowners whose interests would be affected by both alignments to ascertain whether they would be prepared to meet the additional costs of providing a station and changing the route, as necessary. Each of the interested groups has offered to contribute on this basis but the financial case for proceeding with the Greenwich alignment is more robust and offers a number of additional benefits. It is essential to secure the regeneration of the industrial wasteland in the Greenwich peninsula and above all, by providing two further river crossings it will open up new areas in south London to the Underground network. I am sure this announcement will be welcomed in those areas.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to dispose of his shares in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have concluded that it would not be appropriate for the Government to seek to dispose of their ordinary shares in the company now in view of the inquiries by inspectors appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and I have, therefore, decided that in accordance with the Government's general policy on Government shareholdings the ordinary shares should be transferred into the ownership of the Treasury. At the same time I intend to relinquish the right attaching to the special share which enables my right hon. Friend to appoint up to three directors of the company.

Road Signs

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice or instructions are given by his Department as to the signs, illumination and positioning of warning signs at major road junctions or roundabouts when the traffic lights have failed.

Mr. Atkins: Current guidance on these matters is contained in paragraph 5.7 of Department of Transport advice note TA 24/81, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Traffic Lights

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions are imposed on his traffic control systems units maintenance contractor as to the urgency and intensity of the efforts to restore normal working of failed traffic lights at the Hogarth roundabout on the A4 at Chiswick and at similar major junctions.

Mr. Atkins: The priority to be given to repairing traffic signals in London is detailed in the TCSU's contract with its maintenance contractor and varies according to the seriousness of the incident and when it occurs. Complete failure such as happened at the Hogarth roundabout is accorded top priority and the contractor is required, if it is possible, to effect a full repair within two and a half or five hours of the fault, for weekdays or weekend respectively. If, as was the case recently at Hogarth roundabout, major civil engineering works beyond the scope of the maintenance contract are necessary to effect the repair, the maintenance contractor is required to make the installation safe and to place warning signs on approach roads until the civil works can be put in hand.

I can assure my right hon. Friend that all concerned are alert to the need to effect repairs as quickly as possible.

Network SouthEast (Investment)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of investment in Network SouthEast has to earn an 8 per cent. return; and what investment projects do not have to earn this return.

Mr. Portillo: The basic criteria for all replacement investment in BR's subsidised sectors such as Network SouthEast are that the existing service should be maintained and that the chosen project should be the least cost option. An 8 per cent. discount rate is used to compare the costs and benefits of options, but there is no requirement for replacement investment as a whole to earn a financial return of 8 per cent. It is only when an option for investment includes an element of enhancement, for example the provision of first-class accommodation, or air conditioning, or represents an addition to the asset base, that this additional expenditure must normally be justified by its ability to earn an 8 per cent. return. We have however made it clear in the new objectives set for BR in December that where, exceptionally, additions to NSE's asset base cannot meet an 8 per cent. financial return, it is appropriate to consider whether there is a case on cost-benefit grounds. Most investment projects include elements of both replacement and enhancement, so it is not possible to provide the percentages requested.

Network SouthEast (Property Sales)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the major items of property sold by Network SouthEast over the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The sale of property and land no longer required for operational purposes is handled corporately by the British Rail Property Board. Its activities are covered on page 28 of the board's annual report and accounts for 1988-89, a copy of which is in the Library.

THE ARTS

Arts Funding

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many representations he has received concerning Government funding of the arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on 12 February, at column *51*. I have no immediate plans to make a statement on arts funding.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has received on the number of organisations, regionally and nationally, which are planning to *(a)* cut their staff, *(b)* cut their operations or performances and *(c)* close down completely in the coming financial year, following changes in funding available to them from the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: It is for the management of individual arts organisations to determine the level of their staffing and operations. Like any other organisation, they must set the scope of their operations within the limits of available resources. I am confident, however, that with an increase of 22 per cent. in the Arts Council's grant over the next three years, arts organisations will continue to build on recent successes.

Book of Kells

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has any plans to assist in the acquisition for the national collections of one of the two new facsimiles of the Book of Kells.

Mr. Luce: No. Decisions on acquisitions are a matter for the trustees of the national collections. I understand that a new facsimile is available for academic research in the university of London library, and that the British Library holds an earlier facsimile.

Museums and Galleries (Thefts)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many reported thefts from museums and art galleries in London there have been in each of the past five years.

Mr. Luce: Information on the number of reported thefts from museums and art galleries in London is not held centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the function of the official whose signature has been sent to the hon. Member for Linlithgow under the printed phrase cleared and approved for release in the answer to written question No. 164 of 19 February from the hon. Member for Linlithgow to which the Secretary of State said he would reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Cope: It is the administrative practice in the Northern Ireland Office for the Parliamentary Clerk to satisfy himself, before answers to parliamentary questions as approved by the Ministers are dispatched to right hon. and hon. Members, that they contain no textual inaccuracies or other errors and to confirm to those responsible for their dispatch that such a check has been carried out.

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will arrange for his officials to meet Sir George Terry to discuss the need for a wide inquiry into the affairs surrounding the Kincora boys' home.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* I have no plans to do so.

Integrated Schools

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of all primary, secondary and grammar schools in Northern Ireland which have been granted integrated status, showing the number of pupils attending each school in each of the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The table sets out the names of the seven integrated primary and secondary schools that have achieved voluntary maintained status, together with their pupil enrolments at January in each of the years 1988, 1989 and 1990:

	Pupil Numbers		
	January 1988	*January 1989*	*January 1990*
Primary			
Hazelwood (Newtownabbey)	160	199	208
Forge (Belfast)	130	171	186
All Children's (Newcastle)	—	86	103
Bridge (Banbridge)	—	107	140
Milstrand (Portrush)	—	83	115
Secondary			
Lagan College (Belfast)	500	558	585
Hazelwood College (Belfast)	—	215	293

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what numbers of pupils presently attend an integrated school in Northern Ireland; what percentage of pupils this number represents, for *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* grammar schools; what information he has as to how many pupils attend such schools in each education and library board area; and how many in each board area are (i) Roman Catholic, (ii) Protestant and (iii) other, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The seven integrated schools that are grant-aided as voluntary maintained schools had an aggregate enrolment of 1,630 pupils at January 1990.

Enrolment figures for all schools are not yet available for January 1990 but at the latest date for which comparable figures are available (January 1989) the five integrated primary schools had 646 pupils, representing 0·4 per cent. of all primary school enrolments in Northern Ireland and the two secondary schools had 773 pupils, representing 0·8 per cent. of all secondary school enrolments.

In addition to the seven grant-aided integrated schools, there are three integrated primary schools operating as independent schools:

	Pupils
Windmill Integrated Primary School	59
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	64
Braidside Integrated Primary School (Ballymena)	36

The figures for the four education and library board areas in which these schools are situated are as follows:

	Numbers
Belfast	687
South Eastern	688
North Eastern	115
Southern	140

Information as to the religious affiliations of pupils at schools in Northern Ireland is not readily available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has for each of the years of the existence of BES on *(a)* the regional distribution of BES funds and the regional distribution of small firms, *(b)* the distribution of BES investments by two digit standard industrial classification, or as detailed as possible and *(c)* the average size of investment.

Mr. Lilley: Information on the companies receiving investments through the business expansion scheme is published in chapter 7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989". Further information that is readily available is as follows:

Companies receiving BES investments, 1987-88

Industry	*Number of companies*	*Amount of investment £ million*
Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry	21	9
Fishing	20	6
Manufacture of Metals, Minerals and Chemicals	28	3
Mechanical Engineering	26	2
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	50	5
Manufacture of Transport Equipment	20	7
Instrument Engineering	20	2
Food and Drink Industry	30	2
Textile, Clothing, Footwear Industry	23	1
Manufacture of Paper and Paper Products	38	3
Other Manufacturing Industries	47	4
Construction and Real Estate	45	34
Wholesale Distribution	34	6
Retail Distribution	87	27
Distribution and Repair of Motor Vehicles	24	3
Hotels and Catering	70	38
Transport and Storage Services	27	1
Business, Professional and Technical Services	68	6
Medical, Educational and Social Services	36	30
Recreational, Hairdressing and Personal Services	56	4
Others	12	2
Total	782	195

The average size of investment per company is as follows:

	£ thousand
1983-84	147
1984-85	183
1985-86	224
1986-87	226
1987-88	256
[1]1988-89	180

[1] Provisional.

Single Parents

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for *(a)* 1960, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980 and *(d)* the latest year, the number of single people with children who work and pay tax; and if he will estimate the numbers below the tax threshold.

Mr. Lilley: In 1989-90 an estimated quarter of a million working lone parents pay tax and about the same number are in work, but below the tax threshold. Estimates are based on the 1987 family expenditure survey and are provisional. Figures for the earlier years are not available.

Personal Disposable Income

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing annual consumers' expenditure and personal disposable income from 1979 to 1988 in *(a)* owner-occupier households and *(b)* other households.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An analysis of consumers' expenditure and personal disposable income is not available in the form requested. Estimates by tenure of average weekly household expenditure and income are published annually in the report of the family expenditure survey.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what data would be required to enable a reliable assessment to be made of the cost of extending payment of Civil Service widows' pensions to the widows of post-retirement marriages of civil servants who retired before April 1978;

(2) if he will estimate the numbers of surviving retired male civil servants who retired before 6 April 1978.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 9 January 1990, at column *575*. I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Coins

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will undertake a review of the United Kingdom coinage so as to replace the present bronze 1p and 2p coins with copper-plated pieces; and if he will state the excess cost to the Treasury of providing these denominations in the current metal.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on 6 February, at column *540*. The excess cost to the Treasury of continuing to provide 1p and 2p coins in bronze as compared with copper-plated steel depends on metal prices and on the number of coins issued, but a reasonable estimate is between £2 million and £4 million a year.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the smaller size denomination of 5p and 10p to be issued by United Kingdom banks; if he has the coinage under review; if he will issue a £2 coin for circulation; what other plans he has for a redesign of the reverse of the coinage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The new, smaller 5p coin will be issued by the United Kingdom banks in June 1990 and the new, smaller 10p coins will be issued in June 1992. These changes followed a general review of the coinage in 1987. The Royal Mint issued a pamphlet setting out various options for change and the public were invited to comment. The smaller 5p and 10p coins were the options preferred. Aspects of the coinage are always kept under review. £2 coins are issued for circulation from time to time only as commemorative coins. Two versions of the £2 coin were, however, issued last year to commemorate the Bill of Rights in England and the Claim of Right in Scotland. There are no immediate plans to issue a further £2 coin or to redesign the reverse of the coinage.

Property Sales

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide a breakdown on a regional basis for the 1988 freehold and leasehold figures in table 15.1 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989".

Mr. Lilley: I regret that reliable information is not available at the level of detail requested. Available information is in the table:

Property sales in 1988

	Range of consideration (lower limit)															
	£0		*£10,000*		*£20,000*		*£30,000*		*£50,000*		*£100,000*		*£250,000*		*All values*	
Region	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Value*[2]
North	21	98	21	310	21	507	24	910	10	639	2	256	1	415	98	3,135
Yorkshire and Humberside	21	80	39	606	48	1,227	46	1,745	22	1,448	4	513	1	994	182	6,613
East Midlands	21	92	25	375	33	849	50	1,980	36	2,386	6	855	2	1,292	173	7,829
East Anglia	6	15	6	93	6	149	26	1,111	41	2,785	8	1,058	2	1,371	95	6,581
South East	36	67	20	315	27	662	81	3,381	274	19,262	82	11,751	14	10,181	534	45,618
Greater London	30	42	16	231	13	326	25	1,035	167	11,934	60	8,773	14	13,684	326	36,025
South West	21	45	17	252	18	455	66	2,704	98	6,782	23	3,277	4	2,849	247	16,363
West Midlands	26	80	22	323	18	459	47	1,836	38	2,544	9	1,266	2	1,594	162	8,103
North West	40	160	42	643	58	1,460	57	2,192	31	2,083	5	731	2	1,394	234	8,664
Wales	18	69	15	220	26	654	30	1,171	16	1,026	3	416	1	498	110	4,053
England and Wales	240	748	224	3,368	268	6,747	452	18,064	733	50,890	203	28,894	42	34,272	2,162	142,983

[1] Thousands.
[2] £ million.
Source: Survey of Conveyancing 1988.

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will provide for the boroughs of Croydon, Merton and Hounslow the number and rateable value of houses and so on with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500;

(2) whether he will provide for the boroughs of Ealing, Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham the number and rateable value of houses and so on with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500;

(3) whether he will provide for the boroughs of Wandsworth, Greenwich and Lewisham the number and rateable value of houses and so on with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500;

(4) whether he will provide for the districts of Stafford, Cannock Chase and Staffordshire, South-East, the number and rateable value of houses and so on with a rateable value not exceeding £100 and by *(a)* £50 steps to £400, *(b)* £100 steps to £800, *(c)* £800 to £1,000, *(d)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(e)* over £1,500.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost in 1990-91 and in a full year of raising the lower limit for the reduced rate for corporation tax from £150,000 to £200,000; and how many firms would be affected.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* About 20,000 companies would be affected at a cost of £30 million in a full year and £20 million in 1990-91, assuming company incomes at 1989-90 levels and that the change took effect from 1 April 1989.

Tax Relief

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the savings in a full year at 1989-90 rates of restricting all allowances and reliefs to the standard rate of tax; and if he will provide a breakdown of the category of allowances and reliefs.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Estimates of the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1989-90 levels of income from restricting the main income tax reliefs and allowances to the basic rate are as follows:

	£ million
a. Personal allowances	1,350
b. Mortgage interest relief	430
c. Employee's superannuation and personal pension contributions	200
d. Retirement annuity relief[1]	110

[1] Including relief for retirement annuity payments made by employees.

It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for the effects of restricting other smaller reliefs to the basic rate. The direct revenue yield from restricting all reliefs and allowances simultaneously to the basic rate is likely to be in the order of £2¾ billion, somewhat more than the sum of the yields from restricting the reliefs and allowances separately; this is due to the cumulative effect of bringing more people into higher rate tax. About two thirds of those who would pay more tax as a result of this change are currently liable only at the basic rate. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal income and are provisional. No account is taken of possible behavioural changes or the effect on receipts of capital gains tax.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, now or as soon as the figures are available to him, a table indicating for each county and district authority in Wales, the budgeted spending for 1990-91, the corresponding grant-borne and community charge-borne aggregate sums, and the proposed personal community charge level.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to the hon. Gentleman when the figures become available and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the appeal procedure after the refusal of a grant of a waste disposal licence issued under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Appellants are required to give notice of appeal on the form set out in schedule 7 to the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988 and to provide the documentation as required by regulation 10(3).

Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table to show such information as he has to hand from the schemes of local management of schools submitted for his approval by local education authorities to show the relative values of the general schools budget, the mandatory exceptions, the discretionary exceptions and the aggregate schools budget, on a comparable basis to that published by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in his reply of 5 February to the hon. Member for Epping Forest, *Official Report*, column *451*.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The following information has been taken from the local management of schools scheme submissions made by local education authorities to my right hon. Friend. The table gives the percentage figures requested; it is not possible to provide comparative cash figures because the information has been supplied using different price bases.

Local Education Authority	Mandatory exceptions as percentage of general schools budget	Total discretionary exceptions as percentage of general schools budget	Aggregated schools budget as percentage of general schools budget
Clwyd	11·49	24·35	64·16
Dyfed	7·82	23·43	68·75
Gwent	10·13	21·91	67·96
Gwynedd	9·97	24·87	65·16
Mid Glamorgan	9·34	23·37	67·29
Powys	9·08	23·50	67·42
South Glamorgan	7·90	16·91	75·19
West Glamorgan	13·34	18·43	68·23

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for Wales and each major administrative division the number of *(a)* rateable domestic premises, *(b)* resident adults and *(c)* resident children together with (i) the rateable value of the domestic premises, (ii) the yield from that rate and (iii) the estimated yield from a 1 per cent. levy on the capital value of the housing stock in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information for Wales and each district for 1989 is shown in the following table. The estimated yield from a 1 per cent. levy on the capital value of the housing stock in 1988 and 1989 is not available.

Local Authority	Domestic rateable value at September 1989		Average Domestic Rate Poundage	Yield £ million	Resident Population[1] (thousands)	
	Number of hereditaments	Value £000			Aged 0-17	Aged 18+
Alyn and Deeside	27,806	4,440	270·8	12·02	17·8	54·8
Colwyn	23,584	3,573	281·6	10·06	11·6	43·1
Delyn	25,618	3,970	269·2	10·69	15·6	49·5
Glyndwr	17,285	2,206	276·1	6·09	9·3	32·2
Rhuddlan	22,262	3,412	269·5	9·19	11·8	44·3
Wrexham Maelor	45,356	6,126	278·5	17·06	28·5	88·5
Carmarthen	21,885	2,269	263·6	5·98	12·2	43·6
Ceredigion	26,626	2,957	256·0	7·57	14·8	52·2
Dinefwr	15,401	1,417	254·9	3·61	8·5	30·3
Llanelli	30,619	3,176	282·1	8·96	16·0	58·0
Preseli Pembs	28,825	3,047	252·3	7·69	16·7	54·0
South Pembroke	16,854	2,044	258·1	5·28	9·8	32·1
Blaenau Gwent	31,415	2,998	266·9	8·00	17·8	59·5
Islwyn	25,756	2,715	258·5	7·02	15·5	50·9
Monmouth	29,842	4,482	262·3	11·75	18·6	62·7
Newport	52,787	8,038	257·4	20·69	30·9	97·2
Torfaen	35,975	4,519	270·9	12·24	22·2	70·1
Aberconwy	22,623	3,233	261·4	8·45	11·2	42·9
Arfon	23,805	2,410	258·5	6·23	13·3	41·9
Dwyfor	13,683	1,519	259·9	3·95	5·6	21·4
Meirionnydd	16,265	1,818	263·0	4·78	6·6	25·0
Ynys Môn	29,151	3,727	258·1	9·62	17·6	53·5
Cynon Valley	26,710	2,181	273·1	5·96	15·0	49·3
Merthyr Tydfil	23,679	2,177	282·6	6·15	13·8	44·3
Ogwr	50,834	6,213	292·8	18·19	32·4	105·1
Rhondda	32,123	2,067	286·5	5·92	18·0	58·6
Rhymney Valley	39,172	4,181	292·0	12·21	26·8	77·7
Taff Ely	36,414	4,224	283·9	11·99	23·4	71·5
Brecknock	16,676	1,929	248·5	4·79	9·0	32·1
Montgomeryshire	21,521	2,497	229·9	5·74	11·4	39·8
Radnorshire	9,967	1,135	232·4	2·64	4·9	17·7
Cardiff	111,753	19,613	222·1	43·56	68·0	215·9
Vale of Glamorgan	43,548	7,287	230·0	16·76	28·6	90·9
Port Talbot	20,457	2,214	301·5	6·77	11·0	38·0
Lliw Valley	24,738	2,481	305·7	7·62	13·9	47·9
Neath	26,115	2,832	307·2	8·54	15·0	50·2
Swansea	73,859	9,958	315·0	31·37	42·8	144·2
Total Wales	1,140,989	145,085	265·6	385·14	665·9	2,190·9

[1] Registrar General; 1988 mid-year estimates

Local Government and Housing Act

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy that the timetable for implementation of the subsidiary legislation giving effect to part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in respect of Wales should allow adequate time for local authorities to assess the nature of their relationship with companies and make necessary adjustments in the light of the subsidiary legislation;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to allow a period of six months between the publication of the subordinate

legislation giving effect to part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in Wales and the date from which such subsidiary legislation takes effect.

Mr. Grist: The implementation timetable will provide adequate time for local authorities to assess the implications of the controls on local authority companies. Part V of the 1989 Act defines a company and also specifies the tests which apply in establishing a local authority's relationship with companies for the purposes of the new regulatory system. The provisions are explained in greater detail in a consultation paper issued to local authorities in Wales last October.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which Welsh voluntary wildlife bodies have indicated to him support for the Government's proposals for splitting the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A number of other organisations in Wales have done so, including the National Farmers Union committee for Wales, the chairman and chief officers of the national parks and the committees for Wales of both the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will respond to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs report, "The Channel Tunnel: Implications for Wales," published on 21 June 1989.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The command paper should be published next month.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost of a settlement for ambulance personnel in Wales of *(a)* 6·5 per cent. from April 1989 to 1990, backdated to April 1989 with an additional 3 per cent. from April 1990 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990 and *(b)* 9 per cent. from April 1989, backdated to April 1989 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is as follows:
(a) £2·2 million
(b) £2·7 million

Welsh Language

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each county education authority the number of teachers needed to *(a)* deliver Welsh language teaching at the primary and secondary levels as required by the national curriculum and *(b)* deliver all national curriculum subjects in Welsh secondary schools by teachers with the appropriate subject qualifications.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The current estimate, based on 1988 pupil numbers, of the number of teachers required to deliver Welsh language teaching when the national curriculum is fully implemented is:

LEA	*Primary*	*Secondary*
Clwyd	498	128
Dyfed	933	119
Gwent	278	128
Gwynedd	969	97
Mid Glamorgan	560	165
Powys	146	38
South Glamorgan	290	115
West Glamorgan	338	105
Wales	4,012	895

These estimates are being revised and will take account of more recent information on pupil numbers.

Estimates of the number of teachers required to teach subjects within the national curriculum will be available only when the results of the 1989 secondary schools staffing survey are available and have been analysed.

Revenue Support Grant

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether under the community charge system in Wales it is possible to identify the amount of revenue support grant attributable to each county council and to each borough and district council.

Mr. Peter Walker: I calculated the revenue support grant entitlements of all Welsh local authorities, under section 82(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, following the approval of the Welsh revenue support grant report 1990-91 on 24 January. Authorities were notified of their entitlements on 1 February. Those entitlements are listed in the following table:

Welsh revenue support grant settlement 1990-91

	Revenue support grant £
Alyn and Deeside	3,596,953
Colwyn	2,725,742
Delyn	2,764,702
Glyndwr	1,721,119
Rhuddlan	3,178,226
Wrexham Maelor	5,893,988
Carmarthen	2,910,219
Ceredigion	3,673,507
Dinefwr	1,771,103
Llanelli	4,792,442
Preseli Pembrokeshire	3,854,649
South Pembrokeshire	2,743,440
Blaenau Gwent	6,435,008
Islwyn	4,976,825
Monmouth	3,031,576
Newport	10,154,847
Torfaen	5,646,991
Aberconwy	2,849,894
Arfon	3,692,376
Dwyfor	2,309,802
Meirionnydd	2,184,575
Ynys Môn	4,171,718
Cynon Valley	5,442,452
Merthyr Tydfil	5,561,740
Ogwr	8,624,883
Rhondda	8,295,768
Rhymney Valley	6,056,028
Taff Ely	5,803,832
Brecknock	2,202,866
Montgomeryshire	2,228,139
Radnorshire	989,607
Cardiff	17,925,825
Vale of Glamorgan	5,367,849
Port Talbot	3,988,218
Lliw Valley	3,180,384

	Revenue support grant £
Neath	4,006,177
Swansea	15,570,241
Clwyd	124,120,279
Dyfed	117,851,755
Gwent	141,200,394
Gwynedd	82,423,396
Mid Glamorgan	191,709,234
Powys	48,371,125
South Glamorgan	135,014,799
West Glamorgan	118,903,306
TOTAL DISTRICTS	180,323,711
TOTAL COUNTIES	959,594,288
TOTAL WALES	1,139,917,999

SCOTLAND

Salmon

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice has been given to the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust regarding the acquisition of salmon netting rights in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Acquisitions of salmon fishing rights in Scotland are private transactions. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland does not advise on either the acquisition or sale of such rights.

Advice is given by DAFS scientists to salmon interests including the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust (Scotland) on possible research or monitoring activities which they might fund or take part in. Discussions on this basis took place with the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust (Scotland) in March 1988 and in April 1989. Similar discussions are conducted with the Atlantic Salmon Trust, other research trusts concerned with particular river systems, individual district salmon fishery boards and the River Tweed commissioners. General discussions also take place from time to time with bodies representing the collective interests of district boards, anglers and netsmen.

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make a decision on the proposed scheme of salmon tagging being drawn up by the River Tweed commissioners.

Mr. Lang: On 26 January the River Tweed commissioners submitted formal proposals for a local scheme of tagging wild salmon in the Tweed area. The proposed scheme would be organised and financed locally but the River Tweed commissioners have sought my right hon. and learned Friend's views about possible new, local powers to support the scheme. These local powers would require primary legislation. I expect there to be further discussions with the River Tweed commissioners on these and other aspects of their proposals in the coming weeks.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evaluation his Department has made in 1990 of alternative methods of raising finance for Scottish local government other than the community charge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A number of possible options for financing local government were evaluated before the decision was taken to abolish domestic rates and introduce the community charge. There has been no need since then for any study of alternative methods of finance. The Labour party's proposed roof tax is essentially a return to domestic rates and if introduced would mean a return to the many anomalies and unfairness of that system.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of people who have gained financially from the introduction of the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At the outset of the new system it was estimated that around 50 per cent. of households would benefit from the introduction of the community charge. Other changes in the local government finance system, introduced at the same time as the community charge, and the lack of information on what local authority budgets and rate poundages would have been under the previous system make it impossible to provide further information.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations that allow voters to opt out or opt in to the sale of their name and address from electoral registers; whether he has had discussions with the Data Protection Registrar concerning the sale of names and addresses from the electoral register; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans to introduce such regulations. The operation of the electoral registration system requires that all the information in the register should be freely available to the public. The provisions of the Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 1986 governing the publication and supply of the register reflect this fact and the conclusion that its use by commercial organisations could not effectively be prevented. The Data Protection Registrar was consulted before the introduction of the provisions in those regulations governing the sale of the electoral register in data form.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations to alert voters to the fact that their name and address are routinely disclosed from the electoral register for poll tax purposes; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations to protect voters who may be vulnerable to attack if their name and address appeared on an electoral register that is available for sale or inspection by the public; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no present plans to do so, but we shall continue to keep the position under careful review.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has provided guidance to electoral registration

officers concerning the privacy implications of the inspection or sale of the names and addresses from the electoral register without the knowledge or consent of the voter; whether his Department has studied the implications of linking copies of the electoral register information to that of the census or to other large databases; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Home and Health Department has issued guidance to electoral registration officers on the electoral registration process, including the inspection and sale of the register, but not specifically on questions of privacy. Individual census records will not be available for linkage to the electoral register or other large databases.

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each region in Scotland the number of *(a)* rateable domestic premises before the poll tax came into effect, *(b)* resident adults and *(c)* resident children together with (i) the rateable value of the domestic premises, (ii) the yield from that rate and (iii) the estimated yield from a 1 per cent. levy on the capital value of the housing stock in 1988 and 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table. Gross yield is calculated by applying poundages (net of domestic relief) to total rateable values. Figures on actual yield after allowing for reliefs, non-payment, and so on are not available separately for the domestic sector. Reliable estimates of the capital value of the housing stock are not available.

Region/Islands Area	*Number of domestic subjects at 1 April 1988*	*Total rateable value at 1 April 1988 of domestic subjects*	*Gross domestic rate yield 1988-89*	*Adult population (18 and over) at June 1988*	*Under 18 population at June 1988*
Borders	46,209	26,621,187	15,120,834	80,306	22,286
Central	107,162	68,128,907	47,622,106	207,278	64,248
Dumfries and Galloway	61,855	38,539,073	22,314,123	114,364	33,118
Fife	141,111	89,981,175	62,446,935	263,032	81,685
Grampian	207,913	131,750,260	73,384,895	383,216	118,178
Highland	85,953	45,603,970	28,730,501	151,663	50,203
Lothian	312,045	230,025,097	169,988,547	582,047	159,132
Strathclyde	926,810	611,761,080	474,114,837	1,766,910	549,829
Tayside	170,187	105,941,973	73,523,729	304,985	88,763
Orkney	8,108	2,621,357	1,258,251	14,822	4,633
Shetland	9,076	3,277,446	3,310,220	16,210	6,154
Western Isles	13,295	3,577,367	2,575,704	23,214	7,725

Population Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households there are in Scotland with only one adult over the age of 18 years; how many of those are single-parent families with children; and how many are single people over pensionable age.

Mr. Rifkind: Information in the form requested is not available. However, it is estimated that at 31 December 1986, there were 564,000 households with one adult over the age of 16 (either living alone or with children under the age of 16) in Scotland; 70,000 of these are estimated to be lone-parent families, while 325,000 are estimated to consist of one person over pensionable age living alone.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the most recent available breakdown of the Scottish adult population by household size in *(a)* total and *(b)* percentage terms.

Mr. Rifkind: Information in the form requested is not available. The estimates in the table are of the population in private households aged 16 and over, by the number of persons aged 16 and over in the household, at 31 December 1986:

Estimated population aged 16 and over in private households 31 December 1986, Scotland

Number of persons aged 16 and over in household	*Population*	*Percentage*
One	564,000	14·4
Two	1,921,000	49·0
Three	832,000	21·2
Four	438,000	11·2
Five or more	163,000	4·2
TOTAL	3,918,000	100·0

Incomes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the most recent household income figures for Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The most recent family expenditure survey shows that in 1987-88 the average income per household in Scotland was £234·23 per week.

Rating System (Costs)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of *(a)* administering the (i) domestic and (ii) domestic and non-domestic rate rebate system in Scotland in 1987-88, *(b)* administering the poll tax rebate system in Scotland in 1989-90 and *(c)* administering the poll tax transitional relief scheme in Scotland in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Rifkind: No information is held centrally on the cost of administering non-domestic rate rebates in 1987-88. Neither is it possible to distinguish between the costs for administering domestic rate rebates and those for rent rebates and rent allowances from the information which is submitted by local authorities. The total cost of housing benefit administration in 1987-88 was £15·3

million. Similarly, it is not possible to separate community charge rebates from the other elements of housing benefit administration in 1989-90, but the local authorities' estimate of the total cost is £21·7 million. The cost of administering the proposed personal community charge transitional relief scheme in 1989-90 and 1990-91 has not yet been established.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of collecting non-domestic rates in Scotland in 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 25 January.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's most recent estimate of the *(a)* capital expenditure, *(b)* revenue costs and *(c)* extra staff employed by local authorities in connection with the establishment and maintenance of the poll tax register and with the administration and collection of the poll tax and poll tax rebate system in Scotland for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on actual capital expenditure is not yet available centrally for 1988-89 or 1989-90 in respect of establishment and maintenance of the community charge system in Scotland. However, in order to assist local authorities in preparing for the introduction of the community charge, additional capital allocations were provided in 1987-88 and 1988-89 totalling £26 million. The administrative cost of community charge collection for Scotland in 1989-90 is estimated by local authorities at £23·3 million and the cost of registration work is estimated at £8·5 million. These figures are exclusive of the costs of operating the community charge rebate system. These costs are offset by the savings which local authorities made by no longer having to value domestic properties or collect domestic rates.

It is not possible from the information collected to separate local authority expenditure on the administration of community charge rebates from that incurred on other housing benefits but local authorities have estimated the cost of administering housing benefits as a whole at £15·9 million in 1988-89 and £21·7 million in 1989-90.

No information is held centrally on the number of staff employed by authorities on community charge work. The organisational arrangements for community charge collection are entirely a matter for the local authorities themselves.

Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total expenditure on the Health Service in Scotland in *(a)* gross terms and *(b)* net of pay costs in constant prices and indexed (1980=100) for each year since 1980 including estimated expenditure for 1990-91.

Mr. Rifkind: The information in the format requested is not fully available. Details of gross expenditure in both cash terms and adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator, are given in the table:

Total National Health Service Expenditure in Scotland

	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator to 1989-90 prices	Index (1979-80=100)
1979-80	1,064	2,143	100·0
1980-81	1,343	2,386	106·7
1981-82	1,531	2,374	110·7
1982-83	1,660	2,401	112·0
1983-84	1,773	2,450	114·3
1984-85	1,901	2,502	116·7
1985-86	2,015	2,517	117·4
1986-87	2,144	2,591	120·9
1987-88	2,328	2,672	124·6
1988-89	2,591	2,772	129·3
1989-90[1]	2,851	2,851	133·0
1990-91[2]	3,064	2,918	136·1

[1] Projected outturn.
[2] Provisional allocation.

Rate Arrears

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of summary warrants granted for domestic rate arrears in Scotland in each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Rifkind: Information is not held centrally on the number of persons subject to summary warrant procedure for non-payment of domestic rates.

Debt Recovery

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of speculative bank account arrestments served in Scottish clearing banks for the recovery of outstanding debts to local authorities in each year since 1985-86; and how many were successful in *(a)* locating an account and *(b)* recovering the amount outstanding.

Mr. Rifkind: Information is not collected centrally on the use of bank account arrestments for the recovery of local authority debts.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on his allocation of £319·217 million to Lothian health board for 1990-91, giving the percentage increase over the previous year in cash, real and volume terms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The gross allocation to Lothian health board for 1989-90 is £295·956 million. The figure of £319·217 million which I have announced for 1990-91 is likely to be supplemented later in respect of breast cancer screening, waiting list initiatives and a number of minor services. The announced figure represents an increase of 7·86 per cent. in cash terms or 2·73 per cent. in real terms. No separate NHS pay and prices index is maintained for Scotland and it is not therefore possible to calculate the increase in volume terms.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what costs have fallen to regional authorities in Scotland as a result of provision of services which otherwise would have been provided by the ambulance service during the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Police costs will be reimbursed by the Common Services Agency. Regional authorities have not been asked to provide any other services.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the cost of a settlement for ambulance personnel in Scotland of *(a)* 6·5 per cent. from April 1989 to 1990, backdated to April 1989 with an additional 3 per cent. from April 1990 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990 and *(b)* 9 per cent. from April 1989, backdated to April 1989 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Based on the 1988-89 pay bill of £21·6 million for ambulance men and women in Scotland, the cost of a settlement would be £2·45 million in case *(a)* and £2·91 million in case *(b)*.

Revenue Support Grant

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether under the community charge system in Scotland it is possible to identify the amount of revenue support grant attributable to each regional council and to each district council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. Details of the amounts of grant payable to each local authority in Scotland in respect of 1990-91 were specified in the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1990.

Civil Engineers

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil engineers are employed in Scotland in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures requested are not recorded separately in Government employment statistics. Such information may be available from the Institution of Civil Engineers. Periodically it publishes details of its members and their employment.

Grant-aided Colleges

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will announce the allocations of grant in aid for recurrent expenditure to the grant-aided colleges in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that the Secretary of State has made the following offers of grant in aid for recurrent expenditure to the 17 grant-aided colleges for the financial year 1990-91. The offers, which are conditional on parliamentary approval of the supply estimates, are as follows:

	Offer 1990-91 £ million
Central Institutions	
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	3·844
Dundee Institute of Technology	7·273
Edinburgh College of Art	3·973
Glasgow College of Technology	12·588
Glasgow School of Art	3·557
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh	18·441
Paisley College of Technology	10·661
Queen Margaret College	4·603
Queen's College, Glasgow	3·183
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology	11·953
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	2·468
Scottish College of Textiles	2·403
Colleges of Education	
Craigie College of Education	1·555
Jordanhill College of Education	10·534
Moray House College of Education	7·906
Northern College of Education	6·337
St. Andrew's College of Education	3·803

Comparisons of these grants in aid against those made in 1989-90 need to take account of the shift of public funding towards fees and other factors. The offers are designed to ensure that no college will receive an increase of less than 3 per cent. or more than 13 per cent over the initial allocations made in 1989-90. Because the colleges will also benefit from substantial savings as a result of higher rates relief for charities, this should allow expenditure to increase by at least 5 per cent. in 1990-91, and for most colleges by substantially more.

Excluding the effect of the shift of funding to fees, which will be neutral in terms of public expenditure, but bringing into account the savings that will accrue to the colleges from changes in rates relief for charities, the overall level of public funding for the colleges will be some 11 per cent. higher than in 1989-90. I am pleased that we have been able to provide such an increase in funding, which should enable the colleges to further expand student intakes, notably for pre-service courses of teacher training.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Arms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek a meeting with his counterpart in Buenos Aires to discuss the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans yet to meet the Foreign Minister of Argentina.

UN Convention on Rights of the Child

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government intend to sign and ratify the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and what reservations Her Majesty's Government intend to enter on various articles of the convention.

Mr. Sainsbury: We intend to sign and ratify the convention on the rights of the child as soon as possible. We are currently considering what reservations, if any, may be necessary.

Yanomani Indians

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any discussions through United Nations organisations on the Yanomani Indians in Brazil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have not had discussions specifically through United Nations organisations, but my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment both raised this question with the Brazilian president-elect when he was in London on 8 February.

Green Island, Hong Kong

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total area of Green Island, the total area of the building in which the Vietnamese boat people are held and the total number of people so held.

Mr. Sainsbury: Green Island has a total land area of 13·4 hectares. The reception centre, where all asylum seekers arriving in Hong Kong are first taken for the normal port, health and immigration procedures before being transferred after a few days to one of the main detention centres, is situated on a site of 4,150 sq m. The two dormitories in the centre can normally accommodate 480 people but are currently being used to house 500 people. The combined floor area of the two dormitories is about 600 sq m.

Refugees

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the UNHCR lays down any minimum floor space standards for refugees pending examination of their cases.

Mr. Sainsbury: The UNHCR has not established any minimum floor space standards for asylum seekers held pending examination of their cases.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Panamanian relations.

Mr. Sainsbury: We now enjoy good and friendly relations with the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 9 January, *Official Report*, columns *581-82*, what information he has now of the number of deaths and injuries among civilians arising from the invasion of Panama by the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest information available to us indicates that 203 Panamanian civilians and three American civilians were killed. No figures have been released on the number of civilians injured.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current arrangements exist in the United Kingdom to represent the interests of the Panamanian Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Panamanian Government are represented by their chargé d'affaires at the embassy of the Republic of Panama in London.

PRIME MINISTER

Press Office

Q91. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the estimated cost of her Department's press office in 1990.

The Prime Minister: The latest estimate of total expenditure by my press office in 1989-90 is £361,520.

West German Railways

Q101. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to meet Chancellor Kohl; and if she will raise with him his Government's railway investment policy.

The Prime Minister: I next expect to meet Chancellor Kohl at the annual Konigswinter conference on 29 March. I do not expect to raise the question of his Government's railway investment policy with him.

Blaby

Q108. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to visit Blaby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to visit Leicestershire.

German Unification

Q112. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the Government's current policy towards the pace and scope of reunification between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

The Prime Minister: The Government, in common with the other western allies have always supported German unification provided that it comes about as a result of the freely expressed choice of the people of the two German states. It must respect the relevant agreements and treaties and all of the principles of the Helsinki final act. The Government's aim has been to see a framework within which the full implications of Germany's unification could be properly worked out. We very much welcome the achievement of that framework with the agreement at the open skies conference in Ottawa to start meetings of the four powers and the two German states.

Barley Mow Estate, Limehouse

Q.171 **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will visit the Barley Mow estate in Limehouse.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Environment (International Co-operation)

Q.183 **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to international co-operation on environmental issues.

The Prime Minister: The Government work to protect the global environment through a wide range of international organisations including the European Community, the United Nations and the OECD. Our £3 million annual contribution to the United Nations environment programme is the third highest in the world. In my speech to the United Nations General Assembly last

November I drew attention to the problem of global climate change, one of the greatest threats to the world environment. I also reiterated our call for an international framework convention on climate change which has been widely supported. We are playing an active part in the intergovernmental panel on climate change and we have committed an additional £100 million over the next three years to help conserve tropical forests.

Downing Street Services

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what services at 10 Downing street are contracted out; what is the cost per service per year to public funds, respectively; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The contracted-out services regularly used by my office include the following:

Service	*Estimated Annual Cost* £
Window Cleaning	3,000
Catering	24,570
Laundry and Dry Cleaning	4,800
Taxis	7,420
Switchboard	223,000

In addition, in the current year, my office has made use of other contracted-out services for minor maintenance and redecoration and the management of refurbishment of the state rooms. The costs of all these contracted-out services are met from moneys voted by Parliament.

Downing Street (Security)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what level of public scrutiny exists over the provision of security expenditure associated with Downing street.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure associated with 10 Downing street is carried on the Cabinet Office (OMCS) class XX, vote 1 and is brought to account in the annual appropriation account which is audited and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Engagements

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the German Defence Minister and one with the National Pensioners Convention.

HEALTH

Food Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what legislation to safeguard health is being considered in respect of blood gel plasma meat products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 16 February at columns *444-46*. As with any other food, fitness for human consumption is subject to the Food Act 1984 and regulations made under that Act. There is no need to legislate separately on safety grounds.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department plans the contracting out of any additional services; and whether self-governing trusts will be allowed to contract out nursing or medical services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans for another central initiative for additional specific NHS services to be subject to mandatory competitive tendering. Competitive tendering does, however, offer scope for increasing effectiveness and value for money across a wide range of services. We shall continue to support and encourage its extension. NHS trusts will be free to decide how best to provide services in order to fulfil the contracts that they make with health authorities and other purchasers.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of mentions of rape or incest in certificates for abortions performed on pregnancies of 18 weeks' or more gestation, but excluding any mention of statutory grounds 1, 4, 5 and 6.

Mr. Freeman: There was one abortion notification form received for England and Wales during 1988 for an abortion performed at 18 weeks' or more gestation, under either grounds 2 or 3 of the Abortion Act 1967, on which rape was mentioned. There were no mentions of incest in the same categories.

It should be noted that neither rape nor incest are in themselves statutory grounds for performing an abortion, and are not required to be specified on the notification form by the certifying doctor. The available data, therefore, can be compiled only from occasions on which such information is volunteered on the notification form.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has any evidence as to whether women are at risk of contracting toxic shock syndrome through using tampons;

(2) whether his Department has evidence to confirm or deny the United States Federal Drugs Agency's list assessment of contracting toxic shock syndrome at one to 17 per 100,000 women and that there is a risk of death.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information received from the public health laboratory service (PHLS) suggests that

in recent years there has been on average one death per year from toxic shock syndrome (TSS) associated with tampon use in the United Kingdom. The public health laboratory service intends to publish data on the incidence of toxic shock syndrome shortly—which will include data on tampon-related toxic shock syndrome.

Tampons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to introduce standardised absorbency regulations for tampons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have asked the industry to show the grades of absorbency of tampons clearly on the packets.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is aware of any research which has been conducted to ascertain whether tampon usage may be linked to the incidence of cervical cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are not aware of evidence of a causal link between sanitary protection products and cervical cancer.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will conduct research into the health effects of tampon usage including toxic shock syndrome, vaginal ulcerations and the possibility of tampon fibres becoming attached to vaginal membranes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no present plans to do so.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has conducted any research into links between tampon absorbency and the incidence of toxic shock syndrome.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No, but there has been such research in the United States.

NHS Reform

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *26*, relating to arrangements for patients in Denton and Reddish, if he will make a statement on the implications for these arrangements of the proposed reforms of the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Stockport and Tameside, in common with other district health authorities, will soon be making arrangements to discuss with general practitioners treating residents in their areas what future arrangements should be made for contracts for hospital treatment in a wide range of hospitals, including NHS trust hospitals, hospitals they manage themselves and those managed by other district health authorities. The reform of the National Health Service will provide for better treatment and better value for money leading to more treatment for more patients as the standards achieved by the best hospitals are rewarded by the flow of additional resources.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the new tranquilliser Flucto-Trazepan has yet been submitted for approval; and whether it is being tested to ensure that it is not addictive and does not have dangerous side effects.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not usual practice to disclose information about whether or not an application for a product licence has been received or the progress of any such application.

Nursing Staff, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing staff have yet to have their regrading resolved or are currently awaiting appeals in *(a)* Leeds Western health authority and *(b)* Leeds Eastern health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Wythenshawe Hospital

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *706*, if he will seek a further assurance from the chairman of the North Western regional health authority about expediting a reply to the letter from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe of 16 January to the chairman of the North Western regional health authority about the urgent problems facing the regional cardiac unit, raised with the right hon. Member by all the consultant cardiologists and cardiac surgeons at Wythenshawe hospital.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that Mr. Bruce Martin, chairman of the North Western regional health authority replied on 21 February 1990 to the letter of 16 January 1990 from the right hon. Member.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will open discussions with the South Manchester and Trafford health authorities to explore the possibility of a rationalisation of Wythenshawe hospital's services in conjunction with Trafford general hospital rather than Withington hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for the North Western regional health authority to consider, with South Manchester district health authority and other district authorities affected, the proposals made by the South Manchester authority to rationalise acute and priority services at the Wythenshawe and Withington hospitals. The regional health authority is well aware of the contribution that Wythenshawe hospital makes to the hospital care of residents in South Trafford, and it should certainly take account of this in considering any proposals for significant change made by the South Manchester district health authority.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the cost of a settlement for ambulance personnel in England of *(a)* 6·5 per cent. from

April 1989 to 1990, backdated to April 1989 with an additional 3 per cent. from April 1990 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990 and *(b)* 9 per cent. from April 1989, backdated to April 1989 with an offer of further negotiations in October 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The increase in employers' pay costs for ambulance personnel in England for each of the proposed 18-month settlement options is as follows:

Option (a): £25·5 million
Option (b): £30·3 million

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the total cost of using private ambulances during the current ambulance workers' dispute;

(2) what has been the total cost of using taxis in lieu of ambulances during the current ambulance workers' dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost for items other than labour arising from the current ambulance workers' dispute in the following regions: (i) Nottingham, (ii) Manchester, (iii) Essex, (iv) West Yorkshire and (v) Northumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This detailed information is not collected centrally.

Food Poisoning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the number of cases notified to him of the following for each year since 1980 until the latest date for which figures are available: *(a)* food poisoning in general, *(b)* salmonella, *(c)* salmonella enteritidis, *(d)* salmonella enteritidis P4, *(e)* salmonella typhimurium, *(f)* campylobacter and *(g)* listeriosis, respectively;

(2) if he will list the number of cases notified to him of the following for January: *(a)* food poisoning in general, *(b)* salmonella, *(c)* salmonella enteritidis, *(d)* salmonella enteritidis P4, *(e)* salmonella typhimurium, *(f)* campylobacter and *(g)* listeriosis.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

	Food Poisoning		*Salmonella*	*S. Enteritidis*	*S. Enteritidis PT4*[1]	*S. Typhimurium*	*Campylobacter*	*Listeriosis*[2]
	OPCS Formally Notified	*Otherwise Ascertained*						
1980	10,318	—	10,806	816	n/a	3,509	8,956	75
1981	9,936	—	10,600	1,110	n/a	3,691	12,168	86
1982	9,964	4,289	12,051	959	n/a	5,337	12,797	77
1983	12,273	5,462	14,288	1,537	n/a	6,741	17,278	115
1984	13,247	7,455	14,094	1,554	n/a	6,369	21,018	115
1985	13,143	6,099	11,765	2,520	n/a	4,780	23,572	149
1986	16,502	7,446	14,800	4,001	2,271	5,885	24,809	137
1987	20,363	8,968	17,552	5,784	3,861	6,400	27,310	259
1988	27,826	11,887	23,821	13,051	9,062	5,566	28,761	291
1989 (prov)	39,125	15,588	25,188	13,232	9,749	6,182	32,590	251
1990 To week 06 (prov)	2,656	1,216	2,227	1,168	898	459	2,969	8

[1] Data on *S. Enteritiosis* PT's was collected from 1986 onwards.
[2] From 1983 Laboratory reports to CDSC and DMRQC data were pooled resulting in increased ascertainment.
n/a Not available for this year.

EMPLOYMENT

Private Security Firms

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Eggar: At present the following firms provide security for the Department:

Reliance Security Services
Compass Security
Group 4 Security
High Peak Security Services
Chubb Wardens Ltd.
Securicor Ltd.
Securiguard Ltd.
Armaguard
Century Security
Stirling Guards
Securisystem Ltd.
Dagenham Motorsecurity Ltd.
Mint Security

	£000s
1984-85	300
1985-86	331
1986-87	427
1987-88	502
1988-89	444
1989-90	540
Total	2,544

Health and Safety

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many newly established factory premises were registered with each of the Health and Safety Executive's area offices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hong Kong

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the annual allocation of work permits for unskilled applicants from Hong Kong will be completed.

Mr. Eggar: An announcement about the arrangements for the 1990 dependent territories quota will be made soon.

Work Permits (Domestic Servants)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits were granted in 1989 to foreigners described as domestic servants.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 36 work permits were granted for employment in this category under the provision of the dependent territories quota which allows a limited number of overseas nationals from the remaining dependent territories to come for work below the normal occupational skills criteria of the work permit scheme.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what employment regulations govern persons brought into the country as domestic servants by *(a)* foreigners and *(b)* agencies based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Such people, once they have established that they ordinarily work in Great Britain, are covered by the employment protection legislation in the same way as British employees.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what regulations govern the establishment of agencies in the United Kingdom which import domestic servants from abroad.

Mr. Eggar: Employment agencies, including those which recruit domestic servants from abroad, must be licensed under the Employment Agencies Act 1973. Regulations made under the Act (SI 1976 No. 715) set standards of conduct to protect the interests of workers and clients.

Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out, in 1987 prices, the expenditure on work-related further education in *(a)* 1986-87, *(b)* 1987-88, *(c)* 1988-89, *(d)* 1989-90 and *(e)* the projected expenditure for 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholls: The total expenditure on work-related further education by the Employment Department Group Training Agency (and its predecessors, the Training Commission and the Manpower Services Commission) is as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	110·0
1987-88	106·7
1988-89	106·3
1989-90	93·1
1990-91	89·8

The figures shown are at constant 1986-87 prices and were calculated by use of the GDP deflator index.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the total expenditure on the action for jobs campaign in 1988-89 was attributed to printed material; how much was attributed to television advertising; and how much was attributed to other expenditure.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure on action for jobs printed material in 1988-89 was £287,000; expenditure on action for jobs television advertising in 1988-89 was £123,000; and other expenditure relating to the action for jobs campaign in 1988-89 was £190,000.

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number and percentage of *(a)* people who started training with a training manager from the guarantee group and *(b)* people who started training with a training manager from the aim group between September 1988 and December 1989 inclusive for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* A total of 79,000 people (14 per cent. of all entrants) entered employment training from the guarantee group and 173,000 (32 per cent.) from the aim group between September 1988 and December 1989.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number in employment training of *(a)* people aged 18 to 25 years who have been unemployed for between six to 12 months and *(b)* people aged 18 to 50 years who have been unemployed for over two years in each of the months September 1988 to December 1989 inclusive for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The information is provided in the table:

Employment training aim and guarantee group entrants September 1988 to December 1989

Month	*Guarantee group*	*Aim group*
September 1988	3,600	7,900
October	5,100	11,300
November	5,400	12,700
December	4,600	10,600
January 1989	5,500	13,000
February	6,700	15,200
March	6,600	13,600
April	5,700	11,400
May	4,800	9,100
June	5,600	10,800
July	4,700	9,800
August	4,100	8,300
September	5,400	13,200
October	4,400	10,400
November	4,400	10,800
December[1]	3,100	7,600

[1] Provisional.

ENVIRONMENT

Association of District Councils

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of District Councils; and what issues were raised.

Mr. Chris Patten: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities addressed the Association of District Councils national symposium on 23 January. He spoke about the revenue support grant settlement.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the proposed rate of poll tax for all councils and districts which have declared a rate, together with the average rate per head payable in the current financial year.

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of charging authorities which have community charges higher than the Government estimate and how many are less than that estimate; and if he will list the authorities.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 21 February.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the figure of £2,280·12 in paragraph 3.1a of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) was arrived at; and what effect the choice of this figure has on standard spending assessments arrived at for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The figure referred to was arrived at by my right hon. Friend after full consultation with local authority respresentatives. It has no effect on the standard spending assessment for Great Grimsby since, as a non-metropolitan district, Great Grimsby is not responsible for social services for children.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will set out the reasons for the variations in the standard spending assessment on a per capita basis between the London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Enfield, Redbridge, Haringey, Hackney and Barnet.

Mr. Chope: The standard spending assessments have been calculated according to the formulae set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). The results of these calculations for each service element are listed in pounds per relevant adult for the London boroughs requested:

Standard spending assessments

	Education £ *per adult*	*Personal social services* £ *per adult*	*Highway maintenance* £ *per adult*	*Other services* £ *per adult*	*Capital financing* £ *per adult*	*Total* £ *per adult*
Waltham Forest	510	170	36	193	93	1,002
Enfield	452	110	38	134	82	816
Redbridge	414	99	36	136	65	751
Haringey	561	230	35	251	104	1,181
Hackney	701	344	40	359	124	1,569
Barnet	389	103	35	128	52	707

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what gain or loss has resulted for Brighton borough council as a consequence of the reduction in the standard spending assessment for the borough; what was the comparable grant in the previous four financial years; and on what basis the assessment was reduced.

Mr. Chris Patten: Brighton borough council's standard spending assessment (SSA) for 1990-91 reflects a 2·7 per cent. increase over the comparable figure for 1989-90 grant-related expenditure (GRE). It is not possible to determine what grant gain or loss has resulted for an authority as a consequence of a variation between its adjusted 1989-90 GRE and its 1990-91 SSA, because the methodology for calculating grant entitlement under the community charge system is different from that used under the domestic rating system. Brighton borough council's SSA was calculated on the same basis as that used for all other district councils, that is, the basis set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England).

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the detailed criteria leading to the standard spending assessment for Solihull borough; and what assessment he has made of the resultant effect of his calculations.

Mr. Chope: The details of the method of calculating the standard spending assessments for all local authorities are set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) approved by the House on 18 January. The result of the calculations for Solihull is an assessment of £103·664 million.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an estimate of the total number of households in the London borough of Hillingdon that will be eligible for relief under the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Chope: I estimate that about 6 million individuals will be entitled to transitional relief in England. No estimates have been made of the number of persons eligible at the level of individual local authorities, but I understand that the London borough of Hillingdon has estimated that residents of more than 33,000 properties in the borough are potentially eligible for transitional relief.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance the London borough of Hillingdon will receive under the community charge transitional relief scheme; and what estimate he has made of the amount of transitional relief available on a notional charge of £359, excluding any overspending by the council to *(a)* a single occupier whose rateable value does not exceed £94 and *(b)* two occupiers whose rateable value does not exceed £257.

Mr. Chope: For the proposed arrangements for reimbursing local authorities for the costs of the community charge transitional relief scheme, I refer my

hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 15 February, *Official Report*, column *405*. In general, the transitional relief scheme provides assistance where the assumed community charge next year is more than £156 above the assumed rates bill (defined as the rateable value times the assumed rates poundage) this year. In the examples quoted, however, the assumed charge or charges is less than £156 above this year's rates bill and no relief would therefore be payable.

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the estimated yield for the community charge in the year beginning 1 April 1990.

Mr. Chope: It is not possible to make an estimate of the actual yield until charging authorities have set their charges. However, if authorities spend in line with the assumptions used for the settlement, charge payers will have to find about £7·55 billion, after rebates and transitional relief, towards spending of £32·8 billion. If authorities increase their spending, the burden on charge payers will be higher.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the elements which make up the standard spending assessment relevant to local authorities for the purpose of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: The details of the method of assessing standard spending assessments are set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) approved by the House on 18 January.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the rate of inflation assumed for local authorities for the purposes of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Chope: There is no specific assumption about inflation incorporated in standard spending assessments. However, total standard spending for 1990-91, from which standard spending assessments for 1990-91 are derived, is 11 per cent. higher than the equivalent figure for 1989-90.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about local authorities requiring community charge payers to make their payments by direct debits, standing orders or cash but not by cheques drawn on their bank accounts.

Mr. Chope: It is for local authorities to agree with charge payers which method they will use to make payment. I should expect the local authority to have regard inter alia to convenience for charge payers and the cost-effectiveness for the authority of particular methods of payment. I am not aware of any authority that is refusing to accept cheques in payment of the community charge.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) for calculation purposes to determine rate support grant in *(a)* Middlesbrough, *(b)* Stockton and *(c)* Langbaurgh, how many (i) one-parent families and (ii) black families were assessed as resident in the relevant areas;

(2) how much Langbaurgh would receive under the new grant scheme for local council support following the introduction of the community charge if *(a)* 2,000, *(b)* 5,000 and *(c)* 10,000 of its residents were black; and how much it is currently expected to receive;

(3) what weighting is given in calculating the rate support grant to the proportion of immigrants in the population from *(a)* the West Indies, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* Nigeria, *(e)* India, *(f)* Hong Kong, *(g)* Israel, *(h)* Australia, *(i)* New Zealand, *(j)* Canada, *(k)* Eire, *(l)* EEC countries, *(m)* Turkey, *(n)* Greece and *(o)* the United States of America;

(4) which are *(a)* the five local authorities which receive most support in cash terms and *(b)* the five authorities which receive the least support in cash terms under the current rate support grant scheme by virtue of the number of black heads of households.

Mr. Chope: I have today written to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) in real terms what was the annual local government net current expenditure per head of population in Stockport during each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(2) in real terms what was the annual local government net current expenditure per head of population in *(a)* Manchester and *(b)* Trafford during each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Net current expenditure per head in real terms (1989-90 prices)

	£
Manchester city council	
1987-88	804
1988-89	676
1989-90	704
Trafford borough council	
1987-88	493
1988-89	503
1989-90	494
Stockport borough council	
1987-88	475
1988-89	487
1989-90	466

Notes:

1. The GDP deflator has been used to convert cash values to constant prices.
2. Population figures used to derive per capita values are Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid year estimates of total population.
3. Polytechnics were transferred from the local authority sector in April 1989.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the amounts of the additional £250 million given to local authorities to deal with homelessness according to *(a)* explicit or earmarked purposes, *(b)* region and *(c)* money to tenants to enter owner-occupation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is currently considering bids for the £112 million to be made available to local authorities for schemes to relieve homelessness in 1990-91. The Housing Corporation is also considering bids for the £36 million to be allocated to housing associations for similar schemes. Announcements on the projects to be supported will be made as soon as possible.

Water Companies

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people who applied for shares in the privatised water companies have not yet received their shares despite having their cheques cashed.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of last week the receiving banks for the water share offers were dealing with about 970 outstanding requests for replacement interim share certificates.

Archaeology

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now publish guidance on archaeology and development.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has issued today, for public consultation, draft guidance aimed at providing local planning authorities in England, developers, archaeologists, amenity societies, property owners and the general public with advice on Government policy on ancient monuments and archaeological sites and on the handling of archaeological remains and discoveries in the planning process. Its key message is that developers and local planning authorities should discuss outline development proposals at an early stage so that the needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which years before 1 April 1989 the number of members of the Nature Conservancy Council has exceeded 18.

Mr. Chris Patten: Before 1 April 1989, the number appointed to serve on the Nature Conservancy Council rose to 19 only during the year April 1981 to April 1982.

Mortgage Interest Rates

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average gross mortgage rate of the building societies from March 1974 to May 1979; and what was the corresponding figure for June 1979 to January 1990.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimated average gross mortgage interest rates of building societies for the periods March 1974 to May 1979 and June 1979 to December 1989 are 10·8 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. respectively.

River Rother

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans for a major review of consent procedures in relation to discharges into rivers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The NRA is already conducting a review of the way in which discharge consents for all types of discharge are set, and the way in which compliance with the terms of consent is assessed, to ensure that the consent system can effectively protect water quality and enable pollution control standards to be enforced. I await the NRA's conclusions with interest.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instigate an official inquiry into all discharges into the River Rother; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not consider that it would be appropriate for him to institute such an inquiry. This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority, which is under a statutory duty to review, from time to time, all consented discharges, and is responsible for securing such improvements as it considers will be needed to meet new statutory water quality objectives to be set up by the Secretary of State. I understand that major improvements to sewage and industrial discharges are already planned or under way which are designed to raise the quality of the River Rother.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the breaches of consent relating to the discharges into the River Rother, and the number of prosecutions, since 1980 to the present time.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Details of all breaches of consent are available on the public register maintained by the National Rivers Authority. For information on prosecutions, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 18n January 1990, at column *360*.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the ability of the National Rivers Authority to test for any substances that it considers may endanger health.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for maintaining and improving the quality of controlled waters. The most up-to-date analytical techniques are used to test for a wide range of substances. The authority has commissioned three additional laboratories which will be in operation during 1991.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what costs have fallen to local authorities in England and Wales as a result of provision of services which otherwise would have been provided by the ambulance service during the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Chope: Information is not held centrally about the cost of any arrangements which may have been made between local authorities and health authorities for the provision of assistance during the ambulance dispute. The cost of assistance provided by military, police and other organisations will be met by the relevant health authorities.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made to reduce the level of chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Stratospheric chlorine levels are expected to start falling when the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is cut by 85 per cent. In the current

renegotiation of the Montreal protocol, the European Community position, based on our own proposals, is to require this by 1995, earlier than any other proposal. British consumption of CFCs has already been cut by over 50 per cent., 10 years earlier than the protocol currently requires.

Drinking Water

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of benzene contamination is acceptable in drinking water; and what are the standards required in Britain, the rest of the European Economic Community and the United States of America, respectively.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, which incorporate the requirements of the EC drinking water directive, set a standard of 10 microgrammes per litre for dissolved or emulsified hydrocarbons, which includes benzene; however, the regulations do not contain a specific standard for benzene. The World Health Organisations guideline value for benzene in drinking water is 10 microgrammes per litre and the United States maximum contaminant level is 5 microgrammes per litre.

Transferred Property (Sales)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy relating to requests for his consent under section 105 of the Housing Act 1988 to sales of transferred property, where a disposal cost was attributable to that property on transfer.

Mr. Chope: Subject to certain exemptions, notably sales under the right to buy, section 105 of the Housing Act 1988 provides that new landlords under part IV of the Act —tenants' choice—may not dispose of property acquired by them under part IV from a public sector landlord, except with the consent of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Chope: Subject to certain exemptions, notably sales under the right to buy, section 105 of the Housing Act 1988 provides that new landlords under part IV of the Act —tenants' choice—may not dispose of property acquired by them under part IV from a public sector landlord, except with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The statutory arrangements for valuation of property transferring under part IV take into account the cost of any works needed to bring property up to the state of repair required by the public sector landlord's repairing obligations. Where there is a disposal cost—"dowry"—however, the valuation cannot make provision for any additional works of improvements going beyond repair. Tenants may wish these to be carried out, particularly where the properties are below current accepted standards of amenity, as may be the case where dowries are payable. Disposals of some transferred assets may offer a prospect

My right hon. Friend will consider applications made to him for disposal consent on their merits, having regard to all the circumstances of the case. However, in instances where a dowry was attributable to the property under section 99 of the Act, he will, in principle, be prepared to entertain such applications, where proceeds from the disposals are to be used to fund improvements to, or demolition and replacement of, other acquired dwellings, for continued letting at rents within the reach of those in low-paid employment.

My right hon. Friend is also required, by section 105(4) of the Act, before giving consent to satisfy himself that appropriate steps have been taken to consult any tenants of the property to be disposed of, and to have regard to their responses.

Under section 105(4) as amended, my right hon. Friend may impose conditions on his consent, requiring the new landlord to make a payment to the public sector landlord from whom he acquired the property. Again, he will consider individual cases on their merits. However, it is his general intention that the new landlord should be required to pay to the public sector landlord the excess of any proceeds of the disposal over the amount reasonably required to fund works appropriate to the circumstances, after allowing for any contribution which might be made from projected rental income, dowry payments, or right-to-buy sale proceeds in excess of those assumed in determination of the dowry.

House Renovation Grants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the new system of house renovation grants provided in part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will be brought into effect in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I have considered very carefully requests by the local authority associations and others that introduction of the new system should be deferred to allow further consultation on the rest of resources regulations and to give local authorities more time to prepare for implementation.

In the light of these representations we have therefore decided that the main provisions of part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 should be brought into effect on 1 July 1990 and not from 1 April as originally planned. From April to June the existing system of home improvement grants will remain in force.

We have, however, decided to bring into effect the new assistance for minor works on 1 April. This will enable local authorities to continue to provide help for insulation measures for those on certain state benefits, and also for certain other purposes such as repair work for the elderly.

Part VII of the 1989 Act, introducing renewal areas in place of housing action areas and general improvement areas, will also be brought into force on 1 April, together with a number of provisions in part IX of the Act dealing with unfit housing.

My Department and the Welsh Office are writing to all local housing authorities with further details of how these provisions in respect of the repair and improvement of private sector housing are to be implemented. Advice on all those provisions coming into force on 1 April will be issued shortly before then, and further advice on the new grant system will be published well before 1 July.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the leaflet for the public on the new grants legislation will be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* A new edition of "Housing Booklet 14" describing grants for the repair and improvement of private sector housing will be published before the new system is brought into force on 1 July 1990.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the prescribed form for application under the new grants system will be available.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* We are still considering whether to prescribe an application form for the new grants system.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the regulations on the new test of resources for assessment of housing renovation grants will be issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Officials wrote to the local authority associations with a draft of the test of resources regulations on 19 January, and consultations are continuing. The regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible after consultation has been completed, and will be issued to local authorities thereafter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will delay the date of implementation of the new housing renovation grants system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department intends to publish guidelines to parts VII and VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* I have announced today that part VII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will be implemented on 1 April, and the new grant system in part VIII on 1 July. My Department will issue advice to local authorities in advance of those dates, as well as publishing a booklet for the general public on the new grant system.

Buildings (Cleaning)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any information on the annual cost of cleaning urban buildings blackened by smoke in the United Kingdom; and what his Department estimates to be the relative contributions to such blackening from the combustion of *(a)* coal, *(b)* smokeless fuel, *(c)* fuel oil, *(d)* gas oil, *(e)* motor spirit, *(f)* derv, and *(g)* other sources.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* My Department does not collate information on the specific costs of removing black smoke deposits from urban buildings. However, it is estimated that the total United Kingdom stone-cleaning market is of the order of £75 million.

There are no figures available for the relative contributions of fuel combustion to blackening. However, estimates of the percentage contribution of the combustion of different fuel types to black smoke emissions in the United Kingdom will be published in the next air quality statistical bulletin 90(1) of the digest of environmental protection and water statistics.

The two major sources of black smoke are domestic coal combustion and diesel fuel. Since the introduction of the Clean Air Acts (Great Britain 1956 and 1968, Northern Ireland 1964) emissions of smoke from all sources have fallen by over 85 per cent. The United Kingdom Government have long recognised the need to curb emissions from diesel engines and are pressing the European Commission to produce proposals for an EC directive providing strict standards for emissions, including particulates, from HGVs and buses. In 1988, the EC Environment Council agreed a directive setting tight particulate emission standards for cars.

New Grants System

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants have been assigned to prepare the regulations and procedures for the new grants system; what legal assistance they have; and when the work will be completed.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

If the hon. Member cares to say in which new grants system he is interested, we shall write to him.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last 10 years, the number of service men serving on *(a)* Valiant and *(b)* Churchill class nuclear submarines, who have been diagnosed as suffering from radiation contamination.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No personnel in any class of Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine have received a radiation dose from radioactive contamination during the last 10 years.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the results of the inspections carried out on the five Royal Navy Valiant and Churchill class nuclear submarines, in respect of suspected reactor faults.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on specific features of the Royal Navy's nuclear-powered submarines. The programme of inspections of all the Royal Navy's nuclear-powered submarines is continuing.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected service life of *(a)* Valiant and *(b)* Churchill class nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect Valiant and Churchill class submarines to remain in service for their design lives of about 25 to 30 years.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contributions his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March. A Norwegian national exercise, designated "Cold Winter", is planned to take place in which several members of the Alliance, including the United Kingdom, have been invited to take

part. Three Commando Brigade Royal Marines together with several Royal Navy ships and RAF aircraft will form the British contribution.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in regard to the appearance of Ministers and civil servants from his Department before the Defence Select Committee inquiry into the Colin Wallace affair.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend's policy will be to respond as helpfully as possible, in accordance with normal conventions.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total man hours performed by Army personnel involved in ambulance duties in the United Kingdom during the current ambulance workers' dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 960,234 service man hours were deployed in the period to 20 February.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total number of man hours performed by Army personnel during the current ambulance workers' dispute in the following regions; and how many of these hours were paid at overtime rates: *(a)* Nottingham, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Essex, *(d)* West Yorkshire and *(e)* Northumbria.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Military ambulances have not operated in Nottingham, West Yorkshire or Northumbria during the current dispute. In Manchester and Essex the number of service man hours deployed up until 20 February were 4,600 and 19,740 respectively. Service personnel are not eligible for overtime payments.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average hourly rate of pay for Army personnel employed on ambulance duties during the current ambulance workers' dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Rates of pay vary according to a number of factors, such as rank and qualification. An average hourly rate of pay could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

Officer Courses

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make arrangements for hon. Members to visit courses for prospective officers of the armed forces and higher courses for serving officers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: If the hon. Member would care to write to my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces with details of what he has in mind, my noble Friend will be glad to consider his request.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the April 1990 income support allowances for *(a)* single people and *(b)* married couples represents compensation for the 20 per cent. community charge contribution; and if he will consider increasing the community charge element within the allowances if the average community charge payable in 1990-91 is higher than anticipated.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 5 February at column *524*.

The level of income support is reviewed each year as part of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's obligations under section 63 of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of income support in *(a)* west Leeds, *(b)* Leeds, *(c)* west Yorkshire and *(d)* England as a whole; and what are the corresponding figures for those in receipt of supplementary benefit for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table:

Supplementary benefit/income support live load

	Leeds West	*Leeds*	*West Yorkshire*	*England*
1985-86	11,744	69,972	198,797	4,240,546
1986-87	11,939	71,146	200,432	4,308,787
1987-88	12,545	71,917	199,886	4,251,651
1988-89	11,054	63,634	177,182	3,651,273
[1]1989-90	10,538	62,374	175,827	3,602,366

[1] Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which include a number where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing.

Note: Data for earlier years are unavailable.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy, when considering claims for income support and family credit, that the same methods are used in respect of each benefit for calculating the number of hours worked by claimants;

(2) if he will set out in the *Official Report* the detailed methods used to calculate the numbers of hours worked by claimants when determining eligibility for *(a)* income support and *(b)* family credit;

(3) why different methods of calculation are used in determining the numbers of hours worked by claimants when considering claims for income support or family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The method used to calculate the number of hours worked is the same in both income support and family credit. The rules are set out in regulation 5 of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 and in regulation 4 of the Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987. The application of these rules in individual cases is a matter for the independent adjudicating authorities.

Occupational Deafness (Refusal of Benefit)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to identify those claimants who were wrongly refused disablement benefit for occupational deafness in the light of the Court of Appeal judgment in McKiernon's case.

Mr. Scott: The implications of this judgment are still being considered.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a chart or table showing for each academic year since 1979 the average amount of benefit or support, of each kind, received by a student in full-time higher education.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the amount of benefit claimed by students is not routinely collected and is not therefore available in the form requested. However, details of students' income from all sources are contained in surveys carried out by Research Services Limited on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. Copies of the surveys, which cover the 1986-87 academic years, are available in the Library.

Disability

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will take steps to ensure that people in the areas covered by the Derby social security offices who were entitled to a severe disablement premium prior to the amendment of regulation 3(2)*(c)* of the Income Support (General) Regulations on 9 October 1989 receive appropriate arrears of benefit at the earliest possible date.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Entitlement to the severe disability premium is a matter for the independent adjudicating authorities, including social security appeal tribunals. In some cases, awards of this premium by such tribunals have been suspended pending appeal, by the adjudication officer, to the social security commissioners. We are not aware of any delay in paying arrears of other awards of this premium by tribunals, but if the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps she will write to me.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people, in the period 10 December 1989 to 11 January 1990, who have been excluded from unemployment benefit by the new £43 weekly earnings rule.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 21 December 1989 at columns *404-5* which gave our estimate of the numbers who will lose unemployment benefit. Figures of the number of disallowances of unemployment benefit are not yet available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people between 10 December 1989 and 11 January 1990 who have been excluded from the unemployment total by the new £43 limit on weekly pay introduced on 10 December 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Anyone working and earning in a week at least the amount of the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions will have any claim to unemployment benefit in that week disallowed. Such people are not excluded from the unemployment count and will be included in it if they continue to register as unemployed.

Family Credit

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost to his Department to date of advertising family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the financial year 1988-89 the following amounts were spent on advertising family credit:

Amounts spent in 1988-89 financial year

	£
TV	2,304,617
Press	587,667
Radio	173,052
Total	3,061,336
Amount spent in 1989-90 financial year	
TV	4,047,612
Posters	1,313,333
Press	475,000
Total	5,835,281
GRAND TOTAL	£8,897,281

All sums include VAT, production and COI 1 per cent. commission.

Attendane Allowance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to ensure that full advantage is taken of the extension of attendance allowance to children under the age of two years; and if the entitlement will be on the same basis as children under the age of 16 years currently receiving attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: Information about the extension will be included in a new edition of the attendance allowance leaflet to be published in April. This will be supported by information for doctors, health visitors and others who may be advising parents. The publicity will be timed to coincide with the extension and will be maintained thereafter to inform the parents or guardians of newly eligible children of their entitlement. The regulations which I will be laying before the House will extend attendance allowance to children under two satisfy the entitlement conditions which currently apply to children up to the age of 16.

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to alter the social fund budget allocation for 1990-91 in the light of the release of £3 million to supplement 1989-90 social fund expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are currently considering the amount to be allocated to individual local offices for 1990-91 and will make an announcement in due course.

Relocation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement regarding the changes in the timetable of the London Department of Social Security relocation programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Experience in relocating the first group of offices was that conversion of cases to the income

support computer system took longer than expected because of the number of cases requiring information or action to resolve errors. Therefore we have decided to adjust the timetable of the next group of offices, all of which have large income support loads.

The eight-week conversion period in the second group has been extended to 13 weeks as follows:

Euston—17 April 1990 (no change)
Paddington—16 July 1990
Highgate—15 October 1990
Finsbury Park—28 January 1991

The timetable for the transfer of income support cases to other social security centres remains unaltered.

It has also been decided that pensions and incapacity benefits cases will now be relocated simultaneously on the dates published for the transfer of the latter.

Pensioners

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in the light of the abolition of the earnings rule for retirement pensions what guidance his Department now gives to those approaching retirement as to the financial benefit of either claiming or deferring their retirement pension especially for those who have a deficient contribution record.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is the Department's policy to make information available to help individuals make informed choices and plan for their retirement.

Information on deferring retirement and contribution conditions for retirement pension is in leaflets produced by the Department. The retirement pension forecast advisory service provides individuals with a valuable forecast of their entitlement based upon their existing and forecast future contributions record.

Also, as part of the retirement pension claims package, which is sent to individuals four months before they are due to reach pensionable age, there is information on the effect on their pension of deferring their claim and the contribution conditions for retirement pension.

Computers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what hardware and software packages relating to social security have been sent out for tender.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department has a large number of contracts with the private sector for the supply of hardware and the development of software in support of the social security operational strategy and other programmes of computerisation.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what software packages relating to social security have so far been developed with regard to benefits and especially incapacity benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Most social security benefits have some form of automated assistance; we are at present in the process of developing a computer application for incapacity benefits.

Contingency Reserves

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what process was used to determine the allocation to local Department of Social Security offices of the £3 million released from the social security contingency reserves.

Mr. Scott: The additional allocations to local offices were made from money recovered during 1989-90 from social fund loan repayments. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 31 January 1990 at columns *194-95* regarding the basis on which those allocations are made.

Community Charge

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether foster parent allowances will be treated as income when calculating entitlement to community charge benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The community charge benefit scheme will not treat as income any fostering allowance made to a claimant.

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of applying individually to a husband and wife the £8,000 limit on assets which cause a community charge payer to be ineligible for rebates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the individual capital holding of members of couples is not available.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the likely cost of community charge rebate for 1990-91; and how much that would increase if savings were to be disregarded.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Expenditure on community charge benefit in England, Wales and Scotland in 1990-91 is currently forecast to be £1·75 billion. Information is not available to make precise estimates but it seems probable that expenditure would increase by between £250 million and £300 million if the capital limit was abolished and no income was assumed to be derived from capital holdings.

Correspondence

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy that when a woman writes a letter to his Department in respect of her entitlement to benefit his offices will reply to the writer of that letter rather than her husband.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is already the policy for officers of the Department to reply direct to the writer of any letters rather than to a third party. I am aware of a particular case of a letter having been sent in error to the husband of one of the hon. Member's constituents, for which the local office manager has now apologised.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms are currently in operation in each county and region in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and what were the equivalent figures 12 months ago.

Mr. Maclean: Fifty mink farms (premises) are currently in operation in the United Kingdom, compared with 61 a year ago, as follows:

	As at 31 March 1989	As at 20 February 1990
England		
Northern	*16*	*13*
Humberside	2	2
Northumberland	1	1
North Yorkshire	1	1
South Yorkshire	1	1
West Yorkshire	11	8
Midlands and West	*18*	*15*
Cheshire	2	1
Lancashire	14	12
Staffordshire	1	1
Greater Manchester	1	1
Eastern	*7*	*7*
Herefordshire	1	1
Lincolnshire	1	1
Norfolk	1	1
Suffolk	4	4
South Eastern	*5*	*4*
Buckinghamshire	1	1
Hampshire	2	2
Isle of Wight	1	1
West Sussex	1	—
South Western	*6*	*4*
Cornwall	2	2
Dorset	1	1
Gloucestershire	1	—
Wiltshire	2	1
Total England	52	43
Scotland	8	6
Northern Ireland	1	1
Total United Kingdom	61	50

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will instruct his officials to reinspect all mink farms to ensure that after the recent storms they continue to comply with current regulations;

(2) if he will revoke the licence of the mink farm in Stansted, Essex, following the recent large-scale escape of mink into surrounding countryside and buildings;

(3) what information he has on the escape of farmed mink following damage to their cages in the recent storms;

(4) whether he has revoked the licences of any mink farms following damage during the recent storms;

(5) whether he intends to review the conditions of the Mink Keeping Order.

Mr. Maclean: On 25 January very severe winds damaged a mink farm at Stansted and several animals escaped when their pens broke open after being blown through the perimeter fence. The owner fulfilled his statutory duty by notifying MAFF immediately, and as soon as the storm subsided the damage was repaired. Most of the escaped mink have been recaptured or accounted for, but eight are still missing. The licence of the farm has not been revoked. The circumstances of the escapes were wholly exceptional and the pens and fence have been made secure. This was the only notification of escaped mink following the storm.

All farms are visited at least annually by MAFF inspectors to check that the conditions of their licences are being respected. The Mink Keeping Order expires at the end of 1992 and its renewal will be reviewed well before then.

North Sea Dumping

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's definition of inert or harmless as a description of substances permitted to be dumped in the North sea by the 1987 North sea agreement.

Mr. Curry: Her Majesty's Government accept the definition of

"inert materials of natural origin"

contained in Oslo Commission decision 89/1 of 14 June 1989. This is

"solid, chemically-unprocessed geological material whose chemical constituents are unlikely to be released in the marine environment".

They include such materials as sand, gravel, stones and rock material originating on land as well as colliery waste; none of which have been contaminated by anthropogenic processes.

No comparable definition has been adopted for "harmless". This is a quality which has to be assessed on a case by case basis in the light of careful scientific assessment.

I can give some examples of characteristics of liquid industrial wastes which the Government consider harmless. They include wastes which are very rapidly neutralised in the sea into substances which are naturally present in the sea, such as salts and water. Organic constituents at trace levels are rapidly biodegraded and so can have no effects on marine life. No trace of wastes can be found by the most sensitive means of analysis within five minutes of dumping. Constituents of the wastes are tested on oyster embryos to ensure that they have no effects on particularly sensitive life forms in the sea.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under which section of the 1987 North sea agreement is the authorisation being granted by the Government for the dumping of paracetamol in the North sea.

Mr. Curry: The issue of licences for the deposit of substances from the United Kingdom in the sea is subject to the provisions of part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. In considering whether to grant such licences we take into account paragraphs 21 and 22 of the 1987 North sea conference declaration which permit the dumping of harmless industrial waste until practical land-based alternative means of disposal are available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is undertaking or planning to investigate the increase of detritus and domestic rubbish being entrapped in commercial fishing nets in the North sea.

Mr. Curry: The directorate of fisheries research is planning to monitor the incidence of litter in commercial fishing nets in the course of forthcoming cruises of fisheries research vessels.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends that dumping at sea of industrial waste covered by the 1987 North sea declaration will cease.

Mr. Gummer: Ever since the 1987 North sea declaration we have been working hard to identify acceptable land-

based means of disposal for the industrial wastes which we have licensed for disposal at sea. I am very glad to be able to announce that we intend that none of these wastes will continue to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992. In two cases, however, it might not be technically feasible to meet this deadline. We will extend the licences for these two last wastes into 1993 only if absolutely necessary on technical grounds and for the shortest possible part of that year.

I am also glad to emphasise that we have already stopped the dumping at sea of more than half the industrial wastes which were licensed in 1987. Only nine wastes covered by the 1987 North sea declaration remain and some of these will cease to be dumped at sea in the course of this year.

The identification and implementation of acceptable land—based disposal alternatives on this times scale requires a high degree of commitment by the companies concerned. However, although the 1987 North sea declaration accepted that wastes such as ours which do not harm the sea could continue to be disposed of at sea as long as no practicable land-based means of disposal was available, the Government have been determined to ensure that these wastes ceased to be dumped at sea as soon as possible. I am extremely pleased that we have now been able to set a firm timetable for ending all these disposals at sea.

Bottled Water

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any representations were made by his Department to the importers of Perrier water about traces of benzene identified in tests by the food safety directorate since August 1989; and when such contamination was first identified in Perrier water in Britain.

Mr. Maclean: Preliminary results from the food safety directorate's tests of United Kingdom supplies of Perrier water became available on 14 February. My officials made clear to the company that, although the levels detected here and in the United States posed a negligible risk to health, the Government were concerned at what appeared to be adventitious contamination by benzene.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines govern the quality and safety of bottled water sold in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The European Community directive on the exploitation and marketing of natural mineral waters (80/777) requires, inter alia, that all natural mineral waters must be officially recongised and monitored by a competent authority and that certain chemical and microbiological criteria must be met.

Other types of bottled drinking water are covered by the EC directive relating to the quality of water for human consumption (80/778). If the Food Safety Bill is passed, I would intend to use powers therein to make regulations specifically covering such bottled water. In the meantime advice to local authorities on the type and frequency of sampling water intended for bottling is contained in Department of the Environment circular 25/84 (Welsh Office circular 51/84).

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle confirmed as bovine spongiform encephalopathy sufferers have, immediately prior to notification, been the subject of bovine somatotropin experimentation; and what percentage these constitute of the total number of bovine somatotropin-treated cows.

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware that any animal in which BSE has been confirmed has previously been the subject of bovine somatotropin experimentation. Epidemiological studies conducted by the Ministry have not found any connection between the incidence of BSE and the use of pharmaceutical products.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those species of animals known to him as having a vertically transmitted form of spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: Scrapie, which occurs naturally in sheep and goats, is the only spongiform encephalopathy which is definitely known to be transmitted maternally. It is likely that the lamb or kid may become infected at birth or soon after being born, but whether true vertical transmission —i.e. infection contracted in utero before the lamb or kid is born—can occur is not certain.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of recommendations of the British Cattle Veterinary Association, he intends to act by prohibiting surgical interference with suspect bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases.

Mr. Maclean: No. The Ministry does not encourage unnecessary surgical interference with bovine spongiform encephalopathy suspects, but the decision as to whether or not surgery is appropriate in any particular case is a matter of veterinary judgment and professional ethics in the light of individual circumstances.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy were reported in Lancashire from August 1988 until 14 February 1990.

Mr. Maclean: From 1 August 1988 to 14 February 1990, 218 suspected cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy were reported in Lancashire.

Wild Birds (Poisoning)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce measures to prevent the use of alphachloralose for the purpose of the illegal poisoning of wild birds.

Mr. Maclean: Alphachloralose is widely available, not just as a pesticide. The Government seek to deter illegal poisoning of wildlife by investigating every notified incident and pursuing those where the evidence suggests that pesticides have been abused. The cost of this is defrayed from the levy on holders of pesticide approvals.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning Grants)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about decommissioning grants available to fishing vessels

and the amount put in by European Community sources for decommissioning for *(a)* Holland, *(b)* France, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* the United Kingdom and *(e)* Spain.

Mr. Curry: There is provision under EC regulation 4028/86 for decommissioning grants over the period 1987 to 1991. They are available to all member states.

The information requested on EC funding is not centrally available, but I will supply the information as soon as I have obtained it from the commission.

Carbadox

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his reasons for banning the feed additive carbadox.

Mr. Gummer: Carbadox is an active ingredient used in growth-promoting feed additives. It is not banned in the EC but is authorised, subject to strict conditions by the Community directive governing feed additives. This is binding on all member countries although no product containing carbadox is currently licensed in the United Kingdom.

Bananas

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the plans by the Dominican Republic to export bananas to the European Community.

Mr. Curry: Our policy on the import of bananas permits the United Kingdom to fulfil its long-standing commitment to provide preferential access for bananas from our traditional suppliers, Jamaica and the Windward Islands.

During the negotiations last autumn on the renewal of the Lomé Convention and on the accession to it of new members, the Dominican Republic gave certain undertakings to Caribbean members of the group of ACP countries with respect to exports of bananas. We consider that it is important that the DR should abide by its undertakings and hope that it and the ACP will be able to discuss and resolve their differences.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Violent Crime

12. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what, in each of the last five years, has been the increase in reported incidents of violent crime.

50. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what in each of the last five years has been the change in reported incidents of violent crime.

Mr. John Patten: Between 1984 and 1988 the average annual percentage increase in recorded crimes of violence was 7·9 per cent. Full-year figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Prison Recidivism

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to reduce prison recidivism within the 15 to 22 years age groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Our proposals for punishing more young offenders in the community should help to reduce reoffending. When young people receive custodial sentences, our aim is to help to prepare them to lead law-abiding and useful lives on their release, with greater emphasis on the development of personal responsibility.

Concessionary Television Licences

14. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received over the last 12 months about concessionary television licences for pensioners.

Mr. Mellor: In my reply to the hon. Member's question of 22 January I confirmed that in 1989 we received 212 letters and four petitions about reduced-price or free television licences for pensioners. Since 1 January 1990 we have received a further 46 such letters, 23 of them from hon. Members.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

15. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Birmingham pub bombings case.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale).

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands showing on what date and on whose initiative Assistant Chief Constable Tom Meffen interviewed the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Mr. John Patten: No report from the chief constable is called for because the facts are well known to my right hon. and learned Friend. On 2 September 1986 the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), after discussing the contents of his book with officials of the Home Office criminal department, agreed to meet officers of the West Midlands police. But when the hon. Member was seen by the assistant chief constable on 23 September 1986, and was asked to provide information supporting his claim to have interviewed people who had committed the Birmingham pub bombings, he declined to do so, and has refused to do so subsequently.

43. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many hours his force devoted in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, *(c)* 1988 and *(d)* 1989 to investigating the claim of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) to have traced and interviewed all the persons responsible for the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 25 January at column *1036*. My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the failure of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South to disclose the names of those whom he states are responsible for the Birmingham pub bombings. A considerable amount of time, particularly in 1986, was spent by West Midlands police in attempting to identify those persons whom the hon. Member has in

mind. The results of the research were discussed with him, but he neither confirmed nor denied the possible identifications which had emerged.

No records were kept of the specific number of hours dedicated to this research.

35. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Birmingham pub bombings case.

84. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Birmingham pub bombings case.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering very carefully the further material which has been presented to him by a solicitor acting on behalf of the six men convicted of the Birmingham public house bombings, and will decide as soon as possible whether it justifies any intervention on his part.

29. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his consideration of the new evidence in the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

41. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his consideration of the new evidence in the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

44. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his consideration of the new evidence in the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet completed his consideration of the further material which has been presented to him by a solicitor acting on behalf of the six men convicted of the Birmingham public house bombings. He will decide as soon as possible whether it justifies any intervention on his part.

27. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first became aware of the claim by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) to have traced and interviewed the persons responsible for the Birmingham pub bombings; and what action was taken.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office first became aware of the claims of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in May 1986, when extracts from his forthcoming book "Error of Judgement" were passed to my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). We later obtained a full copy of the book shortly after publication in July 1986. These claims were made before the decision of my right hon. Friend on 20 January 1987 to refer the whole case to the Court of Appeal. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South has been repeatedly asked to make available any relevant material to substantiate his claims. He has not done so.

Wapping Dispute

17. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had concerning the publication of the report by the Northamptonshire police into the policing of the industrial dispute at Wapping.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

West Midlands Police

18. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has anything to add to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *304*, concerning DS Brian Morton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Parole

19. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his proposals to retain his discretion to refuse parole in the most serious cases.

Mr. John Patten: The White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm. 965) makes it clear that the Home Secretary will continue to consider the release of those offenders serving determinate sentences of seven years or more. These will have committed the most serious crimes and may be a serious risk to public safety.

46. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his proposals for the supervision of prisoners released on parole and the liability of such prisoners committing further offences to recall to prison, and to serve all the outstanding sentence in addition to any new sentence imposed.

Mr. John Patten: Chapter 6 of the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm. 965) sets out the Government's legislative proposals on parole. All prisoners serving imprisonment of more than one year will be supervised on release until three quarters of their sentence. All released prisoners will be liable, if convicted of another imprisonable offence committed before the end of the original sentence, to recall to prison to serve up to the rest of their sentence.

"Error of Judgement"

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first received a copy of the book "Error of Judgement"; and what action was taken.

48. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first received a copy of the book "Error of Judgement"; and what action was taken.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first received a copy of the book "Error of Judgement"; and what action was taken.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office obtained a copy of the book "Error of Judgement" shortly after publication in July 1986. On 2 September 1986, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) discussed the content of his book with officials of the Home Office criminal department, and subsequently discussed a number of the points raised in the book with an assistant chief constable

of the West Midlands police. The book was considered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), among a number of representations which had been made to him about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six, before his decision on 20 January 1987 to refer the whole case to the Court of Appeal.

Fines

21. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his proposals to ensure that fines more closely reflect an offender's ability to pay.

Mr. John Patten: The White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public", published on 6 February, sets out our proposals for ensuring that fines are more closely related to an offender's means. We have invited comments by 30 April.

Neighbourhood Watch

22. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for the number of neighbourhood watch schemes now operating in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of December 1989 there were estimated to be over 81,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales, covering over 4 million households.

47. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has as to the number of neighbourhood watch schemes now operating in the north-west of England.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of December 1989 there were estimated to be 19,500 schemes in the area covered by the Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside police forces.

Bail Hostels

23. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he plans to involve the private sector in providing bail hostel places.

Mr. John Patten: We have a programme to create 1,000 new bail places at approved hostels between April 1988 and April 1993. About 160 of these places are already on stream and some 500 more are at various stages of development. Although there are no plans for privately managed bail hostels at present, we believe that there is scope now for further private sector involvement in this programme in terms of planning, building, delivery and contracting out of services.

Tyneside Metro

24. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to the cost of policing the Tyneside Metro when establishing manpower levels for the Northumbria police force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend approved 38 extra police posts for the Northumbria police as from April 1990. Twenty of these are to deal with general problems of rising crime in the areas in which the metro operates. The cost of a further 10 posts, specifically for policing the metro system, is reimbursed by the passenger transport executive.

Electronic Tagging

25. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on electronic tagging.

55. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on electronic tagging.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Crime Prevention

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss crime prevention initiatives.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to meet the AMA to discuss crime prevention. However, the association has been kept closely in touch with the preparation of fresh interdepartmental guidance on crime prevention and it and others have been invited this week to comment on a new draft circular on crime prevention issued on 19 February. Comments should be submitted by 3 April.

Prisons (Vegan Diets)

28. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when regional catering officers last met representatives of the Vegan Society to discuss vegan diets in prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The principal catering manager for the prison service met the prison liaison officer for the Vegan Society on 9 October 1989. The prison liaison officer was also invited to speak to "in charge" catering officers at the prison service national catering school on 13 December 1989 about the vegan philosophy and diet.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

30. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what future steps are being taken to reduce the time taken by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to deal with applications for compensation.

Mr. John Patten: We authorised the board in December to recruit 10 extra staff. We have now agreed that 50 more staff may be recruited as soon as possible. This meets in full the recent request of the chairman and the recommendation of the Home Affairs Select Committee (Second Report, Session 1989-90-HC92), for 60 more staff to help the board deal with the expected level of new applications and to reduce arrears.

The reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 8 December at columns *409-17*, set out the revised criminal injuries compensation scheme and described other steps

already take to improve the board's performance. The first phase of the board's major computer project referred to in that answer will begin in March. The board proposes to use the discretion conferred under the new scheme to delegate to staff decisions on a limited range of cases from 1 April 1990.

75. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to inform the social services departments of all local councils that criminal injuries compensation is available to all victims of child abuse or marital violence.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board wrote to all social services departments in Great Britain in October 1989 giving details of the application of the scheme to victims of violence, and in particular to child victims of such crimes.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce computers into the offices of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: Portable computers have been in use at the board since 1987. A major computer project—case location and information management system—was approved in December 1989. This is a centralised database system using the mainframe Home Office computer. Training has begun on the first phase of the project, which will go live in March and provide for the registration and acknowledgement of all new claims and the issue of medical and police inquiry forms. Subsequent phases will allow for monitoring of case progress, the issuing of reminder and other letters and accounting and statistical facilities.

58. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victims in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 received compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for sums between £550 and £750; and what percentage this represented of the total number of awards in those years.

60. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victims in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 received compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for sums between £550 and £750; and what percentage this represented of the total number of awards in those years.

Mr. John Patten: The breakdown of awards by size of award is given in paragraph 8.1 of the board's annual report for the year ended 31 March 1989 (Cm 900). These figures indicate that the number of awards of between £550 and £750 in the three years ended 31 March 1987, 1988 and 1989, were about 3,800, 3,700 and 5,700, a percentage of the total awards in these years of 17·3, 17·7 and 20·6, respectively.

Special Constables

31. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider the payment of a bounty or other remuneration to encourage recruitment of special constables.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This has been considered a number of times by the Police Advisory Board, most recently in October 1988, and the conclusion each time was that an incentive award (bounty) was not necessary. However we are asking the board to consider the option of running pilot schemes on an experimental basis in some forces when it discusses further initiatives to strengthen the special constabulary on 27 February.

Football Exclusion Orders

32. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of exclusion orders imposed on football supporters for the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The exclusion order provisions of the Public Order Act 1986 came into force on 1 August 1987. The number of exclusion orders recorded by the Football Association since then is as follows:

	Number
1987	[1]320
1988	1,029
1989	1,038

[1] Five months.

Central European Time

33. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to publish the responses he received in respect of the Green Paper on central European time; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received with regard to central European time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received with regard to the proposed changes in British summer time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend will be announcing a breakdown of the responses to the consultation exercise in the near future.

Electoral Systems

34. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the reform of electoral voting systems in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Pornography

36. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with his EEC opposite numbers about harmonising the laws relating to the display and sale of pornographic films and magazines.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no personal discussions on this topic, but the Department has contributed to the work of the Council of Europe in encouraging its members to strengthen controls against the distribution of videograms having a violent, brutal or pornographic content, and to the work of the Council and the European Community in securing international

agreement on minimum standards in broadcasting. We shall continue to stress to our European partners the need to maintain high standards in published and broadcast material. Within the European Community, article 36 of the treaty of Rome allows member states to prohibit or restrict imports on grounds of public morality, provided that there is no arbitrary discrimination or disguised restriction on trade between member states. We intend to maintain strong controls over the display and sale of pornographic material within the United Kingdom.

All-seater Football Grounds

37. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has considered the financial implications of the proposed installation of all-seater stadia for football grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand the football authorities provisionally estimate the cost to be £130 million for clubs in the English football league. But, as set out by Lord Justice Taylor in his final report, the cost could be lower. The Football Trust has indicated that about £75 million should be available to the professional game over the next 10 years. This is in addition to any income from television and pools companies which currently amounts to about £26 million each year.

Prison Officers Association

38. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met officials of the Prison Officers Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend met members of the Prison Officers Association on 18 December. The terms and conditions of service for prison officers, resources, the possibility of agency status for the prison service and the possible use of the private sector to escort prisoners and to run remand centres were discussed.

Permanent Residents

40. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the net inflow or outflow of permanent residents of the United Kingdom for the last full year for which data exist.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available data on net migration to or from the United Kingdom are the estimates produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from the international passenger survey. This defines a migrant as a person leaving one country where he has been resident for more than a year with the intention of residing in a new country for a year or more. The 1988 estimates were of a net outflow from the United Kingdom of 21,000 migrants, resulting from an inflow of 216,000 and an outflow of 237,000. These figures include British citizens and are on a different basis from the figures of people subject to immigration control accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom. More detailed information on these migration estimates is published by OPCS in "International Migration 1988".

Welsh Broadcasting

42. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the heads of BBC Wales and HTV; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet met the heads of BBC Wales and HTV, either jointly or separately, but he may have the opportunity at some time in the future.

Taylor Report

45. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received following the publication of the Taylor report and his statement on 29 January, regarding proposals contained within the report.

Mr. John Patten: We have received 13 letters from hon. Members and 52 letters from members of the public. In addition, the Football Supporters Association has requested a meeting to discuss the role that supporters can play in implementing the report.

Distress Warrants

49. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of persons against whom distress warrants were issued in 1987, 1988 and 1989 were dependent on state benefits.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available.

74. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of distress warrants issued by magistrates courts in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Around 185,000 distress warrants were issued by magistrates courts in 1987 and 560,000 in 1988. Information for 1989 is not yet available.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner

51. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend last held a meeting with the Commissioner on 21 December 1989, when the Commissioner's strategy statement for 1990 was discussed.

Crime Detection

52. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the crime detection rate in the west midlands in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Incomplete information for the West Midlands police force area for 1989 indicates the detection rate could be slightly lower than the 42 per cent. for 1988.

Vagrancy

53. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to repeal sections 3 and 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have no present plans to repeal sections 3 and 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824, as amended.

Victim Support Schemes

54. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victim support schemes there are in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Three hundred and fifty-five.

68. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the level of Government funding for victim support.

Mr. John Patten: For this year £3·7 million has been granted for victim support schemes in England and Wales. Subject to parliamentary approval, around £4·5 million will be granted for 1990-91. This represents a 200 per cent. increase over four years.

Senior Police Officers

56. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to improve the selection and training of senior police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's response to the Home Affairs Select Committee's report on higher police training and the police staff college outlined their plans to identify at an early stage those officers with the ability to reach chief officer ranks and to provide them with the training they need to perform their jobs effectively.

Assaults on Police

57. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of serious assaults committed against police officers in the north Wales area during 1989; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of North Wales that there were 308 assaults on members of his force in 1989. There were 109 assaults in 1979, 81 in 1983 and 91 in 1986. Information on the number of serious assaults is not readily available.

Dogs

59. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dogs are kept as domestic pets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office collects no statistics on the numbers of domestic pets. A report prepared by the London School of Economics for the RSPCA in 1988 estimated the United Kingdom dog population to be 7·3 million.

Prisoners

62. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Mellor: On Friday 16 February there were 47,103 people held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. This represents a fall of 2,288 people since the same time last year.

Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory

63. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received calling for an increase in the staffing level at the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am not aware of any such representations. The staffing ceiling of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory is set by the Commissioner, within the total ceiling for civil staff set by my right hon. and learned Friend as the police authority.

66. **Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current establishment at the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory; and in how many months in each of the past three years the numbers in post reached full complement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that the current complement of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory is 297, of which 279½ posts are currently filled. The numbers in post have not reached full complement during the last three years.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the performance of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that no systematic management information about the performance of the laboratory is available, but that the time taken to deal with some types of case, particularly the less serious, has increased in the last year or so. We are discussing with the receiver a case for pay improvements to help deal with staffing problems, and we shall be looking at other management issues and their effect on performance.

81. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the change in the workload of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that no management information system exists to provide data on workload, as opposed to the cruder measure of caseload. However, the available figures show that cases dealt with by the laboratory fell from 27,985 in 1987 to 18,053 in 1989, a fall of 35 per cent. I understand that this reduction reflected in part a decision not to carry out forensic examination in certain types of low priority case, such as possession of cannabis cases where a guilty plea is expected.

71. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that no systematic management information about the performance of the laboratory is available, but that the

time taken to deal with some types of case, particularly the less serious, has increased in the last year or so. A factor affecting performance is difficulty in retaining scientific staff, though I understand that the staffing position has recently improved and that the laboratory is now within 5 per cent. of its authorised complement for forensic scientists. We are discussing with the receiver a case for pay improvements to help deal with staffing problems. However, it is important that we look at all the management issues which may have a bearing on performance—not just pay.

Prisons (Fire Inspections)

64. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to lift Crown immunity in relation to fire inspections in prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Although prisons are exempt from the arrangements for fire certification under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, governors are instructed to arrange periodic fire surveys by the local fire brigade, and the advice of Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate is taken if necessary, with the aim of meeting the joint objectives of fire safety and prison security. I see no compelling need to alter these arrangements.

Pregnant Prisoners

65. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider setting up an independent inquiry into the treatment of pregnant women in Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Criminal Justice White Paper

67. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received to his criminal justice White Paper.

Mr. John Patten: We have invited comments on the proposals in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm 965) by 30 April. The initial reaction has been favourable and my right hon. and learned Friend's statement of 6 February received widespread support in both Houses.

South Yorkshire Police

69. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current manning levels in the South Yorkshire police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of December 1989 there were 2,946 police officers on the strength of the South Yorkshire police matched against their establishment of 2,978.

My right hon. and learned Friend has approved an increase of 20 posts for the force establishment subject to the police authority's confirmation of its willingness to meet its share of the cost.

Police (Operational Duties)

70. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the additional police posts announced for 1990-91 will be deployed on operational duties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The deployment of police officers is an operational matter for chief officers of police. Of the 1,008 extra police posts for provincial forces announced for 1990-91, however, 953 were intended for deployment to operational duties.

The deployment of the 150 posts approved for the Metropolitan police has yet to be decided, although the great majority will go on operational duties.

Coach Parking

72. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the level of observance of "no coach parking" signs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that no separate figures are recorded for non-compliance with "no coach parking" signs. Police and traffic wardens take action against instances of illegal coach parking whenever possible, which may include the removal of offending coaches to police car pounds. The Metropolitan police will be conducting a special coach parking advice and enforcement campaign during the summer months in the central London area.

Disturbances, Granby

77. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received a report from the chief constable of Merseyside police concerning the recent disturbances in the Granby area of Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are informed by the Merseyside police that at about 8.20 pm on 5 February a police inspector and a sergeant responded to a report of youths, armed with bricks, gathering in Granby street, Liverpool 8. The officers were driving along Granby street when their car was rammed by a stolen vehicle. Bricks were thrown at the police vehicle. The sergeant suffered minor facial injuries.

Two police vehicles summoned to assist the two officers were also attacked.

Three other vehicles were later set on fire. When the Merseyside fire service arrived they were attacked with missiles and withdrew. Police reinforcements and a police helicopter were then deployed. The youths dispersed and order was restored by 11 pm. The police estimate that about 200 people were involved in the disturbances. Following the disturbances one person was arrested and charged with violent disorder and criminal damage to a police vehicle.

Prisons (Education and Training)

78. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for increasing the educational and training opportunities for prison inmates.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that between 1989-90 and 1992-93 expenditure through LEAs for educational provision in prison service establishments will rise from £19·152 million to £27·387 million. Between 1987-88 and 1988-89 student hours rose by 23 per cent. and attention will continue to be paid to both efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of education in prisons. The prison service is exploring the implications of the national vocational

qualifications initiative and progress on this and other developments will be contained in the annual reports of the prison service.

Immigration and Nationality Department

79. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to further disperse the immigration and nationality department to the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 31 January at column *205*.

NACRO

80. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders; and what was discussed.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairman, director and an assistant director from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders on 23 January. The meeting provided an opportunity for the representatives of NACRO to give a presentation of their work and to discuss their ideas about criminal justice issues.

Visas

76. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in respect of implementing a common visa regime for the European Economic Community after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to questions from the hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 25 January 1990 at columns 1037-39.

Football Hooliganism

82. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on whether to implement the recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor to create three new specific offences to tackle football hooliganism.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) earlier today.

Crime (Devon and Cornwall)

83. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for recorded crime in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1988 was published in tables 2.5 and 2.7 of "Criminal statistics England and Wales, 1988", Cm. 847, a copy of which is available in the Library. Further detailed figures for the 12 months to the end of September 1989 for local police areas have also been placed in the Library. In the 12 months to September 1989, Devon and Cornwall police recorded 74,905 offences, 1,046 more than in the previous 12 months.

Mr. Kenneth Carter

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now reply to the questions tabled by the hon. Member for Stockton, South about Mr. Kenneth Carter, a prisoner in Durham prison.

Mr. Mellor: I have today replied to the questions tabled by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why deductions are being made from Mr. Kenneth Carter for association expenses in Durham prison.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* It has been common practice in all Her Majesty's prisons for a small deduction to be made from inmates' earnings as a contribution to the establishment's general purposes fund. This practice has been reviewed and instructions are to be issued for it to cease.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will arrange for Mr. Kenneth Carter, prisoner No. AD3434, to be transferred from Durham to another prison;

(2) on how many occasions Mr. Kenneth Carter, prisoner No. AD3434, has moved cell in Durham prison; and what was the reason in each case;

(3) what complaints he has received concerning harassment of Mr. Kenneth Carter, a prisoner in Durham prison, following the death of his former cellmate; and if he will make a statement;

(4) when a representative of the board of visitors of Durham prison last met Mr. Kenneth [illegible]r, prisoner No. AD3434;

(5) why Mr. Kenneth Carter, prisoner No. AD3434, has been recategorised as category A in Durham prison.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* Mr. Kenneth Carter has been charged with the murder of a former cellmate at Durham prison on 5-6 January 1990. For this reason his prison security status is now category A and he will stay at Her Majesty's prison Durham until his trial.

No record is kept of cell movements, but immediately after the death of his former cellmate, Mr. Carter was moved to the prison hospital to which members of the board of visitors make regular visits. Mr. Carter saw a member of the board of visitors on 11 February 1990.

Other than a letter which my hon. Friend forwarded to me on 16 January 1990, no complaints about harassment of Mr. Carter have been received.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement about the allocation of shoes to Mr. Kenneth Carter, a prisoner in Durham prison;

(2) why Mr. Kenneth Carter, a prisoner in Durham prison, was denied an exercise period on 29 and 30 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On 29 January 1990, inclement weather prevented Mr. Carter from taking exercise. On 30 January 1990 he took no exercise as he had been refused a request to wear slippers while on exercise. There are no medical reasons why Mr. Carter should not wear the prison shoes with which he has been issued.

Rottweiler Dogs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he is taking to prevent further attacks in the light of recent attacks by rottweiler dogs on children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has any proposals to restrict the domestic ownership of rottweiler dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of recent incidents involving rottweiler dogs, he will seek powers to introduce a total ban on such breeds of animal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The law concerning attacks by dogs was strengthened only last year by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989. We are studying recent incidents closely and will consider whether the law would benefit from further revision.

Police Rent and Rates Allowances

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in police rent and rates allowances have been made to coincide with the abolition of domestic rates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend expects shortly to lay regulations changing the police rent allowance arrangements with effect from 1 April. The main changes will be that the new housing allowance for each force will no include an element for the reimbursement of rates; the community charge will not be reimbursed; the new housing allowance will be updated biennially in line with movements in the retail prices index; and compensatory grant will be abolished. Special arrangements will, however, be made to ensure that police officers who are in receipt of rent allowance and compensatory grant on 31 March will receive no less than they were receiving on that date.

Immigration (Domestic Servants)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Kuwaitis entering the United Kingdom in 1989 were permitted to bring with them domestic servants;

(2) how many Saudi Arabians entering the United Kingdom in 1989 were permitted to bring with them domestic servants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if all persons described as domestic servants brought into the United Kingdom by foreigners require entry visas; and what steps are taken to ensure that such persons are treated in accordance with United Kingdom law;

(2) if all persons described as domestic servants brought into the United Kingdom by foreigners require work permits; and what steps are taken to make sure such people are treated in accordance with United Kingdom law.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under exceptional arrangements outside the immigration rules and the work permit scheme a domestic servant who has worked abroad for at least the previous 12 months for an employer who comes to the United Kingdom will normally be admitted to continue working for that employer here. Prior entry clearance is necessary if the servant is a visa national or if the employer is coming in a capacity for which he needs an entry clearance. While in the United Kingdom domestic servants are entitled to the normal protection of our law.

Homosexuality

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is held centrally relating to discrimination against lesbians and homosexual men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has to deal with discrimination against lesbians and homosexual men with regard to *(a)* the age of sexual consent, *(b)* the right to serve in the armed forces and *(c)* legal recognition of long-term homosexual partnerships;

(2) what proposals he has to improve the legal rights of lesbians and homosexual men; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what provision exists in the European social charter on the rights of homosexuals; whether he has any proposals for legislation arising from Britain's obligations under the charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 1 February 1990 at columns *304-06*.

Drug Command Informant Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the drug command informant scheme;

(2) if he will require the drug command informant scheme to publish an annual report describing the general nature of cases handled and the level of reward given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the Community Action Trust, a registered charity, intends to launch in the near future an informant reward scheme entitled drug command. The scheme will be funded entirely by the trust but will be operated in close consultation with the enforcement agencies. Publication of reports about the operation of the scheme is a matter for the Community Action Trust.

Prisons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the minimum permitted space per prisoner.

Mr. Mellor: The prison design brief for training establishments published in 1989, which will form the basis for the design of other categories of establishments, lays down the standards for new prison buildings. The brief requires an area of 6·8m² to be provided for a single-person cell with integral sanitation. The area of a cell without integral sanitation in existing establishments built to earlier standards varies.

Armley Prison, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the prison officers' dispute at Armley prison, Leeds.

Mr. Mellor: Officials of the local branch of the Prison Officers Association at Armley prison, Leeds have advised the governor that they are in dispute over staffing arrangements. A meeting between management and union representatives under the agreed disputes procedure has been arranged for 23 February.

Ambulance Dispute

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has issued guidelines to police authorities on charging for cover during the ambulance dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Guidance was issued in October to chief officers and police authorities on the arrangements which might be made for reimbursement by regional health authorities when the police were called upon to assist in providing an ambulance service.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total man hours performed by police personnel involved in ambulance duties in the United Kingdom during the current ambulance workers' dispute.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the total number of man hours which forces have provided in assisting ambulance services in England and Wales up to and including 13 February has been about 1·1 million.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total number of man hours performed by police personnel during the current ambulance workers' dispute in (i) Nottingham, (ii) Manchester, (iii) Essex, (iv) West Yorkshire and (v) Northumbria; and how many of those man hours were paid at overtime rates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested readily available up to 13 February is shown in the table:

Approximate number of man hours

	Number
Nottinghamshire	1,130
Greater Manchester	14,930
Essex	28,930
West Yorkshire	53,300
Northumbria	66,000

All these man hours were paid at overtime rates.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average hourly rate of pay for police personnel employed on ambulance duties during the current ambulance workers' dispute;

(2) what is the hourly overtime rate of pay for police constables involved in ambulance duties in (i) Nottingham, (ii) Manchester, (iii) Essex, (iv) west Yorkshire and (v) Northumbria;

(3) what is the hourly overtime rate of pay for police personnel of ranks other than constable involved in ambulance duties in (i) Nottingham, (ii) Manchester, (iii) Essex, (iv) west Yorkshire and (v) Northumbria;

(4) what is the hourly rate of pay for police constables involved in ambulance duties in *(a)* Nottingham, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Essex, *(d)* west Yorkshire and *(e)* Northumbria;

(5) what is the hourly rate of pay for police personnel of ranks other than constable involved in ambulance duties in *(a)* Nottingham, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Essex, *(d)* west Yorkshire and *(e)* Northumbria.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Police pay for each rank is on a scale connected to number of years' service. It is not, therefore, possible to give an hourly or overtime rate per officer for each force or nationally.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of *(a)* converting a police van for use in ambulance duties and *(b)* reconverting a police van after use in ambulance duties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that in converting vehicles some forces have simply removed seats but others have done more work including the installation of some special equipment. The costs range, therefore, from minimal to several hundred pounds per van.

No vans have yet been reconverted.

Art Galleries (Thefts)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of theft have been reported to the Metropolitan police by museums and art galleries in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the detail requested is not collected.

Metropolitan Police (Damages)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much in compensation, both in court and in out-of-court settlements, the Metropolitan police has paid to members of the public who have brought civil cases for damages since 15 December 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the amounts paid by the Metropolitan police under awards made by the courts and in settlements out of court arising from allegations of wrongful acts by Metropolitan police officers are as follows:

	Awards made by the courts £	*Settlements out of court* £
1988 (16-31 December)	5,500	18,831
1989	252,904	266,850
1990 (to 21 February)	65,000	160,050

Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost in each year since 1979 arising from the presence in Downing street of police officers from the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice to give details of security costs.

Community Penalties

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the development of community penalties for offenders.

Mr. John Patten: The White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm 965) sets out our proposals for providing a wider and more flexible range of strengthened community penalties to reduce reliance on custody for less serious offenders.

Sentencing

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his proposals to enable sentencers to sentence above the normal for the particular crime where the offender's record is such that he is a danger to the public.

Mr. John Patten: The White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" sets out our proposals for empowering the Crown court to give custodial sentences longer than would be justified by the seriousness of the offence alone to persistent violent and sexual offenders, if this is necessary to protect the public.

Durham Prison

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the number of suicides in Durham prison in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 8 February 1990]:* The table gives the numbers of deaths at Durham prison since 1975 for which a suicide verdict was returned at the inquest:

	Number
1975	—
1976	—
1977	—
1978	2
1979	—
1980	—
1981	—
1982	1
1983	—
1984	1
1985	2
1986	—
1987	3
1988	1
1989	2
[1]1990	—

[1] To 8 February 1990.

An inquest has yet to take place on a death in Durham prison in January 1990.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 23 February 1990

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Interests

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals for a Standing Order to require all commercial interests to be duly declared at oral Question Time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In the first instance this is a matter for the Select Committee on Members' Interests and the hon. Member should write to the Chairman.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the new courses referred to in the *Official Report*, 15 February, column 464, for which 50,000 students will be eligible for student loans who are not presently eligible for student grants.

Mr. Jackson: Some full-time home students will be eligible for loans but not for mandatory awards. This group will include some students on courses leading to qualifications such as the BTEC higher national certificate, and other qualifications offered by professional institutions and public bodies. The full range of eligible courses is defined by schedule 1 of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

London Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received a copy of the confidential report on London schools which sets out examination results and subjects taken by children in the Inner London education authoritiy area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of the report on the school examination results in inner London for the year 1988.

The results are not good. I am sure that the new inner London local education authorities will give a high priority to improving them, and will be assisted in this by the Government's education reforms.

Teacher Shortage, Manchester

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are sent home from schools in Manchester each day because there are no teachers to cover for any absences.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not available to the Department.

Education, St. Helens

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reach a decision on the reorganisation of both secondary and primary education in the metropolitan borough of St. Helens.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend notified St. Helens education authority on 30 November 1989 of his decision to approve the proposals for the reorganisation of the Church of England primary schools in Rainford. He is currently considering proposals for the reorganisation of county secondary schools in St. Helens, and for the significant enlargement of Carmel Roman Catholic sixth form college. Decisions on these proposals will be reached as quickly as is compatible with a full consideration of all the issues involved.

Schools, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the 33 first and 10 middle schools in Bradford continue to receive funding of more than £1·2 million in 1990-91, under the local management scheme to meet special needs and social disadvantages; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The levels of funding to be allocated by LMS formulae with reference to individual factors such as specific needs and social disadvantage are for local determination. Ministerial approval is limited to the criteria and ground rules which govern the distribution of resources.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received urging that 33 first schools and 10 middle schools in Bradford continue to receive funding to meet special needs and social disadvantages.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Under-fives

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the quality of provision for children under five years old.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government welcome the good practice in schools and other centres which Her Majesty's inspectors have documented in recent reports, including "The Education of Children Under Five" a copy of which is in the Library. They believe much more needs to be done. A committee of inquiry under my chairmanship is considering how to achieve improvements in the educational content of all forms of provision for three and four-year-olds.

PRIME MINISTER

US Forces, Europe

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy on the minimum number of United States troops which should be stationed in Europe; what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Administration on this policy; and whether she has any plans to revise her policy in the light of recent discussions between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: The presence of substantial numbers of United States troops in Europe makes an essential contribution to Western security. The United States Government have made it very clear that they intend to maintain this contribution. The agreement at Ottawa between the United States and the Soviet Union, by which the two countries' stationed forces in the central region of Europe would each be subject by the CFE treaty to a ceiling of 195,000, is fully compatible with this.

Mid-Staffordshire Constituency

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to the Mid-Staffordshire constituency.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

10 Downing Street

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the percentage change since 1979 in the cost of the upkeep of No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: This information is not readily available for earlier years and cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. However, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 18 October 1989 at column *128*.

Homelessness

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister when was the last occasion on which she visited (i) a bed and breakfast hostel for the homeless and (ii) homeless people at other venues.

The Prime Minister: During my visits to various regions I visit a wide variety of people. I have not recently paid an official visit to a bed and breakfast hostel for the homeless, or held a formal meeting with homeless people.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is taking forward, with urgency, action following our review of the homelessness legislation. This includes the allocation of additional resources to relieve homelessness pressures in London. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Minister for Housing and Planning have had a number of meetings with homeless people in London and with voluntary agencies which work with the homeless.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security Searches

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will request co-operation from employers in Northern Ireland to ensure that employees genuinely delayed in lengthy hold-ups during security searches will not be financially penalised or threatened with loss of employment.

Mr. Cope: Continuing terrorist activity requires the police and armed forces to take measures for the protection of life and property and the police and Army do their utmost to keep any resulting delay and inconvenience to a minimum. The Government hope that all law-abiding citizens will understand the need for these measures and co-operate with them since they are taken for the benefit of the community at large.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the district rate and *(b)* the regional rate for the last three years in percentage and financial terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The figures for the last three years for the average district rate and the regional rate are as follows:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Average district rate	60·07p	62·62p	64·11p
Percentage change from previous year	+5·00	+4·25	+2·38
Regional Rate	113·53p	122·59p	138·07p
Percentage change from previous year	+2·90	+7·98	+12·63

The regional rate for 1990-91 will be announced in early March.

Security Forces

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve public confidence in the security forces.

Mr. Cope: Securing and maintaining confidence in both the fairness and effectiveness of the security forces is a major Government objective. To this end careful and constant attention is being given to ways of improving relations between the security forces and all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. A number of measures have been taken; others are in hand.

Explosives

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what quantities of explosives have been recovered by the security forces in Northern Ireland in each year since 1968.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* Readily available information on explosives found is as follows:

Year	*Explosives (tons)*
1969	0·1
1970	0·3
1971	1·2
1972	18·5
1973	17·2
1974	11·7
1975	4·9
1976	9·7
1977	1·7
1978	0·9
1979	0·9
1980	0·8
1981	3·4
1982	2·3
1983	1·7
1984	3·8
1985	3·3
1986	2·4
1987	5·8
1988	14·7
1989	1·4

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the firms which have been investigated by the Fair Employment Agency from its inception until the latest available date.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The organisations listed are those which have been investigated by the Fair Employment Agency (now renamed the Fair Employment Commission) for which reports have been published. It is not the commission's policy to reveal the names of organisations which are under investigation or where investigations are complete but reports are still unpublished.

Formal investigations completed by the agency (for which reports have been published)

Name of organisation

1. Northern Ireland Electricity Service
2. British Broadcasting Corporation
3. British Broadcasting Corporation (second phase)
4. Short Brothers plc
5. Harland and Wolff
6. Strathearn Audio (closed down)
7. Grundig (closed down)
8. Tilley Lamp
9. Davidsons (Sirocco)
10. Hughes Tool
11. Ford Motor Company
12. Hugh J. Scott
13. James Mackie
14. Standard Telephone and Cables
15. Essex International
16. Molins
17. Du Pont
18. Arntz Belting
19. Belfast Telegraph
20. Northern Ireland Civil Service
21. Fire Authority for Northern Ireland
22. Northern Ireland Housing Executive
23. Unipork
24. Northern Ambulance Service
25. Eastern Ambulance Service
26. Southern Ambulance Service
27. Western Ambulance Service
28. Southern Health and Social Services Board
29. Abbey National Building Society
30. Anglia Building Society
31. Gateway Building Society
32. Halifax Building Society
33. Leicester Building Society
34. Leeds Permanent Building Society
35. Nationwide Building Society
36. Progressive Building Society
37. Woolwich Building Society
38. Ulster Museum
39. Allied Irish Bank
40. Northern Bank
41. Bank of Ireland
42. Ulster Bank
43. Trustee Savings Bank
44. Commercial Union
45. Pearl Assurance
46. Prudential Assurance
47. Brittannic Assurance
48. Royal Insurance
49. General Accident Assurance
50. United Friendly
51. Refuse Assurance
52. Irish News
53. Newsletter
54. Derry City Council
55. North Eastern Education and Library Board
56. Northern Ireland Railways
57. Western Health and Social Services Board
58. Ulsterbus/Citybus
59. Hyster
60. Queen's University
61. Charles Hurst
62. Issac Agnew
63. Irish Road Motors
64. Phillips Ltd.
65. Bairds Ltd.
66. Prentice
67. J. E. Coulter Ltd.
68. Dencourt Motors
69. Desmond Motors
70. Lindsay Cars
71. James Eakin and Sons
72. Dornan Services
73. C.A.R.S. Ltd.
74. R. Kennedy and Company
75. Neville Johnston
76. Sydney Pentland
77. A.V.X.
78. Stability Electrics
79. NI Airports
80. Trusthouse Forte
81. Civil Aviation
82. Emerald Hotels
83. Serviceair
84. Gallahers Ltd.

Religious Discrimination

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many specific cases of claims of religious discrimination have been upheld by the Fair Employment Agency in each year from its inception until the latest available date; and of these how many were of (1) Protestants being the victims of discrimination and (2) Roman Catholics being the victims of discrimination.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* Information is as follows:

Findings of unlawful discrimination by the Fair Employment Agency

	Protestant	*Roman Catholic*	*Total findings*
From 1977 to 31 March 1979	1	4	5
31 March 1980	—	3	3
31 March 1981	—	2	2
31 March 1982	2	2	4
31 March 1983	—	4	4
31 March 1984	2	5	7
31 March 1985	2	6	8
31 March 1986	4	1	5
31 March 1987	—	12	12
31 March 1988	—	3	3
31 March 1989	—	6	6
1 April 1989 to present	1	5	6
	12	53	65
Total findings of unlawful discrimination to date (20 February 1990)	12	53	65

Stevens Inquiry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made by the Stevens inquiry into allegations that members of the security forces are leaking information to paramilitary groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The investigation by Mr. Stevens and his team still continues. I understand, however, that he expects to submit a full report to the Chief Constable of the RUC in the near future. Thereafter the Government will address expeditiously any implications of the report that are for them, and will consider whether any further measures are needed.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys-based adult population figures were replaced as a basis for the underlying data for calculating revenue support grant by information from the community charge register; if he will publish a table giving for each local authority the difference between the two and the financial effect of this on that authority's standard spending assessment; and if he will make a statement on the accuracy of these measures.

Mr. Chope: We announced our intention to base certain revenue support grant calculations on information from the community charges register in July 1989, following representations from the local authority associations and individual authorities that this was the most appropriate basis. OPCS-based estimates were used for illustrative exemplifications of the effects of our proposals when we issued a consultation paper in November last year because they were then the only population data available. I have placed in the Library a table showing for each charging authority the difference between OPCS-based estimates and those derived from community charges registers. Apart from one minor aspect, standard spending assessments are based on estimates of the whole population and the number falling within certain age bands and are therefore calculated using OPCS estimates rather than community charges registers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the information placed in the Library with his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column 222, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult in each region etc.

Mr. Chope: Where tables relating to local government finance run to more than about a page of A4 it is our practice to place the tables in the Library rather than publishing the figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will provide for a national referendum on the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: No.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those chemicals or chemical compounds that are classed as toxic waste in England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: Waste which is dangerous or difficult to dispose of is classed as "special waste" and the substances used in its definition are listed in regulation 2 and schedule 1 to the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 (SI 1980 No. 1709). On 25 January we published a consultation paper reviewing the 1980 regulations and proposing a new definition of special waste. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those firms that are licensed to import toxic waste into England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: United Kingdom firms do not require a licence to import toxic waste. However, the waste must go to suitably licensed waste disposal facilities and the shipment must be notified under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 or the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980, as appropriate.

Council House Sales (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much lower or higher on average the determinations of the district valuer are on council house sales in the London borough of Camden for the past three years than the price quoted by Camden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In the year ending 31 December 1989, the district valuer made 440 determinations of value under section 128 of the Housing Act 1985 on the application of tenants of the London borough of Camden. The value determined was lower than the borough's in 321 cases by an average of £11,201 or 11·03 per cent., higher in 19 cases and the same in 100 cases.

In the year ending 31 December 1988, the equivalent figures were 287 determinations, 258 reductions (by an average of £12,665 or 13·4 per cent.), no increased valuations and 29 unchanged valuations. In the year ending 31 December 1987, there were 26 determinations, 24 reductions (by an average of £10,812 or 10·83 per cent.), no increased valuations and two unchanged valuations.

Water Services

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has received any requests from water authorities to help finance a system of charges for water services following the abolition of domestic rates, other than by meters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the Director General of Water Services has requested financial assistance to help with research into any alternative to charging for water services following the abolition of domestic rates, other than by water meters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 9 January, *Official Report*, column *592*, what was the cost of all works associated with the erection of railings at the Whitehall end of Downing street that did not involve security matters.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* The sole purpose of these railings is to enhance the security of Downing street and all works were directed to achieve that objective.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision is made for public scrutiny of expenditure on No. 10 Downing street.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* Vote expenditure by the Property Services Agency at No. 10 Downing street is subject to the same arrangements for public scrutiny as apply to all such expenditure by the agency.

TRANSPORT

Roads, London

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) by how much levels of traffic in London would rise if the public transport proposals suggested in the London assessment studies were adopted in isolation and the road building options were not;

(2) by how much levels of traffic in London would rise if the road proposals suggested in the London assessment studies were adopted in isolation and the public transport options were not.

Mr. Atkins: Tests carried out for the London assessment studies of the way road and rail traffic levels would change if either major roads or major railways were to be built without the other indicate Londonwide differences of only 1 to 2 per cent. Changes would be greater locally, depending upon the schemes tested. Further work would be needed to assess traffic levels should any of the options, which comprise both road and public transport schemes, be taken forward.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will update the number of responses he has so far received to the London assessment studies consultations; and if he will list in percentage form how many of the total are *(a)* in support of and *(b)* in objection to the proposals.

Mr. Atkins: No. Interim counts would involve disproportionate cost.

London Underground

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many incidents have been reported of tube doors opening in between stations on each line on the London Underground for each of the last 12 months; and what measures exist to prevent this happening;

(2) how many incidents have been reported of tube doors opening on the wrong side of the platform on each line on the London Underground for each of the last 12 months; and what measures exist to prevent this happening.

Mr. Portillo: No incident in either category was reported during 1989, although there was one case of a train leaving Piccadilly Circus station with two doors open, due to malicious tampering with a valve. This good record is attributable to the training undertaken by London Underground Limited staff, the design of the equipment and the methods by which the doors are operated.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times passengers have been asked to detrain on each line on the London Underground, for each of the last 12 months; and what were the reasons for these decisions.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter within London Underground's management responsibility, for which it should answer.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times tube services have been interrupted for more than 20 minutes on each of the lines on the London Underground, for each of the last 12 months; and what were the reasons for these delays.

Mr. Portillo: This is an operational matter for London Underground Limited.

Hidden Report

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much additional funding his Department will make available to British Rail for the implementation of the safety measures mentioned in the Hidden report.

Mr. Portillo: BR is currently assessing the costs of implementing the Hidden report, and will include them in its 1990 corporate plan. We will continue to ensure that BR has adequate funds for safety.

A12, Brentwood

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to alter the A12 in the vicinity of Brentwood to a six-lane highway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We have no plans to widen the existing A12 near Brentwood. The proposed new motorway between the M25 and Chelmsford provides the best solution to relieving not only that section of A12 but the M25, in terms of both economics and advantages to road users.

Electrified Track Closures

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passenger lines of electrified track have been closed by British Rail since 1970; and what was the mileage of these lines.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1970, British Rail has closed four electrified passenger lines of approximately 34 miles in total.

Goods Vehicles

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what provisions were made for full consultations when the reviews of the goods vehicles operators' licensing provisions was undertaken in 1986 and 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he received from individuals or organisations on the review of the goods vehicle operators' licensing provisions in 1986 and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department sought views from the road haulage industry, traffic commissioners, the transport tribunal, local authorities, parish councils, the police, trade unions, environmental interest groups and a number of private individuals who had expressed an interest.

Both reviews attracted wide-ranging and evenly balanced opinion. Overall reactions suggest that our approach is about right.

Airline Failures

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of the recent failure of a scheduled service airline, he has any plans to introduce a compensation scheme similar to that which applies to charter airlines under the air tour operators licence scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans to introduce such a scheme at present. However, the International Air

Transport Association, of which most international scheduled service airlines are members, has guidelines to protect passengers in these circumstances. Passengers holding tickets for flights with an airline providing scheduled services which ceases trading but which is a member of the association should be able to transfer at no extra cost to a flight of another airline which is also a member.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek powers to enable him to commit public funds to ensure the early completion of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: No.

ENERGY

Plutonium Exports

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many permissions, and on what dates since the United Kingdom joined the European Community, the United Kingdom has sought from the European Commission through Euratom, for the right to export civil plutonium created in the United Kingdom and allocated to the European Community under Euratom treaty article 86 to *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan and *(c)* any other state outside the European Economic Community.

Mr. Baldry: In accordance with articles 59 and 62 of the Euratom treaty producers must seek the authorisation of the Commission for exports outside the Community of special fissile material produced within a member country and kept under safeguards. Since 1979 such authorisation has been applied for and granted only once. This covered an export to Canada in 1983.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he has undertaken a comparative cost-benefit analysis of proceeding with the construction of the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor nuclear power station and an enhanced programme of investment in energy conservation and efficiency.

(2) whether he will undertake a comparative assessment of the costs of continuing the construction of the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor with an expanded programme of investment in energy conservation and efficiency.

Mr. Baldry: Sizewell B will maintain the PWR technology as an option for the future, contribute to diversity and security of supply, and help to reduce fossil fuel emissions. For these reasons the Government attach the highest importance to the completion and operation of the station.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of accountants seconded to his Department by accountancy firms during 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Redwood: The numbers were as follows:

1988: 7
1989: 4

Professional Qualifications

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the organisations which have or will be seeking recognition as qualifying bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: Formal applications cannot yet be made. The following bodies have inquired about the procedures for seeking recognition of a professional qualification under part II of the Act:

The Association of International Accountants.
The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants.
The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland.
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland.

South Africa

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's ban on new investment in South Africa.

Mr. Ridley: We have made clear our view that the steps President de Klerk has taken have transformed the political climate in South Africa. He has opened the way to a peaceful end to apartheid through negotiation. This deserves a constructive response from the international community.

In 1986 European Community Foreign Ministers and, separately, Heads of Government participating at the Commonwealth review meeting agreed to impose a number of measures against South Africa, including a ban on new investment in South Africa. The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced the implementation in the United Kingdom of the ban on new investment in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 30 October 1986, Vol. 103, column *220*. In our case the measure was voluntary.

When imposing the measures European Community Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the urgent need for a genuine national dialogue, across lines of colour, politics and religion. To this end they called on the South African Government to release unconditionally Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, to lift the bans on the African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and other political parties. Separately they expressed their wish to see the state of emergency brought to an end.

The steps President de Klerk has taken open the way to such a dialogue. It would be logical, therefore, to respond by lifting the measures imposed at that time.

When the participants in the Commonwealth review meeting in London in 1986 agreed to impose certain measures they referred in their communiqué to the deteriorating situation in South Africa and to a spiralling cycle of violence and counter-violence. They called on the South African Government to initiate a process of dialogue and said that if this call received a positive response and the South African Government took the steps demanded of them, they would review the situation and, if appropriate, rescind the measures. The then

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry referred to that undertaking when announcing our ban on new investment in 1986.

Accordingly Her Majesty's Government are now withdrawing the advice on new investment in South Africa which they issued in 1986. It will, as before, be for companies and firms to make their own judgment about whether to invest in South Africa. The Government will no longer discourage them.

Our goal remains the peaceful end of apartheid through negotiations leading to a democratic and non-racial South Africa. We shall continue our efforts to contribute to the rapid achievement of that goal.

Import Restrictions

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how many occasions in each of the last three years and in respect of which items of trade the United Kingdom Government has invoked article 36 to restrict imports into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: Under article 36 of the treaty of Rome my Department operates longstanding restrictions on imports from Community members of firearms and ammunition and certain fissile materials. My Department has not, over the last three years, used article 36 to introduce new measures on Community products. Other Government Departments operate similar longstanding restrictions on such products as drugs, explosives and indecent or obscene articles for reasons of health, safety or public policy.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General whether, further to his reply of 21 December 1989, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, column 455, any person with a professional accountancy qualification is being prosecuted for offences under section 47(2) of the Financial Services Act 1986.

The Attorney-General: No person with a professional accountancy qualification is at present being prosecuted for offences under section 47(2) of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Miss L. Ritchie

Mr. Butler: To ask the Attorney-General when the protection division of the Public Trustee Office will complete its consideration of the application relating to Miss L. Ritchie and the estate of the late Rita Dennison, deceased.

The Attorney-General: There is currently no outstanding application in either the Court of Protection or the protection division of the Public Trust Office to consider.

There is, however, an application in Warrington county court under the Law of Property Act 1925 and this application will be considered when the parties apply to the court for the matter to be set down for trial.

County Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all the county courts in England and Wales and the current level of unopened correspondence in each of them.

The Attorney-General: I am informed that there is no unopened correspondence at any of the 275 county courts in England and Wales and I refer the hon. Member to my previous reply on 21 February 1990.

"The Blooding"

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General when he intends to complete his review of the report concerning Leicestershire police and the book "The Blooding".

The Attorney-General: Two reports have been received from the police which are being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. He expects to reach a decision concerning criminal proceedings in the near future.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and whether he discussed the Director of Public Prosecution's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on relations between police forces and the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: I last met the Director of Public Prosecutions on Wednesday 14 February when we discussed matters of departmental interest. It is not my practice to particularise these.

Lord Chancellor's Department

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes will be made to the Lord Chancellor's Department's cash limit and running costs for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: Pursuant to the answer which I gave my hon. Friend on 29 January, column *28*, and subject to parliamentary approval of the revised supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Lord Chancellor's Department, class XI, vote 5, will be further increased by £4,000,000 from £260,278,000 to £264,278,000. This increase is necessary to maintain progress on the court building programme and will be charged to the Reserve.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Single Parents

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the weekly benefit entitlement when not working of a single parent with one child aged 15 years and *(b)* the weekly income of a single parent with one child aged 15 years with earnings of *(a)* £10, *(b)* £15, *(c)* £20, *(d)* £30, *(e)* £40 and *(f)* £50.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out in the table.

Net income after housing costs at various levels of gross earnings from October 1989

Gross earnings (per week) of parent	*Net income after housing costs* £
a. Not working	63·69
b. £10·00 part-time	73·69
c. £15·00 part-time	78·69
d. £20·00 part-time	78·69
e. £30·00 full-time	81·68
f. £40·00 full-time	83·18
g. £50·00 full-time	84·46

Notes:
1. The assumptions and methods are those used in the tax benefit model table, copies of which are available in the Library.
2. At earnings £30·00, £40·00 and £50·00 it is assumed that the person works over 24 hours a week and therefore qualifies for family credit. At these levels of part-time earnings, net income after housing costs would remain constant at £78·69 as the person would remain on income support.

Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners aged over 75 years have been awarded the new additional pension introduced by the Government.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Around 2·5 million pensioners who were already entitled to income support or housing benefit will have benefited automatically from the premium changes introduced in October 1989. This includes pensioners aged 75 or over and disabled pensioners aged 60 or over.

Information is not yet available on which to estimate the number of pensioners who newly qualified for benefit from October as a result of the changes. However, over the five months from the start of the publicity campaign in July 1989 until the end of November 1989 there were 232,000 successful income support claims from pensioners. This compares with 82,000 successful claims over the previous five months.

Information on new claims for housing benefit is not yet available.

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many additional *(a)* families and *(b)* children in families will be eligible for income related benefits as a result of the freeze in child benefit (i) since April 1987 and (ii) since April 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* It is impossible to give any meaningful estimate of the number of people who have or will become dependent on income-related benefits as a direct consequence of not uprating child benefit in April 1988, 1989 and 1990 because the effects cannot be viewed in isolation. It is important to remember that eligible populations and their constituents for all the income-related benefits change constantly as family incomes and circumstances change. Gross earnings have risen, and our policies to reduce tax and national insurance contributions have succeeded in enabling families with children to keep more of their earnings. In addition, we have channelled extra help to families with children through the income-related benefits.

Family Incomes and Expenditure

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables employing the assumptions in his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June 1988, *Official Report*, columns *575-80*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in Greenock and Port Glasgow, together with a column showing the extent of the difference resulting from the April 1988 social security changes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* I regret that the information requested is not available for Greenock and Port Glasgow. Moreover, the passage of time and subsequent changes to the benefit system have rendered increasingly meaningless any attempt to make hypothetical comparisons between what people get now and what they might have got under a system which was almost universally recognised as being riddled with anomalies and failing to target help sensibly. With this in mind, the Government do not intend to publish tables making such comparisons any longer.

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund applications are currently outstanding in offices covering the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Scott: The latest information available is for January 1990. For the offices serving the London borough of Newham 306 applications were brought forward as uncleared from December 1989. These were made up of 234 loan and 72 grant applications.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of refusals for social fund community care grants in London social security offices.

Mr. Scott: The number of refusals can be derived from the information on applications processed and awarded which is in the Library.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of income support recipients are now having deductions made from benefit as a result of paying back social fund loans *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each local Department of Social Security office area.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The information requested is in the tables. The percentages have been calculated by referring to provisional data on the number of loans being recovered at the end of January 1990 compared with the number of income support recipients.

Loans currently being recovered as percentage of income support recipients at national, regional and local office levels

	Per cent.
National	9·2
North East Region	11·39
North West Region	9·9
Midland Region	8·7

	Per cent.
London North Region	6·07
London South Region	6·24
Wales and South West Region	14·3
Scottish Region	17·1

North East Region

	Per cent.
Ashington	11·64
Barnsley East	19·71
Barnsley West	12·97
Berwick	5·15
Bishop Auckland	10·27
Blyth	9·08
Bradford East	10·33
Bradford South	11·77
Bradford West	9·44
Bridlington	5·57
Castleford	11·77
Chester-le-Street	8·85
Darlington	10·78
Dewsbury	7·10
Doncaster East	11·65
Doncaster West	11·88
Durham	8·90
Eston	12·16
Gateshead	10·00
Goole	7·74
Grimsby	7·35
Halifax	10·57
Harrogate	5·14
Hartlepool	10·69
Hemsworth	11·01
Hartlepool	5·54
Houghton-le-Spring	13·12
Huddersfield	8·25
Hull East	11·45
Hull West	10·29
Jarrow	14·53
Keighley	7·35
Leeds East	10·95
Leeds North	13·79
Leeds North West	7·91
Leeds South	10·20
Leeds West	9·05
Middlesbrough	17·54
Newcastle East	12·22
Newcastle St. James	12·64
Newcastle West	15·52
Northallerton	5·34
North Shields	10·69
Peterlee	12·16
Pontefract	8·59
Redcar	13·90
Rotherham North	10·43
Rotherham South	10·76
Scarborough	5·95
Scunthorpe	11·32
Seaham	10·30
Sheffield North East	16·89
Sheffield North West	14·35
Sheffield South East	14·94
Sheffield South West	10·50
Skipton	4·19
South Shields	11·97
Stanley	10·26
Stockton	14·25
Sunderland North	17·37
Sunderland South	13·39
Wakefield	10·73
Wallsend	12·12
Wath-on-Dearne	14·01
York	8·21

North West Region

	Per cent.
Accrington	6·85
Ashton under Lyne	7·25
Barrow in Furness	7·64
Belle Vale	14·63
Birkenhead North	13·87
Birkenhead South	11·73
Blackburn	7·62
Blackpool North	3·75
Blackpool South	7·76
Bolton	7·79
Bootle	15·94
Breckfield	10·93
Burnley	8·19
Bury	6·38
Buxton	7·17
Carlisle	8·00
Cheetham	10·10
Chester	8·64
Chorlton	9·55
Crewe	7·87
Crosby	13·22
Edge Hill	13·72
Ellesmere Port	15·10
Failsworth	5·16
Farnworth	12·90
Garston	27·46
Huyton	7·26
Hyde	1·31
Kendal	18·60
Kirkby	12·74
Lancaster	9·08
Leigh	9·19
Liverpool City	17·35
Longsight	2·23
Macclesfield	15·77
Middleton	10·60
Norris Green	15·14
Northwich	14·20
Oldham	8·77
Openshaw	10·43
Penrith	3·62
Preston North	8·21
Preston South	5·55
Rochdale	9·60
Rossendale	7·91
Rusholme	10·09
St. Helens	10·36
Sale	6·95
Salford North	8·47
Salford South	8·81
Skelmersdale	12·49
Southport	2·61
Stockport North	9·34
Stockport South	10·32
Toxteth	19·49
Wallasey	11·42
Warrington	9·19
West Derby	12·76
Whitehaven	8·05
Widnes	16·10
Wigan	10·96
Wilmslow	6·30
Workington	7·34
Wythenshawe	13·58

Midland Region

	Per cent.
Birmingham (Bradford Street)	8·78
Birmingham (Edgebaston)	8·03
15W	
Birmingham (Erdington)	12·31
Birmingham (Handsworth)	12·30
Birmingham (Ladywood)	11·83
Birmingham (Northfield)	11·99
Birmingham (Perry Barr)	9·57

	Per cent.
Birmingham (Ravenshurst)	7·44
Birmingham (South Yardley)	8·51
Birmingham (Sparkhill)	1·48
Birmingham (Washwood Heath)	9·95
Boston	4·09
Burton on Trent	6·20
Cannock	6·83
Chesterfield	7·25
Corby	10·98
Coventry (East)	13·75
Coventry (West)	8·02
Derby (Becket Street)	5·68
Derby (Heritage Gate)	6·25
Derby (London Road)	8·32
Dudley North	8·35
Dudley South	6·47
Grantham	5·37
Hereford	6·02
Ilkeston	8·64
Kidderminster	7·69
Leamington	5·41
Leicester (Burleys Way)	9·67
Leicester (Lower Hill)	9·64
Leicester (Norton Street)	6·78
Leicester (Yeoman Street)	11·12
Lichfield	8·22
Lincoln (Newlands)	8·38
Lincoln (Orchard Street)	9·05
Loughborough	6·15
Mansfield	9·18
Newcastle (Staffs)	7·09
Northampton	5·68
Nottingham (Castle Gate)	9·85
Nottingham (David Lane)	10·04
Nottingham (Shakespeare Street)	11·47
Nottingham (Station Street)	8·12
Nuneaton	8·02
Redditch	5·96
Rugby	7·03
Shrewsbury	5·52
Skegness	2·95
Smethwick	7·66
Stafford	5·74
Stoke North	7·80
Stoke South	8·41
Sutton in Ashfield	6·63
Telford	10·97
Walsall East	8·55
Walsall West	11·16
Wellingborough	6·44
West Bromwich	9·24
Wolverhampton North	14·02
Wolverhampton South	10·63
Worcester	6·72
Worksop	7·61

London North Region

	Per cent.
Acton	5·63
Aylesbury	3·67
Barking	5·69
Barnet	4·43
Basildon	4·32
Bedford	5·97
Braintree	1·04
Bury St. Edmonds	3·88
Cambridge	3·42
Canning Town	11·33
Chelmsford	8·59
Clacton	7·14
Colchester	3·05
Cricklewood	5·78
Diss	19·68
Dunstable	1·81
Ealing	1·11
Edgeware	8·02
Edmondton	3·09
Euston	4·69
Finsbury Park	1·42
Grays	8·92
Great Yarmouth	6·72
Hackney	9·36
Harlesdon	10·53
Harlow	3·03
Harrow	3·13
Hemel Hemstead	2·66
Hendon	6·53
Hertford	3·97
Highgate	6·44
High Wycombe	4·17
Hoxton	9·89
Ilford	11·16
Ipswich	5·05
Kings Lynn	4·47
Leystone	6·50
Lowestoft	6·85
Luton	8·36
Milton Keynes	7·86
Neasden	6·23
Norwich (C)	6·10
Norwich (M)	7·71
Notting Hill	8·79
Oxford	7·94
Paddington	3·32
Peterborough	10·17
Plaistow	6·82
Poplar	7·68
Romford	3·88
St. Albans	4·80
Shoreditch	8·73
Southall	8·97
Southend	4·94
Stepney	5·81
Stevenage	6·24
Edmonton	9·56
Thames North	3·21
Tottenham	10·40
Uxbridge	5·58
Walthamstow	6·68
Watford	5·38
Woodgrange Park	9·75
Wood Green	7·33

London South Region

	Per cent.
Aldershot	6·08
Andover	9·60
Ashford	6·34
Balham	5·43
Basingstoke	7·66
Battersea	5·18
Bexley	9·66
Bloomsbury	4·08
Bognor Regis	7·00
Bracknell	3·19
Brighton	8·64
Brixton	4·15
Bromley	8·56
Camberwell	6·02
Canterbury	3·03
Chatham	2·99
Chelsea	8·17
Chichester	5·01
City	5·69
Crawley	10·38
Croydon	4·92
Crystal Palace	8·42
Dartford	3·94
Dover	12·74
Eastbourne	2·58
Eltham	9·23
Epsom	6·16

	Per cent.
Fareham	4·24
Folkstone	10·51
Gravesend	6·77
Greenwich Park	12·19
Guildford	8·02
Hastings	3·20
Havant	5·76
Hither Green	9·49
Hounslow	3·16
Hove	4·01
Isle of Wight	7·67
Kennington Park	6·68
Kensington	4·92
Kingston	2·44
Lewes	6·86
Lewisham	3·61
Maidstone	7·15
Mitcham	5·72
New Forest	10·52
New Malden	6·35
Newbury	5·46
Orpington	3·30
Oval	6·51
Peckham	4·09
Portsmouth North	6·56
Portsmouth South	5·25
Reading	4·10
Redhill	4·74
Sittingbourne	5·25
Slough	4·44
Southampton	2·87
Southwark	6·08
Streatham	4·31
Sutton	6·74
Thames South	3·21
Thanet	4·53
Tunbridge Wells	4·70
Twickenham	4·46
Wandsworth	3·08
Westminster	9·14
Winchester	3·69
Wimbledon	6·98
Woking	5·24
Woolwich	2·75
Worthing	5·54

Wales and South West region

	Per cent.
Aberdare	14·63
Abertillery	12·50
Aberystwyth	6·12
Ammanford	6·59
Anglesey	8·44
Bargoed	14·01
Barnstaple	5·59
Barry	9·02
Bath	5·73
Blackwood	9·52
Bournemouth	4·84
Bridgend	7·60
Bridgwater	6·80
Bristol Central	8·70
Bristol East	5·81
Bristol Horsfield	8·01
Bristol South	9·10
Bristol West	3·17
Caernarfon	8·36
Caerphilly	19·88
Cardiff Central	9·07
Cardiff East	12·38
Cardiff West	12·50
Carmarthen	6·37
Cheltenham	5·39
Chippenham	5·26
Colwyn Bay	6·85
Cwmbran	8·93
Deeside	8·83
Devonport	11·79
Ebbw Vale	10·45
Exeter	6·27
Gloucester	8·94
Haverfordwest	8·62
Launceston	4·13
Llanelli	10·14
Merthyr Tydfil	12·83
Morriston	13·04
Neath	8·32
Newport	11·09
Newtown	5·22
Pembroke Dock	10·80
Penzance	3·50
Plymouth	7·89
Pontypridd	11·60
Poole	4·29
Porth	9·62
Porthmadog/Dolgellau	4·65
Port Talbot	11·45
Tonypandy	13·19
Rhyl	5·95
St. Austell	7·33
Salisbury	7·09
Stroud	4·42
Swansea	11·05
Swindon	7·99
Taunton	5·15
Torbay	5·28
Trowbridge	6·09
Truro	5·32
Weston-Super-Mare	5·46
Weymouth	5·20
Wrexham	8·58
Yeovil	3·98

Scottish Region

	Per cent.
Aberdeen North	10·16
Aberdeen South	8·71
Airdrie	24·75
Arbroath	8·71
Ayr	14·81
Bathgate	13·77
Bellshill	25·11
Cambletown	10·86
Clydebank	24·47
Coatbridge	21·75
Cowdenbeath	12·37
Cumbernauld	12·36
Dumbarton	21·24
Dumfries	8·82
Dundee East	13·11
Dundee West	13·96
Dunfermline	14·76
East Kilbride	13·46
Edinburgh City	14·44
Edinburgh East	13·25
Edinburgh North	13·45
Edinburgh South	11·35
Edinburgh West	13·85
Elgin	8·18
Falkirk	15·50
Fort William	7·68
Galashiels	8·42
Glasgow Anniesland	26·28
Glasgow Bridgeton	01·36
Glasgow City	21·89
Glasgow Craigton	22·85
Glasgow Cranstonhill	13·27
Glasgow Laurieston	18·36
Glasgow Maryhill	26·19
Glasgow Parkhead	24·14
Glasgow Partick	17·00
Glasgow Provan	30·99

	Per cent.
Glasgow Rutherglen	23·15
Glasgow South Side	26·41
Glasgow Springburn	26·24
Greenock	19·83
Hamilton	21·45
Inverness	8·67
Irvine	23·60
Johnstone	15·33
Kilmarnock	15·44
Kirkcaldy	12·31
Lerwick	4·34
Leven	12·20
Motherwell	21·09
Oban	7·43
Paisley	18·13
Perth	9·13
Peterhead	10·01
Port Glasgow	24·02
Stirling	12·05
Stornoway	5·18
Stranraer	10·31
Wick	5·81

Note: Calculations based on latest available information on Income Support caseload as at November 1990.

HEALTH

Capital Investment

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in descending order the levels of capital investment of each health district in the Northern region since 1974, and then give the figures adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. Information derived from the annual accounts of the Northern regional health authority (RHA) and the district health authorities (DHAs) comprising the Northern region since the establishment on 1 April 1982 of DHAs is shown in the table.

Northern Region—District Health Authorities total capital expenditure 1982-83 to 1988-89 (inclusive)

Districts	£000 (cash)	£000 (at 1988-89 prices)
Newcastle Upon Tyne	50,098	58,778
South Tees	38,050	43,646
South Cumbria	34,845	40,124
Northumberland	31,587	36,799
South Tyneside	24,473	27,130
North Tyneside	21,309	25,937
Hartlepool	20,308	24,235
Gateshead	20,215	24,901
Sunderland	16,409	19,350
East Cumbria	14,780	17,615
Durham	12,373	14,899
South West Durham	8,132	9,600
West Cumbria	8,033	9,397
Darlington	7,675	8,824
North Tees	5,783	6,766
North West Durham	3,235	3,794
Districts total	317,305	371,795

Notes:

1. The cash based figures are the aggregate totals derived from the series of annual accounts. In deriving the aggregate figures at 1988-89 prices each year's figures have been seperately expressed at 1988-89 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflators.

2. Capital expenditure recorded in the annual accounts of the Northern RHA in respect of district schemes has been included in the figures for the districts concerned but capital expenditure incurred by the RHA for the region as a whole is excluded.

3. Capital investment in particular regions and districts tends to fluctuate year on year mainly reflecting changes in the pattern of capital investment throughout the country and at district level it is also influenced by other local factors.

4. Prior to 1 April 1982 many of the DHAs predecessor health districts formed part of larger area health authorities and in those cases district based figures were not collected centrally.

HIV 2

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy to screen all blood supplies for HIV 2.

Mr. Freeman: Samples from blood donors who have visited those countries where HIV 2 is common are tested for antibodies to the virus. This selective screening policy has been in existence since June 1988.

Combined tests for the antibodies to HIV 1 and HIV 2 were recently developed and the desirability of extending screening for antibodies to HIV 2 to all blood donations is under review in light of the results of their evaluation.

Disabled People

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of disabled employees in his Department and in the regional health authorities; and what is the applicable statutory quota on the recruitment of disabled persons.

Mr. Freeman: In the Department of Health in February 1990 there are 31 registered disabled employees, representing 0·74 per cent. of the work force. In addition, two appointments have recently been made under the sheltered placement scheme and another person with a disability is working for the Department at home under a remote working arrangement.

Responsibility for employment matters in the NHS rests with individual employing authorities. Figures recently published by the employment service show the number of registered disabled people employed by regional health authorities, at May 1989, to be:

Regional Health Authority	Registered disabled staff	Per cent. of work force
Northern	11·0	0·4
Yorkshire	15·0	0·5
Trent	[1]13·5	0·4
East Anglia	3·0	0·2
North West Thames	3·0	0·9
North East Thames	0·0	0·0
South East Thames	4·0	0·3
South West Thames	4·0	0·4
Wessex	4·0	0·3
Oxford	11·0	0·6
South Western	9·0	0·5
West Midlands	46·0	0·9
Mersey	9·0	0·4
North Western	10·0	0·2

[1] Staff employed between 10 and 30 hours a week are counted as half a unit.

The figures are likely to understate the number of people with disabilities because many choose not to register as disabled.

Employers of more than 20 staff have a statutory duty to employ a 3 per cent. quota of registered disabled people. This is not binding on the Crown, but Government Departments, including the Department of Health, and health authorities aim to meet or improve on this quota.

We have made clear to authorities the importance that we attach to equal opportunities for disabled people in employment, for example through our endorsement of the then Manpower Services Commission's code of practice on the employment of disabled people. We have also encouraged the formation of direct links between NHS personnel managers and the major organisations development unit of the disabled peoples service.

Child Care

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government to establish and develop positive child care policies to date; and if he will make a statement outlining his proposals for future child care initiatives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's positive child care policies have been reflected in legislation over a number of years culminating in the Children Act 1989 which updates and consolidates previous child care legislation in respect of England and Wales and will be implemented in October 1991. Regulations and guidance will follow as part of the process of implementing the Act. In addition, the Government have set up a number of specific initiatives in the child care field in England including a central training initiative on child abuse; the extension of the training support programme to inclde local authority child care staff; a central training initiative to promote the development of work with children who have been abused and young perpetrators of abuse; and a new under-fives initiative to fund local projects for young children and their families.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to entitle men aged 60 to 64 years to free National Health Service prescriptions;

(2) what would be the cost of extending entitlements to free National Health Service prescriptions to men aged 60 to 64 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible from the information available to estimate accurately the cost of extending the present arrangements for exemption from NHS prescription charges to include men aged 60 to 64 years. The existing arrangements, particularly those for persons on low income, ensure that no one, regardless of age, needs to forgo necessary medication on financial grounds, and we therefore have no plans to change them. As a result of these arrangements over 75 per cent. of prescription items are dispensed free.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures exist to ensure that the cost of laundry services provided by National Health Service laundries is properly monitored and controlled.

Mr. Freeman: It is for individual health authorities to lay down procedures that monitor the costs and control the laundry services they receive.

Sweet Cigarettes

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward legislation to ban the renewed sale of imitation sweet cigarettes to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Existing legislation covers items which can be shown to be intrinsically unsafe. While we deplore any attempt to encourage children to regard smoking as a game, we believe it would be very difficult to try to define in legislation confectionery products which might be regarded by some people as imitations of cigarettes. We believe the better course is for the Government, and groups of people concerned with the risks of smoking to maintain public awareness of these risks, particularly among children and young people.

Nurses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of places available to state-enrolled nurses to convert to registered general nurses in 1989 and 1990; what is the total number of applications received for these courses; what is the average waiting time for successful applicants; and if there are any plans to increase the number of places available for state-enrolled nurses wishing to undertake the conversion courses to registered general nurses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Not all the information requested is held centrally.

Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting shows that 2,639 enrolled nurses were on conversion courses at 4 January 1990. By 14 February 1990 conversion courses in 210 educational institutions had been approved by the board. This compares with six by 31 March 1985.

Enrolled nurses converting to the first level qualification of registered general nurse must receive training which meets the EC equivalent for a nurse responsible for general care. The number of places available may be constrained in some areas by the availability of clinical placements, particularly in obstetrics and mental illness-handicap. We are asking health authorities to make plans for further conversion courses and to consider the more flexible modes of conversion agreed by the board which build on additional experience gained since qualification. We have also provided funding to the first 13 Project 2000 demonstration districts for an expansion of 232 places for enrolled nurses in 1989-90. We are considering further bids from schools and colleges of nursing to commence Project 2000 training in 1990-91 and are ensuring that these plans contain firm proposals for conversion courses.

Correspondence

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he intends to reply to correspondence from Dr. Bryan Scaife of Queens Park medical centre, Stockton on Tees sent to him by the hon. Member for Stockton, South;

(2) when he intends to reply to a letter from Dr. Bryan Scaife of Queens Park medical centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have now written to my hon. Friend.

Community Hospital Sales (Shropshire)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on Shropshire health authority's proposals to sell off five community hospitals for use as private nursing homes;

(2) what revenue savings will result from the proposed selling off of five community hospitals by Shropshire health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for Shropshire district health authority.

I understand, however, that members of the health authority are considering outline proposals for the transfer of some continuing care services currently provided in its cottage hospitals to independent charitable trusts. Any such proposal to change the use of these hospitals would be consulted on by the DHA in the normal way, and might in due course come to Ministers for approval. Ministers' decisions would be on the proposals as finally approved by the health authority following consultations.

Any savings which might result would clearly depend on the health authority's final plans. If the hon. and learned Member wants details of possible savings from the options currently under consideration or any further details of the health authority's proposals, I suggest he should contact the district chairman direct.

North West RHA

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the allocation of funds to the North West regional health authority and South Manchester health authority for 1990-91.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* North West regional health authority's initial revenue cash limit for 1990-91 is £1,237,876,000. It is for regional health authorities to decide on the allocations to be made to their districts.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Unions

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service unions; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met members of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants on 29 January to discuss physical security of Government establishments.

THE ARTS

National Film and Television School

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy on increasing training provision at the National Film and Television School.

Mr. Luce: I shall be increasing the grant to the National Film and Television School from £1·7 million in 1989-90 to £1·85 million in 1991-92. The school plays an important role in providing training for directors, camera staff and other specialists for the audio-visual industry. It is currently drawing up plans for its longer-term future which I hope to consider shortly.

Nottingham Playhouse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will pay an official visit to the Nottingham Playhouse to discuss funding for the performing arts.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans at present to do so.

HOME DEPARTMENT

EC Computer System

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the intended use of the computer system advertised in the supplement to the official journal of the European Commission No. S244/50, dated 19 December 1989; and what new functions and facilities will it provide.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that this system will provide a computerised indexing facility for the force's general registry. No new functions or facilities will be provided, but computerisation will allow the registry to accomplish its tasks with greater speed and accuracy.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning the establishment of a national missing persons register.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only recent representations that we have received are the questions which were asked by the hon. and learned Member earlier this month.

Prisons (Inmate Committees)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Tooting on 16 January, *Official Report*, column *176*, if he will list prisons in England and Wales that have inmate committees; how often such committees meet; what is their composition of members; how their agendas are prepared; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information on inmate committees is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Chief Officers of Police (Cars)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many chief constables of police have chauffeur-driven cars; and if he will list them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Transport arrangements in forces are matters for police authorities and their chief officers.

Passports

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports have been issued by the Belfast passport office to people who lodged their applications at the Glasgow passport office in the past year; and if he will make it his policy that passports should be marked as having been issued at the office to which the application was sent, regardless of any other administrative arrangements which may be made by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since September 1989, about 50,000 passport applications sent to the Glasgow passport office have been transferred to the Belfast office for processing under the passport department's arrangements for balancing workloads between offices to reduce delays. To show on a passport an issuing office other than that which issued the passport would be administratively difficult, confusing, and contrary to international passport practice.

Firearms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of shotgun and firearms certificates issued in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not yet available. The 1988 figures for England and Wales are published in Home Office statistical bulletin 18/89, a copy of which is in the Library.

Cable Television

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cable franchises have been allocated since 1984; to which companies and when; what is the proportion of foreign ownership in each; and how many homes have been cabled up by each contractor.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1984 the Cable Authority has allocated 53 cable franchises. I understand that on 1 January 1990 a total of 303,427 households were connected to cable systems, of which 88,006 were connected to broadband cable. I have placed in the Library a list of the other information requested, where this is not commercially confidential.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victims in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 received compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for sums between £550 and £750; and what percentage this represented of the total number of awards in these years.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given yesterday to questions from the hon. Members for Don. Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy).

"Error of Judgement"

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first received a copy of the book "Error of Judgement"; and what action was taken.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office obtained a copy of the book "Error of Judgement" shortly after publication in July 1986. On 2 September 1986, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) discussed the content of his book with officials of the Home Office criminal department, and subsequently discussed a number of the points raised in the book with an Assistant Chief Constable of the West Midlands police. The book was considered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), among a number of representations which had been made to him about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six, before coming to his decision on 20 January 1987 to refer the whole case to the Court of Appeal.

Police Pensions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the difference in annual pension between police constables, sergeants and inspectors and their respective widows where their police service was completed *(a)* prior to 1960 and *(b)* since the current police pension scheme was introduced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Retirement date	*Constable* £	*Sergeant* £	*Inspector* £
1959	3,510(1,400)	4,010(1,610)	4,700(1,880)
1989	7,560(5,040)	8,300(5,530)	9,420(6,280)

1. The figures assume that each officer had the maximum period of reckonable service of 30 years and opted to commute part of his pension for a lump sum payment.

2. Widows' entitlements are shown in brackets; the figures in the first line reflect cost of living increases during the intervening period and assume that each officer opted for a widow's award based on one third of his pension (before commutation).

Mr. Kenneth Carter

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now give a substantive answer to the questions for priority written answer on 8 February from the hon. Member for Stockton, South relating to the case of Mr. Kenneth Carter, a prisoner in Durham prison, to which a holding answer was given.

Mr. Mellor: I replied to my hon. Friend yesterday.

North Africa (Visas)

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to impose a visa requirement on nationals of Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia who wish to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I will shortly lay before Parliament a statement of changes in the immigration rules which will include provisions requiring nationals of Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia to obtain visas before travelling to the United Kingdom. The Governments of the three countries have been informed, and the necessary formal notice of one month under our agreements for the abolition of visas with Morocco (1958, Cm. 623) and Tunisia (1962, Cm. 1989) will be given to those two Governments. The United Kingdom has no such agreement with Algeria. The new visa requirements will come into effect on 1 April.

This change, like that in June 1989 in respect of Turkey, should be seen in the context of the increasingly close co-operation between the member states of the European Community on immigration matters. EC Ministers with responsibility for immigration matters have for some time had under consideration possible additions to the list of countries for whose nationals all member states require visas; and among the countries which have been given particular consideration in this context are Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. A majority of member states already require visas of Algerian and Moroccan nationals, and six member states already require visas of Tunisian nationals. In the light of increasing operating difficulties with nationals of these countries, the Government have decided that the time has come for the United Kingdom also to require visas of all three nationalities. Growing

numbers of nationals of these countries are proving ineligible for entry on arrival at United Kingdom ports. This had placed strains on the immigration control and created delays and inconvenience for passengers.

The introduction of these visa requirements should benefit all bona fide travellers, who will know before they depart that they are eligible for admission to the United Kingdom, and will be less likely to encounter delays on arrival. Our visa issuing posts in the three countries are being strengthened to ensure an efficient service. Regular visitors to this country will be eligible for multiple-entry visas.

London Underground (Smoking)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the level of fines imposed by magistrates on those convicted of smoking on the London Underground.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 26 January 1990]:* Our records show that since November 1987 we have received five letters on this subject.

Murder Trials

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about enabling the families of murder victims to be legally represented in court during trials; and what has been his response.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* We are acutely conscious of the sense of grievance felt by the families of some murder victims that they have no opportunity to be heard in court. Entitling the victim's family to be represented at the trial would mean fundamental changes of principle and practice in how criminal proceedings are brought and conducted, and would need careful consideration. There may be other mechanisms for ensuring that the views of families in murder cases and of victims themselves in other cases are taken properly into account. These are difficult issues on which the Government are inviting views in their victims charter published yesterday.

WALES

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West of 2 February, *Official Report*, columns *372-73*, (1) which authority or company will be responsible for the cost of works undertaken within the inland bay to maintain water quality under the provisions of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill after the 20-year period following the commencement of impoundment;

(2) which authority or company will be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of works undertaken within the inland bay to maintain water quality under the provisions of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill after the 20-year period following the commencement of impoundment.

Mr. Grist: The responsibility for the ownership maintenance and costs of works undertaken within the inland bay to maintain water quality lies with the promoters of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. There are provisions within the Bill to enable the development corporation's responsibilities to pass to a successor body on the dissolution of the development corporation.

Nursing

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of places available to state enrolled nurses to convert to registered general nurses in 1989 and 1990; what is the average waiting time for successful applicants; and if there are any plans to increase the number of places available for state enrolled nurses wishing to undertake the conversion courses to registered general nurses.

Mr. Grist: The number of places available to second level general nurses to convert to first level general nurses in Wales in 1989 and 1990 is as follows:

1989—130
1990—142 (to date)

Information about the average waiting time for successful applicants is not held centrally.

The Government's response to Project 2000 stressed the need to increase the number of second level nurse conversion courses, and the United Kingdom Central Council and the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are examining the provision for more flexible modes of conversion. Health authorities in Wales have been encouraged to increase opportunities for second level nurse conversion wherever possible.

DEFENCE

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many army personnel have been injured in their duties as temporary ambulance workers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nine service personnel have been injured while assisting in providing temporary accident and emergency cover during the present ambulance workers' dispute. None of the injuries were serious.

D Notices

Mr. Graham Allen: To Ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the subject of each D notice issued in the last six months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No new D notices have been issued in the past six months, although the eight standing D notices on which the system has been based since 1982 were reprinted and reissued to the media in November 1989. At the same time, D notice No. 4, formerly entitled "Radio and Radar Transmissions", was revised, to take account of advances in technology, and is now entitled "Electronic Equipments and Electro-Magnetic Transmissions". Copies of the D notices are held by the Library of the House.

Low Flying

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints the Government have received about low flying planes in Scotland in the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence has received inquiries and complaints about military low flying training in Scotland as follows:

	Number
1987	729
1988	875
1989	1,440
1990	93

The figure for 1990 covers the month of January.

SCOTLAND

Police Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list, for each year since 1979, the countries from Latin America and other non-democratic states that have sent delegations of police officers or military to study the police technology, crowd control techniques and computers used by Scottish police forces.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table gives details of all centrally recorded visits by police officers and associated civilian personnel to Scotland from overseas, in the course of which interest has been shown in the subjects specified.

Year	*Technology*	*Computers*	*Crowd Control*
1986	Sudan	Sudan	—
		Guyana	—
1987	Australia	—	—

Farm Incomes

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average net income from livestock farms in Scotland of 50 to 100 acres 100 acres to 200 acres and other small farms under 50 acres; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. Data on average net income by type of farm and farm business size are published in "Farm Incomes in Scotland, 1988-89", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees receive a top-up from their employers over and above the basic YTS rate, giving the results by region.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Tourism

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate *(a)* the number of foreign tourists coming to Britain in 1989 and *(b)* the value of tourism to Britain in 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: During the first 11 months of 1989, the latest period available, overseas residents made an estimated 16·1 million visits to the United Kingdom, 9 per cent. more than in the same period of 1988. For the same period it is provisionally estimated that overseas residents spent £6,285 million in the United Kingdom, 9 per cent. higher than for the equivalent period in 1988.

Tourism (South Africa)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

Mr. Howard: The Government have made clear their view that the steps President de Klerk has taken have transformed the political climate in South Africa. He has opened the way to a peaceful end to apartheid through negotiation. This deserves a constructive response from the international community.

In 1986 European Community Foreign Ministers and, separately, Heads of Government participating at the Commonwealth review meeting agreed to impose a number of measures against South Africa, including a ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment announced the implementation in the United Kingdom of this ban in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 30 October 1986 (c. *213*, Vol. 103). In our case the measure was voluntary.

When imposing the measures European Community Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the urgent need for a genuine national dialogue, across lines of colour, politics and religion. To this end they called on the South African Government to release unconditionally Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, and to lift the bans on the African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and other political parties. Separately they expressed their wish to see the state of emergency brought to an end. The steps President de Klerk has taken open the way to such a dialogue. It would be logical, therefore, to respond by lifting the measures imposed at that time.

When the participants in the Commonwealth review meeting in London in 1986 agreed to impose certain measures they referred in their communiqué to the deteriorating situation in South Africa and to a spiralling cycle of violence and counter-violence. They called on the South African Government to initiate a process of dialogue and said that if this call received a positive response and the South African Government took the steps demanded of them, they would review the situation and, if appropriate, rescind the measures. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment referred to that undertaking when announcing our ban on the promotion of tourism in 1986.

Accordingly Her Majesty's Government are now lifting the ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. It will be for individual organisations in the tourist trade to decide whether or not to promote tourism to South Africa. The Government will no longer discourage them.

Our goal remains the peaceful end of apartheid through negotiations leading to a democratic and non-racial South Africa. We shall continue our efforts to contribute to the rapid achievement of that goal.

Adult Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total estimated expenditure on adult training in each of the years 1988-89 to 1992-93 inclusive, in cash and real terms, for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Expenditure on adult training[1] in the years 1988-89 to 1992-93 in cash prices and constant 1988-89 prices is given in the following table:

	Cash prices £ million	*Constant prices*[2] £ million
1988-89 outturn	690	690
1989-90 forecast	1,158	1,082
1990-91 planned	1,280	1,139
1991-92 planned	1,250	1,074
1992-93 planned	1,271	1,061

[1] Adult training includes the following programmes: business enterprise programme, business growth training, employment rehabilitation centres, employment training, industrial language training service, local collaborative projects, local grants to employers, national priority skills, new job training scheme, old job training scheme, residential training for the disabled, training for enterprise, voluntary project programme, wider opportunities training programme. It does not include the community programme.

[2] Cash figures adjusted to 1988-89 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure both outturn and planned on employment training and those programmes subsumed by employment training for each of the years 1985-86 to 1992-93, in both cash and real terms, for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The following table shows planned expenditure and outturn expenditures on employment training and the programmes subsumed by employment training[1] for each of the years 1985-86 to 1992-93 in both cash and real terms, for Great Britain.

	Cash prices		*Constant prices*[2]	
	Planned £ million	*Outturn* £ million	*Planned* £ million	*Outturn* £ million
1985-86	909	867	1,061	1,012
1986-87	1,205	1,255	1,361	1,417
1987-88	1,479	1,328	1,586	1,424
1988-89	1,361	1,290	1,361	1,290
1989-90	1,230	[3]1,112	1,150	[3]1,039
1990-91	1,210	n/a	1,077	n/a
1991-92	1,180	n/a	1,057	n/a
1992-93	1,200	n/a	1,002	n/a

[1] Programmes subsumed by employment training were: community programme, job training scheme, new job training scheme, residential training for the disabled, voluntary projects programme, wider opportunities training programme.

[2] Cash prices adjusted to 1988-89 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator.

[3] Forecast.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of employment training trainees in *(a)* employer/work-based schemes and *(b)* project-based schemes for each quarter between December 1988 and December 1989 and for each of the standard regions, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Information is not available in the precise form requested. Information is available only for the eight Training Agency regions in England and for Scotland and Wales and is given in the following table.

Employment Training

Trainees on practical training placements with employers and on projects on the census date December 1988—December 1989 (Estimated)

Percentage

Region	*December*[1]		*March*		*June*		*September*		*December*	
	Project	*Employer*	*Project*	*Employer*	*Project*	*Employer*	*Project*	*Employer*	*Project*	*Employer*
South East	46	31	39	31	36	31	34	25	29	28
London	43	17	48	18	42	19	44	18	42	17
South West	47	24	45	26	44	30	n/a	n/a	37	29
West Midlands	65	22	58	20	59	21	58	20	59	24
East Midlands and Eastern	n/a	n/a	57	27	49	26	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	52	23	51	25	48	25	47	23	50	24
North West	58	24	49	28	54	27	52	24	49	24
Northern	66	16	53	24	53	24	52	25	51	24
Wales	56	20	45	27	43	28	40	26	39	27
Scotland	69	18	62	21	60	24	65	21	64	22
Great Britain	58	21	52	24	50	25	50	23	49	24

[1] Returns include trainees on CP wages.
n/a = Not available because of low number of returns.

Radiation (Exposure)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to reduce the maximum exposure of workers to radiation to 10 mSv a year.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* No. On 5 February 1990 the Health and Safety Commission published a consultative document inviting comments on additional guidance on dose limitation. This proposed that decisions on whether doses are as low as reasonably practicable should take account of the latest revisions of estimated risk from exposure to ionising radiations and additional action where a worker's annual dose exceeded 15 mSv on average. My right hon. and learned Friend is awaiting further advice from the Health and Safety Commission as to any additional measures that may now be seen as necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Soviet Union, under the terms of the Helsinki agreement the question of the provision of direct flights between the Soviet Union and Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the greatly increased flow of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. The question of direct flights between Israel and the Soviet Union is not covered by the Helsinki final act, and is for the two countries themselves to decide.

EC Directives

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many European Community directives have been *(a)* implemented, *(b)* not implemented and *(c)* infringed, by each European Community country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Under the EC treaties it is for the Commission to monitor the implementation of Community legislation. The most recent information available on the implementation and application of Community law was contained in the fifth annual Commission report to the European Parliament (*Official Journal of the European Communities*, c. 310; volume 31 of 5 December 1988), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Publication of the sixth annual report is expected shortly.

In respect of single market measures alone, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 9 January by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), which gave details of implementation and confirmed the United Kingdom's excellent record.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of enabling married couples who wish to share the benefits of married couples allowance equally between them from 1990 to do so; and what would be the income distribution of those couples who would financially gain.

Mr. Lilley: The costs to the Exchequer of allowing married couples who wish to share the married couple's allowance equally between them are uncertain, but they might be up to £20 million per annum. In addition there would be a substantial cost of extra staff required by Inland Revenue. About 50,000 couples where the wife pays tax at the higher rate and the husband at the basic rate would benefit, as would some other couples where the husband receives income subject to composite rate tax. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. I regret that further information is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to revise the estimate of direct costs of abolishing income tax rates above 40 per cent. in the 1988 Financial Statement and Budget Report, in the light of the Exchequer's receipts since then.

Mr. Lilley: No. Updating the estimates of the direct costs of the higher rate tax cuts on the basis of later information on incomes or tax receipts would be misleading as increases resulting from the incentive effects of lower marginal tax rates would inflate the calculated costs.

It is not possible to isolate the incentive effects of the 1988 Budget measures on income and employment. However, the buoyancy of income tax receipts in 1988-89 and 1989-90 suggests that the tax yield from the improvements to the supply side of the economy have helped to offset the direct costs of the reductions in the basic and higher rates of income tax.

Leasing Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of money disputed between the Inland Revenue and taxpayers involved in leasing schemes based on the artificial manipulation of capital allowances which the Revenue's special investigation section are challenging through the special commissioners of income tax.

Mr. Lilley: The total amount of tax in dispute in all such cases is approximately £135 million. Separate figures are not available for cases before the special commissioners.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in employment in each year in firms with profit-related pay and in firms without profit-related pay.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not available.

Domestic Premises (Sales)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing for sales of domestic premises in 1988-89 *(a)* the number of transactions in each region and *(b)* the number which were exempt for falling under the duty threshold.

Mr. Lilley: The available information is given in the following table. Reliable estimates for Scotland and Northern Ireland are not available.

Sales of residential property in 1988-89 by region in England and Wales

	Total number of transactions (thousands)	*Number not above stamp duty threshold of £30,000*[1] (thousands)
North	92	58
Yorkshire and Humberside	193	117
East Midlands	156	68
East Anglia	73	11
South East	457	52
Greater London	279	25
South West	202	37
West Midlands	157	62
North West	221	126

	Total number of transactions (thousands)	Number not above stamp duty threshold of £30,000[1] (thousands)
Wales	99	51
England and Wales	1,928	608

[1] Excludes 63,000 purchases of new leases with premiums below £30,000 which have different rules as to calculation of duty according to the premium and rental elements.

Source: Surveys of Conveyancing 1988 and 1989.

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what taxes the vendor of a major work of art is liable to pay on the price obtained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Assuming that the work of art is not being sold as part of a trading activity, the vendor may be liable to capital gains tax on any gain realised on disposal. If the work of art has previously been conditionally exempted from capital taxation an inheritance tax charge may also be triggered. Special rules apply if the sale is by private treaty to an approved museum, art gallery or heritage body.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for manufacturers, less food, drink and tobacco, the percentage and value increase between 1984 and 1989 in purchases of (i) imported and (ii) home-produced manufactures less food, drink and tobacco, together with the value of sales including income from employment and gross profit etc. as separate items.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information is not available. No estimates yet exist of purchases by manufacturers in 1989.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* for the input-output tables for the years 1979, 1984 and 1989, a table showing for manufacturing industry less food drink and tobacco the value of purchases of (i) imports and (ii) home-produced manufactured goods less food and drink and tobacco, together with the value of sales and the contribution made by employment and gross profits etc.;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, input tables for the United Kingdom for 1984, 1986 and 1989, which exclude food, drink and tobacco from manufacturing on both sides of the account and, if required, a reconciliation with the trade figures; and if he will addk for manufactures so defined the total input showing income from employment and gross profit etc.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is available for 1984 only, within cost limits. The table for 1984 following the classifications and definitions used in table 2.6 of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the CSO Blue Book), 1988, has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to collect information to enable him to make a reliable estimate of tax liability on the benefit of subsidised workplace nurseries provided by employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Employers give details of employee's taxable expenses and benefits to tax offices on form P11D. The forms for years up to 1988-89 do not separately identify the taxable benefits of subsidised workplace nurseries.

Conveyancing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table further to table 15.1 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1989, showing for 1988 the same information on conveyances of freehold and leasehold residential property in the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that reliable information is not available at the level of detail requested.

Housing Stock

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the ratio of the capital value of the housing stock to the rateable value in each of the standard regions; and if he will provide a separate figure for council housing.

Mr. Lilley: An estimate of the capital value of the housing stock is contained in the book "United Kingdom National Accounts 1989". The other information could not be produced in the form requested without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Royal Mint

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to respond to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Royal Mint especially in regard to quality assurance procedures (British standard 5750) and fixed costs borne by the taxpayer in regard to marketing, promotion and sales.

Mr. Ryder: The Public Accounts Committee heard evidence on the Comptroller and Auditor-General's report on 19 February. It will issue its own report in due course and the Government will then give their considered response. I therefore do not wish to anticipate what the Public Accounts Committee will say at this stage.

Community Charge Records

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate what instructions or guidance have been given to the Inland Revenue in relation to access to community charge records for income tax purposes.

Mr. Lilley: None.

Tax Relief

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much it would cost to restrict *(a)* personal tax allowances, *(b)* age allowance, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief and *(d)* tax relief for occupational and private pensions to the basic rate in 1990-91 and in a full year.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Estimates of the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1990-91 levels of income from restricting the main income tax reliefs and allowances to the basic rate are as follows:

	£ million
Personal allowances	1,100
Age allowances	nil
Retirement annuity relief[1]	100

[1] Including relief for retirement annuity payment made by employees.

It would be premature to provide an estimate for mortgage interest relief, since the cost will depend on the amounts of mortgage lending and level of interest rates. Similarly, the estimate for employees' superannuation and personal pension contributions would depend on take-up.

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The estimates allow for the introduction of independent taxation and assume that the tax regime for 1989-90 has been indexed to 1990-91 in accordance with the rules for statutory indexation.

Privatisation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sale price received and the net asset value of each public undertaking sold since 1980.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* The information the hon. Member requested is as follows. In the case of the 10 water companies I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for water to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 5 February 1990, *Official Report*, columns *436-37*.

Net asset values do not take account of contingent liabilities (for example, liabilities to employees, etc).

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the data on which he based his conclusion that the balance of payments deficit in manufactured goods in 1989 was due to excessive consumption; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the balance of trade in manufactures less erratics in 1978 and 1989 in terms of 1988 prices together with the percentage of gross domestic product spent by consumers on goods other than fuel, food, drink and tobacco.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* It is not possible to make precise estimates of the contributions of various elements of expenditure to the increase in the deficit in trade in manufactured goods. Data on the trade deficit, and on the components of consumers' expenditure, are available in the Library. The balance of trade in manufactures at constant 1988 prices can be derived from the CSO databank which can be accessed through the Library.

Building Societies

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to building societies as a result of the composite rate of tax; and what assessment he has made of the extent of the relief that could be extended to borrowers if the tax were ended.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* Building societies and other deposit-takers account for composite rate tax on interest paid to depositors and I am not aware of any particular cost to those institutions. It is not clear that any relief would be extended to borrowers if the tax were ended.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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